CHAPTER 1

THE FRAGMENTED STATE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

"If we spent more money on new software and some good consultants, we could solve this problem."

How often have we heard these words from corporate managers as they try to explain the poor performance of their organization and its people?

Of course, the notion that the only thing standing between poor performance and breathtaking, record-setting success is inadequate software and a lack of experts to implement it has been with us for quite some time. Certainly, all the enterprise software companies and systems integrators would like you to think that a lack of software is the problem.

After all, with good software, we can set and manage strategic objectives, assign metrics for performance, and cascade objectives and metrics down to every individual in the organization. We can compare sales figures with data from individual competitors, the marketplace, or a selected subset of the marketplace and measure how the organization is performing relative to any number of benchmarks. We can measure individual performance against goals and collect performance appraisal data. We can create a nearly unlimited number of incentive compensation plans linked to a practically unlimited number of data sources and metrics of performance. We can slice and dice financial numbers—for the enterprise, for each business unit, and for each product line—in literally hundreds of ways. We can generate reams of reports placing the daily, monthly, or quarterly performance of the organization and the employees in any number of contexts. We can rank employees by comparing individual performance to others in similar roles across the enterprise.

The truth is, today we *do* have good software and we *can* do all these things. When it comes to the many flavors of performance management, if an enterprise wants to try one, you can be sure that someone somewhere has developed the software for it.

Despite the over promises of software companies and systems integrators, despite implementations that go over budget and drag on for years, and despite an excessive number of well-documented failures, software is truly the all-purpose enabler for the enterprise. And in the field of performance management, there is plenty of good software out there, and much of it can be used to automate performance-related processes—if the approach to addressing a particular issue is rooted first in process redesign and second in process automation using software.

So, as we move forward in understanding how to create a performance-driven organization, there is one important principle you will need to keep in the back of your mind: *Performance management is a* process *problem, and software is not the solution.*

I believe that if we are ever going to fix the systemic performance management problems that exist in so many organizations, we need to stop worrying about what new software could do and start looking at exactly which processes we need to fix—regardless of whether we ever use software to automate the process. We need to look at the underlying concepts of performance management and determine whether perhaps we are deploying all that software firepower in the wrong arena or with the wrong priorities. And we need to begin by asking ourselves what performance management is really all about.

Let's start our analysis with this idea: Performance management is not so much a set of single, *independent* processes; rather, it is a series of *interrelated* processes, the combination of which is critical to the achievement of organizational and individual performance.

I have no problem with the many individual flavors associated with performance management. My problem is with the assumption that performance management consists of no more than one flavor at a time—a flavor that may, in fact, be different from the flavors chosen by individual divisions and departments within that same enterprise. There are many perfectly valid approaches—CPM, BPM, and WPM, as well as a host of other acronyms that are described in this chapter—but not for the kind of performance management that has utility across the entire enterprise.

Each of these approaches addresses only one aspect of performance management. An enterprise that believes it can improve performance management by adopting only one of these approaches—and more commonly, just one aspect of one of these approaches—is likely to be disappointed.

To understand why no single approach will suffice, we need to examine the major objectives and capabilities of each one. As we go through this alphabet soup of performance management methodologies, keep in mind that all of them share a fundamental flaw: They lack the full complement of components and associated activities needed to make effective performance management a reality across the enterprise.

As you read all these descriptions, I would like you to think about something else: If we were to tie all these approaches together in a nice, neat bundle, would that collection, as a whole, embody the kind of unified worldview and comprehensive methodology needed for a real-world solution that is truly capable of creating a performance-driven enterprise?

Developing a unified view of performance management requires first sorting out the patchwork of definitions that go with these acronyms. This is a process that requires a thorough understanding of the underlying concepts of each approach. Without such knowledge, we face a subject that begins to look a lot like an organizational model for entropy.

To discover for myself whether this area is really as fragmented as it seems, I did an Internet search on "performance management." Two and a half million hits later, I was convinced. Of course, that number of hits on any topic would suggest a high level of interest, but perhaps in this case, it is because we are dealing with more than a single topic. A quick look at the results turns up scores of fill-in-the-blank performance management topics. When I then filled in the blank with some of the most common words—such as "business," "corporate," "enterprise," "employee," and "workforce"—and searched for _____ performance management, I got hundreds of thousands of hits for each item.

Digging a bit deeper into my Internet search results turned up dozens of related, popular topics, including balanced scorecard, six sigma, financial reporting, data analysis, business intelligence, performance appraisals, competency management, training, and incentive compensation. Is it any wonder that people are confused about what performance management means? It's a phrase that has been embraced and exploited by so many people that it no longer means anything.

In case you don't notice it on your own, I'll tell you in advance that the definitions of performance management presented in the next section are overlapping, contradictory, and confusing. On top of that, they are constantly evolving, and the various promoters of a term (typically software vendors, systems integrators, or software industry analysts) may use the term differently, spinning the definition to suit their marketing objectives. Furthermore, sometimes the same initials stand for different terms. For example, does the "E" in EPM stand for enterprise or employee? Does the "P" in BPM stand for performance or process? Does the "M" in BPM stand for measurement or management?

The first thing to understand about the many approaches to performance management that are currently in use is that they fall into two very separate and distinct categories:

1. Terms that refer to the performance of the *organization*
2. Terms that refer to the performance of the *individuals* who make up the organization

APPROACHES THAT FOCUS ON THE ORGANIZATION

Organizational performance management is primarily the world of the chief executive officer (CEO), chief financial officer (CFO), and other senior executives and managers. This part of performance management is about setting strategic objectives for the various entities that make up an organization (business units, departments, and product lines), budgeting, measuring the entities against objectives and budgets, reporting results, and using information to determine how well the different parts of the organization are performing.

The most common approaches to the performance of an organization are:

- Corporate performance management (CPM)
- Business performance management (BPM)
- Enterprise performance management (EPM)
- Strategic enterprise management (SEM)
- Strategic performance management (SPM)

Corporate Performance Management

The analyst firm Gartner Research is a primary advocate of the term "corporate performance management." It describes CPM as "one of the hottest trends in business intelligence" and states that "under the CPM umbrella are the processes, methodologies, metrics and technologies for enterprises to measure, monitor, and manage business performance."[1] According to Gartner, CPM introduces a holistic integration of these elements through an enterprise-wide strategy that seeks to align departmental initiatives to prevent managers from optimizing local business at the expense of overall corporate performance.

Oracle, a Gartner client and a well-known supplier of database software, has also adopted the term. Oracle's definition of CPM focuses on using business intelligence in a closed-loop system to optimize day-to-day operations by monitoring and analyzing transactional data and then using business rules and analytics to generate user alerts, recommendations, and automated actions. It makes a lot of sense for Oracle to promote CPM as a corporate savior. After all, it has tapped the market for database software that manages transactional data, so the next logical step is to develop—or acquire—applications that use these data.

Cognos, another Gartner client whose worldview stems from its origins as a business intelligence software company, has also embraced the term. It touts the following benefits of CPM:

- *Predictability:* Drives sustainable and consistent performance outcomes
- *Visibility*: Establishes a clear sightline into what is affecting performance
- *Accountability:* Equips people with strategy-wired information that lets them effectively take charge of specific performance outcomes
- *Agility:* Responds on the fly to changing market opportunities
- *Confidence:* Manages and makes decisions from a common set of numbers and assumptions
- *Alignment:* Ensures that all parts of the business are on strategy and pulling in the same direction[2]

Like Oracle, Cognos needed to expand its product footprint beyond its origins, so it expanded business intelligence both up-process to include planning and down-process to include reporting. Similar in concept to Oracle (although a bit different in practice), Cognos promotes CPM as a closed-loop, coordinated approach to managing organization performance by planning, monitoring, and reporting.

With its roots in business intelligence, CPM is really a slightly expanded and repackaged business intelligence with a fancier moniker, not unlike the repackaging that occurred when "management information systems" morphed into "business intelligence."

Business Performance Management

The META Group, one of Gartner's archrivals until Gartner acquired it in 2004, is a primary proponent of the term "business performance management." It defines BPM as a set of principles that make up a closed-loop management process that includes:

- Setting a goal for a business process (e.g., quarterly sales, customer satisfaction)
- Creating a plan or budget to reach that goal (e.g., number of sales calls, number of customer service representatives)
- Monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) assiduously to compare actual data against a forecasted estimate
- Ascertaining why a KPI has varied outside its acceptable range
- Adjusting the plan or budget to ensure the KPI is on target to reach its goal[3]

Hyperion, a primary rival of Cognos, has chosen to differentiate itself by getting on the BPM (versus CPM) bandwagon. Like Cognos, Hyperion has layered a set of applications on top of its business intelligence platform to do modeling, planning, budgeting, forecasting, reporting, and scorecarding, thus completing the closed-loop management process described in the definitions of both CPM and BPM.

Like CPM, BPM principles are used by most organizations in the financial management process, which includes planning (during which KPIs are established for various initiatives), budgeting (which includes establishing revenue and cost goals associated with each initiative), and reporting of planned versus actual performance.

Enterprise Performance Management

Yet another analyst firm, AMR Research, encourages the use of the term "enterprise performance management," which it describes as an emerging superset of applications and processes that cross traditional departmental boundaries to manage the full life cycle of business decision making. According to AMR Research, EPM does the following:

- Combines strategic goal setting and alignment with planning, forecasting, and modeling
- Uses analytics and tactical reporting to drive smarter operational plans in light of inevitable and ever-present trade-offs
- Actively notifies business users, in context, of performance anomalies, allowing for corrective action to be taken[4]

Enterprise performance management is an iterative, continuous process that aligns corporate goals with departmental initiatives and gives companies the ability to respond to changes or opportunities as they occur by adjusting business strategies, tactics, and activities.

Not surprisingly, another one of the large enterprise software companies—Lawson, which competes with Oracle's CPM offering—has adopted the EPM term and become a big promoter of the approach. (PeopleSoft also was well known for promoting the term until it was acquired by Oracle in 2005.)

Business Objects, a competitor of CPM-oriented Cognos and BPM-oriented Hyperion, uses the EPM moniker. Business Objects describes EPM as:

- Aligning actions with strategy for continuous performance improvement
- Monitoring what matters so you can focus on meeting strategic objectives
- Acting with confidence, knowing you are equipped to make the right decisions[5]

Global consulting giant Accenture, which partners with Oracle, Hyperion, and Cognos to deliver EPM solutions, seems to have shifted its focus from the use of BPM to EPM—with its older white papers using the term "BPM" and its newer web pages using "EPM."

Strategic Enterprise Management

None of the major software industry analyst firms or systems integrators has adopted the term "strategic enterprise management," although SAP, the largest enterprise software company in the world and a competitor of Oracle and Lawson, has made SEM a centerpiece of its strategy to differentiate itself from its competitors. The company promotes SEM as managing the following processes:

- Business planning and simulation to integrate and align strategic, operational, and financial plans
- Business consolidation to support financial reporting standards
- Strategy and performance management to support the balanced scorecard, value-based management, and risk management initiatives
- Stakeholder relationship management for communicating enterprise strategy, current plan data, and strategic initiatives[6]

Strategic Performance Management

Yet another billion-dollar software company, SAS, touts the benefits of "strategic performance management," which it describes as including:

- A map to define corporate direction—one that molds technology to accommodate strategy to get different views of key internal processes with documented strategic objectives, measures, targets, and initiatives
- A compass to measure and manage progress toward strategic goals—one that combines structured information (data) with unstructured information (text) to give a complete cause-and-effect picture of relationships among internal processes
- A knowledge base for exploring new opportunities—one that simplifies, organizes, and audits every byte of information that flows through your enterprise.[7]

Among systems integrators, BearingPoint has picked up on the SPM acronym, offering services to assist companies in "setting clearer, more meaningful performance goals, and monitoring them accurately, in such a way that the company's planning and decision making improve."[8]

Organizational Performance Management: A Summary

If you look closely at all the words that describe CPM, BPM, EPM, SEM, and SPM, you will see that they are all essentially describing the same thing, with small variations depending on the worldview of the software companies, analyst firms, and systems integrators promoting each particular term. All the terms, however, share some common processes. The basic idea is that in order to effectively manage the performance of the organization, an enterprise must:

- *Align* the strategic objectives, plans, and budgets of the various groups or departments that make up the organization
- *Measure* historical performance, with an orientation toward financial measures of organizational performance
- *Report* organizational performance, especially gaps between expected and actual performance
- *Analyze* what must change to optimize strategy and maintain organization alignment

The closed-loop process of aligning, measuring, reporting, and analyzing is the essence of organizational performance management.

APPROACHES THAT FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS IN THE ORGANIZATION

Whereas CPM, BPM, EPM, SEM, and SPM generally have their roots in business intelligence and focus on the performance of the various entities that make up an organization, there is another whole world that is even more fragmented and focuses on the performance of the individuals—employees, brokers, contract workers, agents, and others—working for or on behalf of the organization.

Individual performance management is primarily the world of human resources and sales management. This part of performance management is about cascading the strategic objectives of the organization down to goals for every individual, making sure that each person understands what he or she needs to do to achieve those goals, using pay for performance to keep people on track to achieve their goals and the organization's objectives, providing frequent feedback to individuals about their performance, and analyzing data about the workforce to make human resource decisions.

Although the approaches to organizational performance management are dominated by several large vendors, the approaches to individual performance management are highly fragmented, with pieces promoted by hundreds of different vendors.

Despite the high degree of fragmentation and specialization among vendors, there are a few common approaches to managing the performance of the individuals who make up the organization. These approaches, which tie together various components of individual performance, include:

- Employee performance management (EPM)
- Enterprise employee performance management (EEPM)
- Employee relationship management (ERM)
- Workforce performance management (WPM)
- Human capital management (HCM)

The following sections briefly describe each approach, along with what analysts and vendors are saying about it. The vendor claims, in particular, may not resolve the questions that some of us have about where one approach ends and another begins, but they certainly provide some insight into how analysts and vendors view this side of the performance management market and its likely future direction.

Employee Performance Management

The term "employee performance management" is widely used; however, it means many different things to different people. Gartner describes EPM very broadly as including all the following processes:

- Goal and objective management setting for an individual employee
- Cascading of top-level objectives down through the organization
- Alignment between top level corporate goals and individual goals
- Pay for performance
- Competency evaluations
- Rating scales for competency and weighing importance of competencies
- Appraisal of employee performance
- Assessment for development
- Manager support
- Mentoring
- Development planning
- Succession planning (for key positions)
- Compensation planning
- Position management
- Workflow
- Reporting and analysis[9]

AMR Research says that EPM is a combination of processes that provides the foundation for focusing employee behavior and effort on activities that are most important for the business. At its highest level, employee performance management is a routine, day-to-day activity performed by anyone in the company who supervises other workers.[10]

In practice, EPM combines objectives, real-time visibility of progress against those objectives for each employee, ongoing feedback and coaching, and formal reviews and ratings.

To illustrate just how specialized and fragmented the EPM market is, I have assembled a few descriptions of what various software vendors are promoting—all of which are labeled EPM.

One EPM vendor that specializes in the link between competencies and compensation advertises software to be used for "enhancing the motivation and performance of employees" by providing a method to "address target setting," "assess the competency balance both of teams and single employees," and "support the compensation process."[11]

Another EPM vendor that focuses on performance appraisals describes its offering as addressing the "link between higher employee retention and productivity rates and effective employee performance management." This vendor offers to "help you provide the feedback and performance evaluations your employees need to succeed at their jobs, all in an efficient and timely manner."[12]

And yet another EPM vendor broadly claims that it has a solution that "enables the automation and streamlining of all aspects of performance management in order to ease the burden placed on HR and managers."[13]

Although the analyst firms have done a decent job of defining—in a theoretical way—a complete set of processes required to effectively manage individual performance, the vendors themselves are far from delivering on the analysts' visionary ideas of what EPM is. Furthermore, because the number of EPM vendors is so great and the approaches to EPM so fragmented, it simply is not possible for anyone to truly understand how the different EPM processes relate to one another.

Enterprise Employee Performance Management

Giga Information Group, another analyst firm, recognizes the confusion about the "E" in EPM (which could mean enterprise or employee) and attempts to clarify the matter by creating a new term: "enterprise employee performance management."[14]

An analysis of EEPM vendors reveals that this approach is narrowly focused on a subset of the more complete, albeit theoretical, definition of EPM. The focus of EEPM is the employee performance review process, which includes goal setting, employee evaluations, and personal development planning.

According to Giga, EEPM enables organizations to build the competencies of employees that are critical to business success, streamline the overall development planning process, develop employees more quickly to meet new strategic objectives, write development plans when the need arises, and provide employees easy access to robust development resources.

Employee Relationship Management

Siebel Systems, which built a dominant position in the customer relationship management space, entered into the performance management space through its "employee relationship management" offering. Siebel (also acquired by Oracle in 2005) describes ERM as consisting of the following processes:

- Aligning organizational activity with key business drivers
- Managing employee performance to track its impact on key metrics
- Communicating continually to reinforce the corporate agenda
- Building workforce competencies to support key initiatives
- Providing employee services to maximize productivity[15]

Trying to analyze the various ERM offerings to get a better sense of exactly what is and is not part of the definition is an extraordinarily difficult task dominated by lots of marketing hype and not a lot of substance.

For example, Siebel and Accenture, in a joint white paper, say that ERM "helps organizations architect the solutions that will enhance workforce performance and organizational flexibility, increase revenues, reduce operating expenses and drive sustainable value throughout the enterprise."[16] What is *that* supposed to mean?

CapGemini, a large systems integrator, claims that ERM "help[s] clients build an organizational architecture while developing workforce effectiveness."[17]And IBM says that its ERM solutions "can help you build a better workplace—and help increase customer satisfaction at the same time."[18]

As you can see, trying to define ERM doesn't get us much further in our efforts to understand individual performance management.

Workforce Performance Management

Ventana Research, an analyst firm focused exclusively on performance management issues, prefers the term "workforce performance management," which it defines comprehensively as a link between corporate strategy and employee execution and between compensation and performance, with integrated individual feedback and direction. Among the components that Ventana views as part of WPM are enterprise-wide learning management and incentive compensation management. Ventana refers to WPM in terms of understanding, optimizing, and aligning every employee with corporate initiatives and goals by setting individual objectives.

Ventana's approach to WPM has some support from IDC, a rival analyst firm, which finds that "there is some pull from the marketplace calling for WPM to play a bigger role in the way workforces are managed and developed to drive business results."[19]

Because it comprises the interrelationships and linkages among the various processes associated with individual performance management, the definition of WPM is, in my view, better thought out than that of EPM. As with EPM, however, the ability of the vendors to deliver on the complete vision does not exist.

Human Capital Management

Forrester Research, yet another of the top 10 analyst firms, talks about "human capital management" in terms of aligning corporate goals with individual goals, providing employees with personal development plans, implementing competency models, and linking employee performance to rewards. Like Ventana, Forrester sees HCM as critical to maximizing the performance of the workforce.

As with the other definitions of individual performance management, the HCM space is made up of many vendors, each with a unique view of how it fits into HCM and how its solutions can benefit companies.

PeopleSoft (now Oracle), the largest of the organizations touting HCM, describes the approach as an enabler for organizations "to put the right people in the right jobs, develop and reward top performers, retain key talent for the long term, and increase efficiency and operating performance throughout your organization."[20]

Another HCM vendor claims that its software "helps companies enhance the management of human resources through streamlined processes, more efficient information access, and better insight into and analysis of critical HR issues and trends."[21] Another describes its HCM offering as "aligning employees, processes, and strategies for business success."[22] And yet another claims to give you "organizational insights that enable you to plan effective human capital strategies, and measure and compare your company's best practices."[23]

Individual Performance Management: A Summary

So, has our short tour through individual performance management approaches cleared everything up? If our goal was to discover a unique identity for each of these acronyms, I would have to say we failed miserably. But I believe the experiment succeeded nonetheless because we did clear up something about the nature of this field overall.

Specifically, we learned that the approaches to individual performance management are highly fragmented and specialized. We also learned that EPM, EEPM, ERM, WPM, and HCM are essentially the same thing—with relatively minor variations or a few missing pieces. Once again, the various parties interested in promoting differentiation are all using different words—and letters—to describe the same approach to individual performance management.

After synthesizing all the different ways of describing similar processes, we find that the terms used to define the various approaches to managing individual performance share common processes. The core concept is that for an organization to manage the performance of individuals, it must:

- *Align* individual goals with the strategic objectives of the organization
- *Measure* individual performance
- *Reward* individuals for achieving goals
- *Report* individual performance
- *Analyze* what must change to optimize strategy and maintain alignment of individual goals with the organizational objectives

This closed-loop process is similar to organizational performance management except for the addition of the reward process and, of course, the focus on people rather than organizational entities.

FAILURE TO INTEGRATE THE APPROACHES

As you can see, the two approaches to performance management—one focused on the organization and the other focused on the individuals who make up the organization—have very little overlap. The two approaches are parts of a hypothetically more complete model of performance management.

"So what's the problem?" you might ask. "We'll just combine the two approaches into a single approach that merges the concepts, and we'll buy software to automate all the processes."

Not so fast.

The truth is, even if you became technologically cutting-edge and managerially sound across the entire spectrum of performance management acronyms, you still wouldn't be managing performance effectively, let alone *driving* performance.

By way of analogy, think about automobile maintenance. You can inflate the tires with air, change the oil, repair the brake linings, and do a hundred other things to make your car run better. But if you forget to perform even one important repair (such as replacing a dead battery), the process of starting the car will fail, no matter how many other repairs you've made.

In today's business world, companies are failing to make needed process repairs. Surely it's not for lack of effort. Many companies have adopted CPM, EPM, or one or more of the other approaches just described. Even many entry-level employees are familiar with terms such as "balanced scorecard" and "business intelligence." But where are the results? And where companies can point to improvements in a particular area, is this the magnitude of improvement they sought to achieve? Is it an improvement that will have a strategic companywide impact? Or is it an isolated success, bearing little or no relationship to the company's strategic objectives?

I suggest that in almost every case, we are talking about the latter.

The reason this is so is the failure of executives to see the *interrelationships* among processes—those critical linkages that are required to make the entire business system work efficiently—and the unwillingness of managers working in departmental silos to approach performance management from a cross-departmental, enterprise-wide perspective. In the next two chapters, I will describe how these things undermine real performance management and then suggest a strategy for overcoming them through a far more comprehensive, *unified* approach to performance management.

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