

Podcast Title: Performance Management Annual Review: An Interview with Rebecca Andersen

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Guest: Rebecca Anderson

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Suzanne: Hi, this is Suzanne Budd from Lawrence Berkeley National Lab's Strategic Communications Team. I'm here today to discuss the Performance Management Process with Rebecca Andersen, Program Manager for Talent Strategies. Welcome, Rebecca.

Rebecca: Thanks so much.

Suzanne: Rebecca, tell us about your role at Berkeley Lab.

Rebecca: I manage talent strategies for the Lab, which really means my role is to help us all be successful.

This starts with day one with onboarding and includes throughout the employee lifecycle from Performance Management to programs that support career growth, like the Tuition Assistance Program.

Suzanne: So how does the Performance Management Process work at the Lab?

Rebecca: Well, coming up is one of our anchor events in Performance Management, the Annual Review. But Performance Management is not limited to this one-time review. [00:01:00] It's really an ongoing collaborative process between managers and employees that happens throughout the year. Performance Management is about building relationships where you can work together to set expectations and goals, exchange feedback, and discuss professional development needs and career aspirations.

The new Performance Management cycle is launched by completing the past year's annual review and setting goals for the coming year, which is the process that will be launching this June, starting with self-assessments, before supervisory reviews, and then review discussions.

Suzanne: So I have to say, Performance Management sounds very formal. How would you suggest supervisors and employees think about this annual process?

Rebecca: It really does sound formal and frankly a little intimidating. But if we look at Performance Management through the lens of stewardship, where we recognize the importance of team science and the necessity of establishing trust and respect, where we actively care for each other, [00:02:00] Performance Management just becomes a part of how we succeed together.

So what I mean is consider Performance Management as a way we can work together to improve our collective performance. Caring for each other means helping each other succeed. To do that, we need to get clear on what's happening, and then get really curious about how we can reach our desired outcomes.

Performance Management is not a directive. It's a dialogue where we work together to come to this shared understanding of strengths and opportunities for growth and development. The focus should be on that idea of coming to this shared understanding, again, getting really curious on what's going on, the impacts and how we can support each other to help reach success.

Suzanne: So, what updates or improvements can people expect this year?

Rebecca: So this year, we're working on sharing best practices and new tools to help make Performance Management an everyday practice that helps you level up. Our website has been refreshed with [00:03:00] resources for the Annual Review, such as using AI for self-assessments, as well as tools to help support ongoing Performance Management practices. We're building on the idea that Performance Management is a part of stewardship, and this means shifting our focus from solely output or what we do to also encompassing our behavior or how we work together.

Suzanne: That all sounds amazing. What new feature are you most excited about and why?

Rebecca: I'm excited about many things, but two I'm going to give a shout out to include the guidance around leveraging AI in Performance Management, starting again with AI to complete self-evaluations, and then also the resources around feedback and performance conversations.

I really believe the most powerful practice in Performance Management is asking good questions. That helps make the invisible visible and generates

possibilities for growth. I'm excited to help people become really curious and actively listen to each [00:04:00] other.

Suzanne: You mentioned curiosity or being curious a few times now. What do you mean when you use it in this context?

Rebecca: That's a great question. What I mean by “getting curious” is taking the time and care to engage in the process in a proactive and inquisitive way, rather than passively receiving information and treating Performance Management as a check-the-box exercise. It can be easy to just accept status quo, but getting curious prompts us to explore possibilities and growth.

Reactive Performance Management becomes about pointing out what is wrong or wrong spotting without digging deeper into how we can support improvement. Reactive approaches also lead to feeling defensive. Instead of getting curious about someone else's perspectives. So I encourage the mindset shift, get curious, not furious. Approach with an inquisitive and understanding mindset, seeking to [00:05:00] understand the situation, and then being really solution focused.

Suzanne: I love all of that. What would you say are the long-term plans for Performance Management at the Lab?

Rebecca: There are great Performance Management practices happening here at the Lab already. In the short term, we are centralizing and sharing these best practices. Long-term we'll be working to build on the efforts of the Future of Performance Management working group, and foster a culture change around Performance Management so that it really does become that everyday practice for everyone that supports our collective mission.

Suzanne: Thank you so much for taking the time to walk us through these exciting changes. More information about Performance Management and annual reviews will be available in Elements. You can also go to go.lbl.gov/pmp to find out more for Strategic Communications at Berkeley Lab, I'm Suzanne Budd.