



CASE STUDY

Acas - Performance Development Programme

October 2024

The Challenge

Acas identified inconsistencies in the implementation of their performance development policy and recognised the need for a more modern approach. A training needs analysis highlighted areas requiring improvement, including greater consistency, increased accountability, a stronger focus on feedback, coaching, development, and wellbeing.

They aimed to ensure performance management is motivational, fair, transparent, and development centred. The existing paper-based system was found to be ineffective, prompting Acas to redevelop their policy and introduce a digital tool for recording and reviewing performance.

Due to limited resources within their internal training team, and the benefits of external expertise, Acas decided to engage an external supplier to design training for 1,000 staff across 11 offices. With staff spread across locations and adopting hybrid working, the training was developed for both in-person and virtual workshops. Given the high workloads, the sessions needed to be concise, impactful, and time efficient.

The Solution

The main objective was to enhance Acas's organisational culture around performance development for all staff. The training also needed to support the implementation of a new digital performance management tool. After evaluating options, Acas chose Cosensa to design and deliver sessions introducing both the new policy and tool.

Scoping meetings were held to determine the programme's structure, and Acas decided on the following approach:

Two core workshops:

- Performance Development at Acas for Managers
- Performance Development at Acas for Staff

Four deep dive modules:

- Setting & Agreeing Objectives
- Giving & Receiving Feedback
- Having Great Conversations
- Supporting Development & Wellbeing

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was one of the standout
aspects of the project**

The Core Workshops were 4 hours and 2.5 hours long for Managers and Staff respectively. They included similar objectives however the messaging, activities and discussions were written with differing perspectives to ensure inclusion of all.

Each module was collaboratively developed with the Acas Learning and Development Team, with schemes of work outlining the aims, objectives and methodologies. Throughout the design phase materials were shared and input from both Cosensa and Acas stakeholders ensured the key messages and requirements were met.

The deep-dive modules were designed to suit all staff, balancing both management and employee perspectives. Pilots were conducted with input from stakeholders, including trade union representatives, and feedback was used to refine the final materials. Each of the deep dive modules were 2.5 to 4 hours in length.

The workshops featured a storyline about a manager and team member navigating the new performance development process. Realistic case studies, digital tools, and interactive activities (like Mentimeter polls, quizzes, and word clouds) were used to embed learning. Videos were produced to explain policy changes and to demonstrate the new digital platform, with live demonstrations using a sandbox.

Materials produced for Acas trainers included a detailed slide deck with notes, handouts, pre- and post-work, activity guides, and instructions for using digital tools. Acas trainers also attended pilot sessions and a "train the trainer" course to ensure they were fully prepared to deliver the programme. Detailed below are the aim and objectives for each delivery:

Performance Development at Acas for Managers – Core Workshop

Aim

By the end of the workshop Acas Managers will be equipped with the skills to have regular, positive, forward focused and effective performance development conversations with their team members. These will focus on wellbeing, performance and development. This will be in line with personal development policy and supported by the personal development digital platform.

Objectives

- Explain the importance of having a fair, transparent, and consistent approach to performance development.
- Set and agree clear development objectives.
- Carry out regular, purposeful conversations with direct reports.
- Balance the focus between wellbeing, performance, and development.
- Provide feedback and assess performance against objectives.
- Use the digital platform to support effective performance development.

Performance Development at Acas for Staff – Core Workshop

Aim

By the end of the workshop, you will be able to describe the new PD policy in Acas. You will know how the new performance development approach will work and its importance in supporting your wellbeing, performance, and development.

Objectives

- Explain the importance of having a fair, transparent, and consistent approach to performance development.
- Set and agree clear objectives and expectations with your manager.
- Discuss why we are encouraging a continuous conversation cycle.
- Summarise how the performance development approach supports your wellbeing, performance, and development.
- Get feedback and assess your performance against objectives.
- Use the digital platform to support your performance development.

Setting & Agreeing Objectives

Aim

By the end of the workshop, you will be able to set and agree appropriate objectives using the SMART methodology. You will know how to evaluate performance against the objectives and how to use the digital platform to record, track and update them.

Objectives

- Describe the different types of objectives and how many of each there should be.
- Create effective objectives using the SMART methodology.
- Demonstrate an effective objective setting conversation.
- Discuss the importance of supporting, monitoring, and reviewing objectives to ensure they are achieved.
- Use the digital platform to record, track progress, and update objectives.

Giving & Receiving Feedback

Aim

By the end of the workshop, delegates will know how to give feedback using the Situation, Behaviour, Impact and Action (SBIA) Feedback Model. They will also consider their response to feedback and the benefits of self-reflection and application of learning.

Objectives

- Explain why feedback is an essential and effective personal development tool.
- Express how people may feel about giving and receiving feedback.
- Describe how to use the Situation, Behaviour, Impact, and Action Model to provide motivational, developmental feedback.
- Apply the SBIA feedback model having practiced using it.
- Use the digital platform to support give, receive and add feedback.

Having Great Conversations

Aim

By the end of the workshop, you will be able to use effective communication skills to have great conversations in a variety of situations.

Objectives

- Use verbal and non-verbal communication skills to have great two-way conversations.
- Structure meaningful conversations.
- Discuss what gets in the way of having purposeful and honest conversations.
- Approach 'under performance conversations' competently.
- Use the digital platform to record and review quarterly conversations, and one to ones and performance assessment.

Supporting Development & Wellbeing

Aim

By the end of the workshop, you will have learned a variety of tools and techniques to support your development and wellbeing.

Objectives

- Discuss the different stages of learning, and the appropriate development needs for each.
- Describe your individual learning styles and how applying these can aid your learning.
- Tailoring your development activities to the specific development area.
- Define what wellbeing is and what support is available.
- Talk about wellbeing and support needs confidently.
- Use the digital platform to record development and wellbeing discussions.

The Outcome

The contract was successfully delivered on time and within budget. Cosensa exceeded expectations, making multiple revisions to the materials even after initial approval. They demonstrated flexibility throughout, accommodating feedback on course duration well into the design phase and adapting case studies and activities based on delegate and trainer input.

Despite Acas having to reschedule some meetings, pilots, and train-the-trainer sessions due to business demands, Cosensa remained accommodating. Their team showed impressive knowledge, adaptability, and dedication to creating materials that truly reflected Acas's performance development structure. These courses will play a key role in supporting Acas's cultural transformation.

Testimony

"We partnered with Cosensa to help redesign and deliver our performance development training, and the experience exceeded all expectations. From the outset, their team demonstrated a deep understanding of our organisational needs and provided invaluable expertise in shaping the content. They worked closely with our learning and development team to ensure every module was tailored to reflect Acas's unique culture and goals.

Cosensa's flexibility was one of the standout aspects of the project. They made numerous revisions to the materials, even after the initial scope was agreed, incorporating feedback from delegates, trainers, and senior management. This ensured the final product was engaging, relevant, and delivered on our objectives. Despite our need to reschedule meetings, pilot sessions, and train-the-trainer workshops, Cosensa's team remained accommodating and adaptable throughout.

Their commitment to quality was evident not only in the expertly crafted case studies and interactive learning tools but also in the way they supported us through the delivery phase. The use of real-world scenarios and digital tools, such as live demos of our new performance platform, made the workshops both practical and impactful.

Thanks to Cosensa's hard work, the materials they developed will be an integral part of our culture change initiative, helping us to modernise performance development across the organisation. We couldn't be more pleased with the results and would highly recommend Cosensa to any organisation looking for a collaborative and innovative training partner."

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