It is an age-old leadership dilemma – what to do with underperforming leaders or teams?

There are many well-worn paths in getting to a solution with steps covering performance management, coaching, incentivised promises of rewards or replacement, team meetings, or doing nothing.

Searching for the right solution can be a long and torturous trail for anyone involved in the process.

Rather than searching for answers, maybe a better way is to work on ensuring everyone in your business has a common and agreed understanding of their leadership role.

Start by organising for the underperforming leader to workshop with peers a simple process that looks at a typical "day in the life". Not an **as is** day in the life, but a realistic and desirable future state day.

The first thing the group needs to do is explore and define what such a successful day looks like. Sounds simple, but many businesses will avoid undertaking this important task.

During the exercise, aim to generate a list of activities where tasks are ideally completed daily, weekly or monthly. While each activity alone is not so earth shattering, when the exercise is facilitated properly, the collective outcomes created during the process and in the weeks after can be transformational. These include:

• genuine discussion about required level of work

• alignment and agreement regarding leadership competencies

• understanding linkage between specific leadership role and organisation's vision

• identified expectations on interactions with other roles and levels of work

• defined context around importance of role in direct relation to business outcomes

• recognised expectations of consequences when leader has a bad day

• specific plan to address individual and group skills and competency shortfalls

• respectful discussion about capabilities and performance (often these are started by the leader as they realise their own suitability, or otherwise, for the role).

Once the team knows what a good day, week or month looks like, it can then generate an expected work schedule which would include a greater understanding of "musts" as opposed to "wants".

So, what happens when the team returns to the workplace and begins trying to implement the ideal day plan?

That will depend on a supporting transition plan and whether that is effectively introduced. Typically, the types of transitional issues needing to be addressed will include:

• how to stop doing things not in the daily plan (invariably leaders and peers spend huge amounts of time on activities that do not add value)

• how to develop skills and competencies found to be lacking in leaders

• communicating proposed changes to those who will be affected

• ensuring access to correct tools and workplace systems.

This article began by posing the question of what to do with underperforming leaders and teams.

Perhaps it's better to ask if your business supports its senior people with the best systems and processes to work as capable leaders?

ESTABLISH THE OUTCOMES AND BEHAVIOURS YOU EXPECT

PROVIDE FEEDBACK

PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNICATE OUTCOMES AND BEHAVIOURS

OBSERVE, MONITOR, MEASURE, AND PROVIDE APPROPRIATE TRAINING, COACHING & DEVELOPMENT