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Unlike the Cheese, Performance Management Does Not Stand Alone

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In their focal article, Pulakos, Mueller Hanson, Arad, and Moye (2015) have presented a helpful five-step plan for improving the use of performance management (PM) within organizations. As they have pointed out, it is important that an organization's PM system match the organization's values and culture. At the same time, one cannot forget that an organization's PM system should also align with the organization's other human resource (HR) practices. Thus, I suggest that taking time to make sure this alignment happens

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should be included as a substep under the first step (i.e., plan change) of the model.

Let us take employee selection as an illustration. In the second step of their model, the authors of the focal article have suggested that practitioners should develop role descriptions for employees. As industrial and organizational psychologists, we know the importance of a good job analysis. As such, we also know that we will likely have issues if the role descriptions we develop for a PM system do not align with the job descriptions that we use as part of a selection system. We are unlikely to improve the performance of someone who does not have, or cannot attain, the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary for the job—namely, someone who should not have been selected for the job in the first place.

Further support for the suggestion to align PM with other HR practices can be found in the literature. A number of authors, for example, have reported that there is a relationship between an organization's use of integrated HR practices and outcomes, such as turnover, and both individual and firm performance (for examples, see Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995; Richard & Johnson, 2001). Some of these authors have suggested that an organization's use of integrated HR practices is a source of competitive advantage over other organizations (Richard & Johnson, 2001). Similarly, Becker and Gerhart (1996) noted that HR practices improve firm performance by improving efficiency. It is difficult to imagine that misaligned practices are efficient.

As industrial and organizational psychologists, we can build on the useful model that Pulakos et al. (2015) have presented by including a substep in the model: We should take time to make sure that our PM practices align with the other HR practices used within organizations. Although this integration is difficult, it is important (den Hartog, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2004). Unlike the proverbial cheese in the children's song, within organizations, PM does not stand alone.

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Going Beyond the Fix: Taking Performance Management to the Next Level

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Most organizations require some level of emphasis on sustained performance to survive. This is particularly true of publically traded organizations or those concerned with profit-and-loss accountability. In short, performance needs to be managed. As a result, performance management (PM) is a key practice in business and is often one of the primary areas of responsibility for industrial and organizational (I-O) practitioners in organizational settings. It is also a key lever for change in organization development (OD) interventions (e.g., Church, Rotolo, Shull, & Tuller, 2014), particularly when linked to specific behaviors that are being introduced and/or reinforced for the future success of the organization. Unfortunately, as Pulakos, Mueller Hanson, Arad, and Moye (2015) have noted, leaders and employees in most organizations fundamentally dislike PM. In fact, this dislike is so intense that it has resulted in professional conferences, workshops, and popular business books focused on the simplification, replacement, or even demise of the field (e.g., Culbert, 2010; Effron & Ort, 2010). There is even a PM book for dummies (Lloyd, 2009).

What does this mean for I-O psychologists? As practitioners responsible for the design and delivery of streamlined PM systems focused on meeting a number of complex organizational objectives, we face of number of challenges. One of the major obstacles is finding the right balance in the design. Although it is important to understand the science and research behind

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