

***AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF FEEDBACK WITH THE USE OF
TECHNOLOGY TO DEVELOP AND SUSTAIN HIGH PERFORMANCE***

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Abstract

The competitive pressures in today's business environment have had a massive impact on the way organisations conduct its operations. Employees have now become a key asset to many organisations and as such should be treated as so. This study aims to take an insight into the feedback process, use of technology to develop performance, the impact of the overall culture affecting performance and suggest some recommendations for organisations to enhance performance.

The approach undertaken to carry out this study contained interviews with a number of professionals in their respective fields. The aim of the interviews was to seek out their opinions on the relevant topics associated with the study such as feedback, technology, 360 degree feedback and the Balance Scorecard (*hereinafter* BSC). A sample group from Medtronic was enlisted to complete a questionnaire in relation to the study.

The following study takes the reader through the various areas of interest within the research. These being, impact of feedback on performance, effect of performance management, 360 degree process in providing feedback and advantages and disadvantages associated with it. An investigation into recent trends of professional coaches used to enhance performance and also that of E – Learning. The dissertation gives an in – depth analysis of the findings gathered through the primary research.

The research concludes by offering some recommendations on the various issues and topics mentioned in the study.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Robert Allen a financial writer once suggested that there is no such thing as failure, only feedback. This statement is as relevant today as it was then. Numerous organisations have now begun to realise that in order to be competitive in today's environment, they need employees to be constantly developing and sustaining a high performance to be competitive in the market place.

Taking Robert Allen's statement into consideration, individuals require some form of feedback and further development in order to improve performance for the organisation. Traditionally financial measures were implemented to measure performance; however this method has become outdated due to organizations now trying to enhance the skills and competencies that are key to gaining competitive advantage.

Some aspects of the research today focuses on the benefits of having informed individuals and creating an efficient workforce with high productivity. The trend has become a more for less focus. To date research has focused on different aspects of culture and motivation and how such issues impact on feedback and performance.

1.1.1 Hypothesis

The empirical study that was undertaken for this dissertation is "that there is a relationship between feedback and technology (E – Learning) in developing and sustaining high performance". The hypothesis allows the author the scope to examine the feedback process and the usage of technology to enhance performance as a whole.

1.2 Background

The research question was formed during the authors work experience with a new and emerging company. The organisation's product incorporated a system whereby the user was monitored on his / her sporting performance and then the information gathered and downloaded on to their personal laptop. It then provided feedback on performance while also allowing a certain element of coaching to highlight what was required to further enhance the overall performance. It was from this work experience that the issue of feedback, technology and performance formed the core of the focus of the research.

1.2.1 Focus of the research

Organizations struggle to create an environment that encourages and supports managers to provide regular feedback to employees. Even in the late 1700's Robert Owen, a manager within a factory in Scotland placed painted blocks of wood beside each employee's workstation to highlight the previous day's outputs. It was hoped that such an act would encourage workers to improve their performance.

Things have moved on significantly from that and more and more organisations are spending vast amounts of money developing and training employees. In the process of individual development, feedback is critical in order for the individual involved to know exactly if their performance is poor or good. The question remains how have such methods of feedback evolved over time in order to enhance performance while looking at other factors which also affect the feedback process and performance.

1.3 Primary Objective

The purpose of this study is

- To investigate the use of feedback to enhance performance whilst also
- Examine the use of technology and other mechanisms to develop and sustain a high level of performance.
- Examination of the feedback process provided by mentors / management in business environments to develop and enhance and other factors involved in a high performance organisation.
- Ultimately the goal of this research is to ascertain the level of benefits associated with providing feedback and development for employees.

1.3.1 Secondary Objectives

1. An assessment of the organizations and individuals potential to change (specifically culture) and willingness to implement relevant and appropriate systems in order to reap the benefits of using techniques to enhance performance.
2. Identifying methods such as technology (specifically E –Learning) and its effects which can be used to assist in providing feedback and its potential in the future to develop, sustain and eventually enhance performance

3. Highlight certain frameworks (Sports and Business Background) which will allow others the capacity to review and examine and use in order to create a performance culture, detailed data and information system, allow for direct feedback on performance and create individual responsibility to create a win – win situation for all parties involved in order to succeed.
4. In identifying such techniques and its effects on performance it is anticipated that the research and perceived advantages in providing feedback along with other studies will be used by the relevant authorities.
5. To highlight the parallels and transference of techniques used between sport and business in relation to performance and feedback, whilst also other areas of interest such as communication skills required, and allowing others to buy – in to individual performance to create a collective high performance mantra.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The research is broken into the following areas. Chapter 2 will provide a detailed description of the literature review. This section will outline the relevant topics and issues and theories associated with the research. This chapter also highlights the current literature on the research. Chapter 3 consists of the research methodology. This chapter involved the methods carried out to complete the research, time lines and reasons for selecting the different approaches in order to complete the primary research. Chapter 4 illustrated the findings from the questionnaires and interviews. This was done both in diagrammatic and theoretically. In the final chapter is a discussion of the findings. These results are then compared and contrasted with the current literature which allowed the author to form some opinions on the research question. The appendix has a list of table and figures which were used to illustrate findings in the research along with a reference list.

Chapter 2
The Literature Review

CHAPTER 2 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Prior to the concept of feedback and its effects Baker et al (1996) suggested that “knowledge of results was the term most commonly used in the first half of the century when referring to a subjects awareness of the outcome of his or her behaviour. Over the years a number of theories and research have maintained that feedback can indeed motivate and allow employees to do their jobs better. Theorists such as Latham and Locke (1979) Goal Setting Theory along with the most influential of that time was Thorndike’s (1927) Law of Effect were the first to investigate performance and feedback.

Thorndike’s view was that behavior which leads to a pleasing conclusion will be repeated while behavior the results in unpleasant outcomes will not. In short if one was to receive positive feedback they would repeat the action, while if they were to receive negative feedback they would not repeat action and try other avenues. From this theory, performance does in some way affect the rate and level of learning and could serve as informational or rewarding function. Ammons (cited in Baker et al 1996, pg 23) stated that “the most common effect of knowledge of performance is to increase motivation”. According to Springer (2008, pg 409) suggested that “multiple mechanisms have been advanced to account for how feedback can undermine or complicate motivation, and motivation admits of many models”. Shannon’s Information Theory (1948) suggested that goals are likely within any system, receiving, storing and using information and monitoring the environment. From early research it was proposed that motivation or goal setting was an essential element in

the relationship between knowledge of results and performance thus acknowledging that goals or purpose was instrumental in the feedback process. Behavior than was as a result of both internal and external processes. This issue will be discussed later in greater detail and its effects on performance.

Numerous articles compared the behaviour of living organisms to self regulating machinery. It was in one such article that the concept or term feedback which had long been used by engineers was used to describe human behaviour. Rosenblueth et al (1943) wrote,

“all purposeful behaviour may be considered to require negative feedback. If a goal is to be attained, some signals from the goal are necessary at some time to direct the behaviour.... The behaviour of some machines and some reactions of living organisms involve a continuous feed – back from the goal that modifies and guides the behaving object”.

One of the most influential articles written on feedback was created by Ilgen (1979) where he suggested that he was able to consolidate many of the ideas on feedback into one broad framework. Ilgen et al. (cited in Baker et al, 1996, pg 27) defined feedback as “a special case of the general communications process in which some sender conveys a message to a recipient. In the case of feedback, the message comprises information about the recipient. The recipient’s perception of the feedback and response to it depends upon his or her personal characteristics, the nature of the message, and characteristics of the source of feedback”. Annett (1969) (cited in Alder, 2007, pg 157) described feedback simple as “information received by an individual about his or her past behaviour”.

Madzar (1995, pg 246) has suggested that “up until about ten years ago, feedback was seen as exclusively a tool for managers to use to influence the behavior of subordinates”. More recently, the view that some employees go out of their way to seek information on their performance has become widely accepted. Morrison (cited in Tourish et al 2004, pg 190) suggested however “there are a range of considerations that influence the extent to which we actively look for feedback”. Feedback in this respect can also be negative or positive resulting in people within organisations fearful about seeking feedback on their performance. Summarised below are some feedback considerations;

Reasons for feedback seeking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving goal or seen as competent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct errors in performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve overall performance
Factors that influence the decision to seek feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility and competence of the feedback source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of the source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of achieving goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop oneself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of self – esteem

- Performance expectations

- Strategy – more likely to seek feedback if performance is good and this shows us in a good light

Potential costs of negative feedback

- Dent ones ego

- Negative public image within organisation

- Decline in attitude and motivation to complete task

Most people are less willing to accept negative feedback which is less accepted and is perceived as less accurate than positive feedback. This must be taken into account intentionally or otherwise it appears that people are especially sensitive to negative input – what has been termed the automatic vigilance effect (Pratto & John, cited in Toursih et al, 2004, pg 196). According to Quaglieri (1980, pg 13) suggested that “feedback refers to the process whereby information about the effectiveness of an individual's actions or responses to a task is reported to that individual”. With this in mind feedback can affect numerous organizationally outcomes. Not alone will it affect the organizational bottom line but also its most valuable asset, its employees. Fried & Ferris (1987) (cited in Alder, 2007, pg 157) suggested that “research indicates that feedback impacts on employees job motivation, satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover”. However in today’s competitive environment it is critical that management within organizations recognize those employees are an organization most valuable asset and should be treated as such. By providing the flexibility and input required by employees to reach optimal performance can only enhance the overall performance of

an organization. Baron and Kreps (1999, p. 189) describe “high performance/commitment practices as “an ensemble of human resource practices that aim at getting more from workers by giving more to them.” The more channels of precise and helpful feedback that management and employees have the more likely that that they obtain higher performance. Russell (1994, pg 44) believes that “feedback has its place in both on – and off – the – job training situations....the type of feedback will depend upon the type of learning, knowledge, skills, judgment and attitudes”. It is vital that regardless of time or place that feedback is focused on the skills being developed.

2.2 Performance Management

Performance management has long been seen a critical element in implementing strategies for organizations. Such strategies had been transformed into financial targets; however this has been subject to numerous criticisms due to its excessive focus on financial profits or losses. Nilsson (2002, pg 235) states that “from its traditional form, with a focus on monetary measures such as ROI and RI, performance management has thus broadened its scope and gradually become more strategically oriented”. This is further highlighted with Bacal, (1999, pg 3) definition when suggesting that “performance management is an ongoing communication process, undertaken in partnership between an employee and his or her immediate supervisor that involves establishing clear expectations and understanding about:

- The essential job functions the employee is expected to do
- How the employees job contributes to the goals of the organisation

- How employee and supervisor will work together to sustain, improve, or build on existing employee performance”.

An examination of performance management would be substantial, so for the purpose of this study purpose a review of its influences on feedback is critical in understanding its effect on overall performance. As stated earlier feedback in engineering, allowed feedback transmitted information on performance from one part of a system to an earlier part of the system in order to generate corrective action. Thus it has been suggested by Armstrong (1994, pg 127) “performance management has some of the characteristics of a system in that it provides for information to be presented (feedback) to people on their performance, which helps them to understand how well they have been doing and how effective their behaviour has been”. Within most organizations whilst trying to enhance their performance management practice there will be efforts to develop the coaching capability of managers, often whose sole effort is to ensure greater return from people resources. Harrison (2005, pg 110 – 111) strengthens such a statement by suggesting that there has been “a shift from a directive to a supportive approach to the management of performance in best practice organizations with a learning – focused rather than a training – focused approach to development and frequent use of coaching, counseling and guidance”.

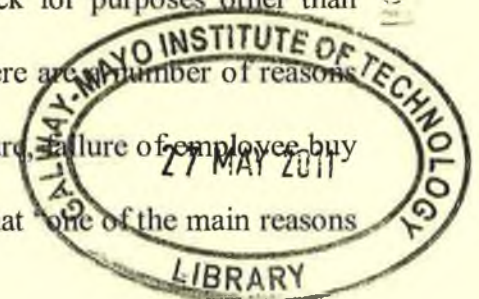
Feedback in performance management is seen as positive with its main aim is to highlight improvement and development, not simple to tell people where they have gone wrong (negative feedback). Failings should not be used in the blame game but instead should be treated as opportunities for learning in order to improve for the future. Houldsworth et al (2006, pg 162) suggested that “there are two main types of feedback that are appropriate in performance management: positive feedback (praise), which tells the person what he or she did well; and constructive feedback (advice),

which tells the person what needs to be changed and how to do it". One of the main themes within performance management is to get individuals to take responsibility for their own development. Thus what employees seek out for themselves, with some guidance if necessary, will have a much greater impact to that individual and to the organization as a whole.

2.3 360 Degree feedback

Some have suggested that the term could be described as "old wine in new bottles". There has been a number of different terms to describe 360 degree feedback down through the years including multi – rater feedback, co-worker feedback, multi-perspective ratings and full-circle to name but a few. Bacal (1999, pg 151) suggests that "360 degrees, as in a circle, the idea being that information and feedback are collected from all sources – from the manager, the customers, co – workers, and suppliers – rather than only from a single source, the manger". Such a system believes that by boosting the number of rater sources will in turn increase the amount of relevant information available to rates.

Although full – circle systems can increase the information, it is difficult to judge whether or not that the information provided is used, let alone accepted. Greguras et al (2003, pg 346) has suggested that "multisource rating systems primarily have been used for managerial development, however, increasingly these systems are being used for non - managerial employees and for a variety of different purposes (e.g. salary administration, promotion decisions)". However Rogers et al (cited in Carson, 2006, pg 397) stated that "organizations that used 360-feedback for purposes other than personal or organizational development often failed". There are a number of reasons why 360 degree feedback systems fail, poor learning culture, failure of employee buy – in to name but a few. Wimer et al (1998, pg 70) noted that "one of the main reasons



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for the unsuccessful implementation of a 360-degree feedback process is the lack of a clear purpose". Yet it is not all negativity associated with this type of feedback. By creating a culture of feedback and learning, can have a positive effect on individual performance. Regardless of the results negative or positive some form of action will be as a result of the findings. Some may try to improve performance if seen in a poor light by work colleges and vice versa if positive results arise may result in ever greater productivity. Such motivational factors and culture will be discussed later and the overall impact it has performance. Maylett et al (2007, pg 50) states that "360-degree feedback results have a direct relation with employee engagement results...numerous studies suggest that engaged employees provide better customer service, record lower rates of attrition and absenteeism, and demonstrate improved quality and increased productivity....these factors, in turn, relate to overall performance".

2.3.1 From Sport to Business:

The 1970's witnessed the introduction of sports coaching techniques in management literature. The founder of this theme was also the first to recognise the benefits of sports coaching and its transference to the business world. This can be traced back to the sports author and founder Tim Gallwey. Whitmore (2002, pg 10) suggested that "Gallwey's earlier books did not attempt to teach coaching, but rather identified issues so often faced in sport and business and gave clues as to how to overcome them ourselves". Even before Gallwey's books, there was no reference about the practice of coaching other than its playing of its name. A quote from Socrates seems to have been a prime exponent:

"I cannot teach anybody anything – I can only make them think". (Socrates cited in Wilson 2007, pg 7)

In recent times coaching in organizations has been overshadowed by the perception that it is labor intensive, expensive and difficult to assess. Most workforces or individuals can be against change or even afraid and a culture of "this is how we do things around here". This may be overpowering and has the potential to lead to issues and ultimately loss of profits. Culture and its effects on coaching and feedback will be discussed later in more detail. According to Rolfe (2010, pg 292) "the majority of any workforce resists change fearing a disruption of a comfortable status quo, or unknown learning curve that may just prove too steep to navigate with grace". In today's competitive environment change is a regular occurrence and as Deming once suggested "we do not have to change because staying in business is not compulsory" underlines the fact that in order to succeed or even survive organisations must be able to facilitate change.

In a presentation held by CIMA in 2008 "Developing and Sustaining High Performance – combining insights from the leading edge of sport and business" analysed performance. Study linked feedback to drive superior performance, whilst also examining the importance of developing an organisational culture that breeds superior performance. One of the key aspects of this talk was focusing on developing organisational capacity and capabilities to win. As seen in the framework below (Figure 1):

Figure 1 Framework for developing Organizational Capacity and Capabilities to Win.



2.3.2 Coaching for performance:

Coaching used to be synonymous within the sports environment; however this concept of coaching has become steadfast in the business world today. Coaching is seen as having clear and unique advantages, and is establishing itself alongside related activities, such as mentoring and counseling, as a key development technique (Phillips, 1994, pg 19). According to Eggers et al (2000, pg 67) “in the context of management, coaching appears to have been first used by Myles Mace in 1958, in *Developing Executive Skills* (Eds. H.F. Merrill and E. Marting, American management Association) , in the chapter entitled “On – the – Job Coaching. It is at this stage that coaching became linked with job – skills development and at this time had no affiliation with counseling or mentoring as it does today.

Armstrong (1994 , pg 131) suggested that “every time a manager delegates a new task to someone, a coaching opportunity is created to help individual learn any new skills or techniques which are needed to get the job done”. Such coaching allows learners to obtain instant feedback about their performance, which reinforces successes and helps them to correct any mistakes swiftly. This helps develop the whole learning and performance-improvement process. Coaching in simplistic terms can then be regarded as unlocking an individual’s potential to optimize their performance. It is constantly helping them to learn rather than just teaching them. Some have suggested that coaching and counseling are intertwined in improving performance. Counseling is seen as helping people to help themselves. Coaching is similar but is not the same. Salisbury et al (2001, pg 8) suggested that “counseling is focused on helping the individual to overcome problems encountered, while coaching is geared towards developing the performer to realize future opportunities”. Cleary (1995, cited in Geroy et al 1998, pg 59) stated that “coaching as an informal, planned, ongoing process for interacting with employees.

Coaching therefore is a two way street, both between the receiver and the coach in order to change. Ulrich (2008, pg 105) reinforces this thought by stating “Coaches will not make change happen or stick; they will simply help set conditions and circumstances that help others change”. Coaching to enhance performance does what it says – a means of reaching optimal performance, however with this thought, changes are required in attitude, behavior and the overall structure within the organization for it to be successful. By establishing feedback links between both parties can allow for employee performance or development process as part of significant change. In today’s competitive world performance has many different

meanings to various people. However Somers (2007, pg 17) believes that performance amounts to being about one of the five things:

- Increasing revenue
- Providing excellent service
- Reducing cost
- Increasing or maintaining quality
- Reducing time

Individuals and coaches need to have an understanding than on what performance actually means in their role and how they would know if there has been improvement or not. No matter how big or small the overall potential an individual has there will be always be a gap between the potential and performance. By closing such a gap the more potential is concerted into higher performance.

2.4 Closing the performance gap:

As stated earlier there is always a gap between potential and performance and this is further highlighted by Houldsworth et al (2006, pg 163) by stating that “of the numerous models and frameworks for coaching now in existence, a common feature is the recognition of some sort of ‘gap’ in terms of desired performance. Although the coach is there to close the gap between current and desired performance it also offers the ideal opportunities for exploring new solutions whilst offering continuous support and feedback.

King et al (1999, pg 147) suggested that “A good coach can also be instrumental in spreading a “coaching culture” throughout the organisation. That is, having coached the individual manager to hone their skills in a more effective way, that same manager can be coached in how to coach others. According to Ketter (2010, pg 10) states “that development—discovering and analyzing performance gaps, planning for future improvements in human performance, and designing and developing cost-effective solutions to close performance gaps—lies with middle management”. With this in mind it is imperative that management have two main questions in mind. Where are we? And where do we want to be? The simpler the goal, the more likely individuals are to understand, contribute and become more focused on achieving such a goal. However what happens if the goal desired is more difficult to reach or poorly understood by employees?

Management will need a system in order to motivate, provide better information, greater clarity, and less interference in order to improve genuine performance. Armstrong (1994, pg 132) furthers strengthens this thought by stating that “coaching should provide motivation, structure and effective feedback if managers have the required skills and commitment”, however he does also suggest that “they do need to be trained in coaching skills if they are to carry out their important role effectively. In simplistic terms, the manager in any organization can be seen as a coach. Singer (1974, pg 11) suggests that “good coaching recognizes that the coach himself will learn; that the subordinate has something to contribute to his boss’s thinking; the process takes place between equals, although hopefully one participant has wider and greater experience than the other”. The main issue with the manager been seen as a coach is gaining the respect of his/her subordinates. Management should set the right example by therefore being open and honest with regards to coaching. The

combination of result – orientated steering and coaching equals the style of “result – orientated coaching” (Waal 2007, pg 247). Such management could and can lead to a win – win situation for both management and employees.

According to Evans (2004, pg 193) he believes that in order to close the performance gap that a manager should use five simple tools which can help;

1. A set of measurable outcomes
2. A clear, well defined plan
3. Effective problem analysis of the selected performance issue
4. A reliable feedback system
5. A system for collecting and applying what you learn about performance improvement

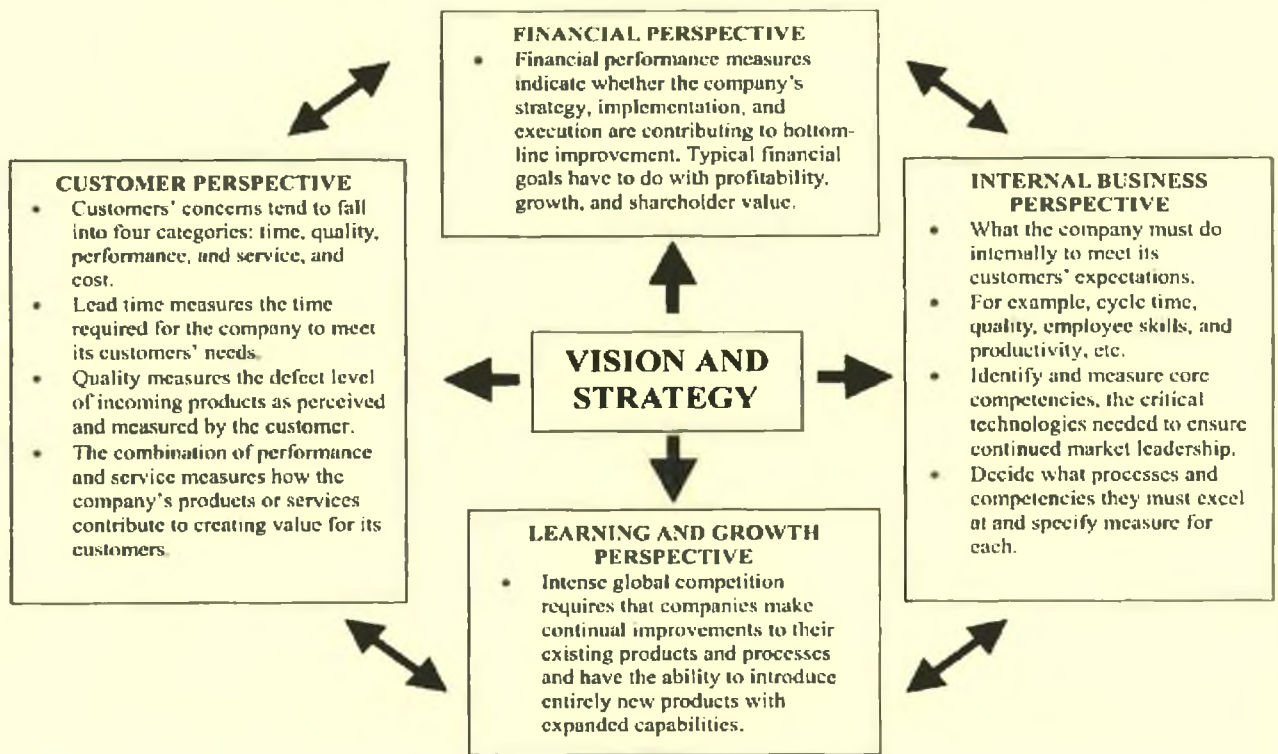
Evans highlights the need for having a reliable feedback system as one of the key tools in order to improve performance. He goes on to suggest that “good feedback systems teach as well as hold people accountable” (Evans, 2004, pg 194).

A more common tool used widely in organizations is known as the “Balanced Scorecard”. This approach to strategic evaluation was developed by Kaplan and Norton in the early 1990’s. The scorecard has four perspectives financial, customers, internal business processes, and innovation perspective. (See Figure 2 below for overview of BSC). Kaplan (cited in De Waal 2007, pg 144) states that

“the success of the BSC can be explained as follows: There is a huge gap between the vision and the strategy developed at the top and the things down in the organization, at the front line, are doing...And because all organizations face the aforementioned

gap, especially when they transfer from the traditional command and control style, which used to work well in the old days, to the empowerment style of modern times, they need something like the BSC to help them bridge the gap”.

Figure 2 Skeleton of balanced scorecard



Source: Thakkar et al, (2007, pg 31)

Chavan (2009, pg 395) describes the process of the BSC into four simple steps:

- . Clarify and translate vision into strategy.
- . Communicate and link strategic objectives and measures.
- . Plan, set targets and align strategic initiatives.
- . Enhance strategic feedback and learning.

A key part of the Balance Scorecard approach is the feedback and learning step, where an organisation is able to quantify where it is on its strategic capability building journey, in the context of its current performance, and possible changing business environment (Chavan, 2009, pg 396). Overall the BSC is one of the most common tools used to for measuring a company's performance, one that examines the success of financial objectives and strategic objectives. By constantly pursuing strategic outcomes, allows a company to improve its performance throughout the organization. Thus it can strengthen the company's position and obtain and maintain a competitive advantage over its rivals. Thompson et al (1999, pg 35) stated that "in 2006, approximately 70 percent of global companies used the balanced scorecard approach to measuring strategic and financial performance".

Performance management from the past had both its advantages and disadvantages and even into day's society, there are still some pros and cons associated with the BSC approach. A principal at IT Performance Management Group (ITPMG), Mike Bitterman, wrote that measurement-managed organizations have better decision making, improved financial performance, increased levels of effectiveness, greater employee satisfaction and best-in-class performance (Bitterman, cited in White 2005, pg 6). Also from the same article the Hackett Group (cited in White, 2005, pg 6) reported that "70 percent of balanced scorecard implementations are failing because they do not provide concise, predictive and actionable information about how a company is performing and may perform in the future". Other issues why BSC fail may be as a result of the lack of associated business performance programmes to close the performance gap. As already stated there is pros and cons attached to using the BSC system, as Kaplan et al (1996, pg 38) states that "the Balanced Scorecard is

primarily a mechanism for strategy implementation not for strategy formulation". With this in mind managers must therefore be aware of the pitfalls of which so many organization falls into. Crafting strategy seems to be the easy part, executing and knowing what is expected of individuals throughout the organization is the most difficult to implement and maintain.

2.5 Technology

When first examining the use of technology to enhance performance and its effects a review of the origins of the internet and the role in has played and continues to play into days organizations is needed. The internet began in 1969 as a US Department of Defense Project. Since its introduction it has allowed person – to – person electronic communication. From this according to Berners et al (cited in Sampson 1998, pg 72) "the breakthrough for electronic passive solicitation of feedback came with the introduction of the World Wide Web in 1993 - 1994". With the use of technology and other mechanisms to provide feedback allows a person to access information more easily. The more channels that is readily available, the better the chances of feedback being sought. This impact of technological improvement is seen clearly in the domain of computer performance monitoring (CPM). CPM is the use of computer hardware and software to collect, store, analyze, and report individual or group actions or performance (Nebeker et al cited in Alder, 2007, pg 158). It has been suggested that technology has no place in performance management, however according to Andrew (2003, pg 6) "technology allows for performance monitoring whilst it also allows for ongoing feedback which is essential for permanent changes in performance".

Another term which should be noted is electronic performance monitoring, (EPM). With EPM systems, managers can assess activities on computer terminals and telephones to determine the pace at which employees are working, the degree of performance accuracy, log-on and log-off times. As with feedback there is pro and cons associated with EPM, Stanton et al (2002, pg 87) suggests “that in addition to adverse affects on attitudes and health, many employees have complained that electronic monitoring creates a conflict between the quantity and quality of performance”. Although this method is very intrusive it can improve performance, although as stated above this may have negative effects in the long run.

As mentioned earlier feedback is a complex process and with recent advances in computer and electronic technology make the process even more difficult. Bauer et al (2006, pg 508) states that “providing and receiving constructive and critical feedback has been emphasized in research and practical work on the establishment of a learning orientated organizational climate”.

Igonor (cited in Navarro 2005, pg 277) reported that that “e - learning refers to learning that is delivered or enabled via electronic technology”. Such technology includes learning via a range of technologies such as: the internet, electronic distribution technologies and basic PC technologies (PCT).

2.5.1 E- Learning

In recent years workplace learning has embraced technology to meet the demands of continuing professional development and general training of employees (Payne et al 2009, pg 548.) E-learning is emerging as the new tool in assisting modern education. Chen Sun (2008, pg 1183) states that “E-Learning is the use of telecommunication

technology to deliver information for education and training". The use of information communication technology is related to networking and communication and should not be confused with e – learning, although it is part of the e – learning phenomenon. So what is e – learning and how can it enhance performance. The ‘e’ in e – learning joins many common hybrids such as e – mail and e – commerce in signifying enactment through electronic means, typically interpreted as computer based (Andrews et al, 2007, pg 6). So what of learning, in business it is seen as a means to an end. Rosenberg (2001, pg 4) states that “learning is the process by which people acquire new skills or knowledge for the purpose of enhancing performance”.

So from ‘e’ + ‘learning’ such a system should be continuously emergent, asynchronous, and critically, enhance conditions so that learning can take place. In study carried out by Bouhnik et al (2009, pg 428) concludes that “asynchronous sources are overwhelmingly important to the success of the modern firm and capture the lion’s share of employees’ learning sources”. The learner should than be the focus of the organisations, therefore they should concentrate on increasing knowledge and encouraging learning.

Employees are expected to continuously learn in the workplace. There is numerous ways in which we can learn. Workplace learning is defined as a process whereby people, as a function of completing their organizational tasks and roles, acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enhance individual and organizational performance Hicks et al (2007, pg 62). E – Learning has become popular in many organisations seemingly because of the numerous advantages associated with it. Such advantages consist of:

- no space needed
- substantial cost savings

- timely access to information
- greater flexibility in the workplace
- methods used can increase learners interest, deliver content clearly
- provide feedback

By creating an effective learning strategy must surpass learning. Training / instruction is used when it is necessary to shape learning in a specific direction – to support learners in acquiring a new skill or to utilise knowledge in a specific way or to a specific level of proficiency, and perhaps within a specific time frame (Rosenberg 2001, pg 5). Fry (cited in Park et al, 2007, pg 312) suggested that “in particular, the rapid obsolescence of knowledge and the need for cost-effective and efficient training have been identified as major stimuli for the use of e-learning in workplaces”. Other dimensions will be discussed later such as motivation, ease of use and the organisational environment which all play on the effectiveness of e – learning.

However more in depth analysis and critique of e – learning and its impacts on the training environment associated within an organisation is needed. With the arrival of ICT’s has allowed training to be delivered through the internet and other electronic resources. It has been suggested that learning and training are two completing different parallels however it is proposed in this discussion that the two are very much intertwined in relation to feedback and enhancing performance. Like feedback it is a two way street. Sloman (2001, pg 5) states that “learning lies within the domain of the individual; training lies within the domain of the organisation”. Without organisations providing training for employees to learn and transfer training into performance how can an organisation wish to sustain or even create a competitive advantage into

Figure 3 Training and e - learning.

	Training	E – Learning
Delivery	Push – instructor determines agenda	Pull – student determines agenda
Responsiveness	Anticipatory – assumes knowledge of the problem	Reactionary – responds to problem at hand
Access	Liner – has defined progression of knowledge	Non – linear – allows direct access to knowledge in whatever sequence makes sense to the situation at hand
Symmetry	Asymmetric – training occurs as a separate activity	Symmetric – learning occurs as an integrated activity
Modality	Discrete – training takes place in dedicated chunks with defined stops and starts	Continuous – learning runs parallel and never stops
Authority	Centralized – content is selected from a library of materials developed by the educators	Distributed – content comes from the interaction of the participants as well as the educators
Personalisation	Mass produced – contents must satisfy the needs of many	Personalized – content is determined by the individual users need to know in order to satisfy

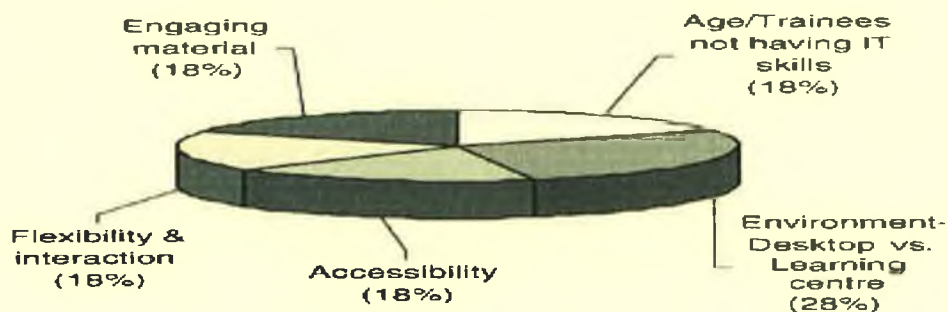
	their needs.
Adaptivity	Static – content and Dynamic – content changes organization/taxonomy remain in constantly through user input, their original authored form experiences, new practices, without regard to environmental business rules, and heuristics changes

In today's knowledgeable economy more and more organizations are looking for the extra edge. But e – learning has some question marks over its use and enrichment of an organization. In the current working environment it has become increasingly knowledge – intensive. Issues that arise as to how an organization find, keep, develop and share knowledge effectively and in turn transfers such knowledge into business performance. Strategies are continually changing and can no longer be set in stone and an organization needs to be able to change.

By creating such flexibility this requires an organization's ability to guide and facilitate continuous learning and knowledge creation. Rossett (2002, pg 23) suggests that “to be effective, companies should pursue e - learning with an informed approach that balances hope and hype, addresses the needs of the learner, and recognises that e – learning is one, albeit critical, part of the overall learning strategy”. However, e- learning seems to have under – delivered for a number of reasons. Ali et al (2008, pg 40 - 41) stated that “the barriers to the adoption and implementation of e –learning are related to either to organizational or technical issues”. A study carried

out by Skill Soft (2004) identified a number of keys areas which examined different areas within the organization and technical capability. See Figure 4 below for breakdown of results.

Figure 4 Barriers to e – learning



2.6 Organisational culture and motivation

Taticchi (2010, pg 361) suggests that “organisational culture is interpreted as a socially constructed / validated pattern of shared basic assumptions, which have been developed by a specific group of individuals (organisational members) as they learn to cope with the problems of external adaption and internal integration. Organisational culture seems to revolve such themes as values, beliefs, and behaviour patterns which help to shape employees behaviour. Within a strong positive organisational culture seems to correlate with economic performance. “If an organization does not have an appropriate culture, knowledge-sharing processes will be very difficult and very limited”, (Tseng 2009, pg 273). While this may be true, the commitment of the people within the organisation is critical also to its overall success. Rashid et al (2003, pg

709) states that “organisational commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organisation”. An employee’s commitment will have an impact on his /her job performance, staff turnover, and absenteeism. Although creating a positive organisation culture with commitment from all employees this research focus more on a learning culture and knowledgeable employees.

Stonehouse et al (1999, pg 132) states “knowledge is a shared collection of principles, facts, skills, and rules.....organisational knowledge aids decision-making, behaviour and actions, and is primarily developed from the knowledge of individuals within the organisation”. Such intellectual capital than can be described as a major competitive advantage. Some have referred to “intelligence organisations” or “knowledgeably organisations” but in this research the focus will be on the phrase “learning organisations”.

Evans (1998, pg 201) suggests that “a learning organisation is one that promotes learning among its employees – but, more importantly, is an organisation that itself learns from that learning”. Such an organisation encourages its employees to extend their personal skills and qualities so that they can learn and develop. DeGeus (1997, pg 28) suggests that “within companies, our success depends on our skill with human beings: building and developing the consistent knowledge base of our enterprise”. The learning organisation is not an end in itself, but a means to improve performance, productivity and profit. The critical element than with a learning organisation is the overall effect the organisations culture plays. Murray et al (2003, pg 52) argue that “learning orientation can lead to a favourable culture for innovation and improving

the behavior and capability of individuals so that the organization can more effectively respond to its environment”.

A framework developed by Hill et al (1998, pg 189) (see Figure 5) highlighted the elements within an organisation and the critical part culture plays in driving performance. This framework showed the interrelation of the different areas using a propeller analogy. The areas 1 – 6, organisations products, services and markets to skills, training and learning approaches make up the blades of the propeller, with the organisational culture making up the hub. The hub than drive the propeller blade and provides the direction. Although the process in a complex issues this framework gives an understanding of what element of an organisation impact on performance and learning.

Figure 5 The organisational propeller: aspects of organisational functioning that affect performance and learning



Argyris (1999, pg 67) defines learning as “occurring under two conditions. First, learning occurs when an organisation achieves what it intended; that is, there is a match between its design for action and the actuality or outcome. Second, learning occurs when a mismatch between intentions and outcomes is identified and it is corrected; that is, a mismatch is turned into a match. The main difference between the two learning types is what they change. Argyris coined the phrase’s single loop learning and double loop learning. Essentially, single-loop learning takes place after a problem has occurred, making it a reactive process; whereas double-loop learning focuses on fixing processes before a problem occurs, making it a proactive process.

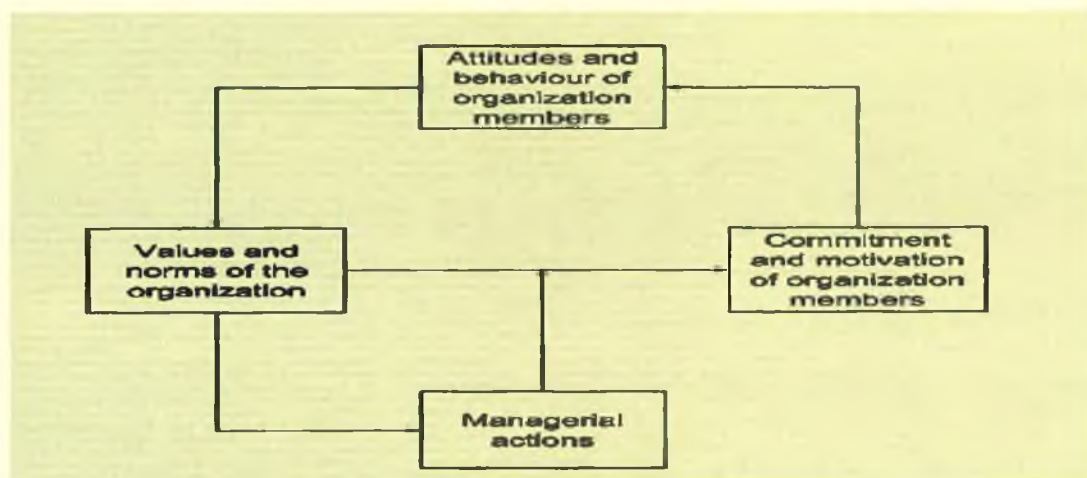
Deutero learning refers to the capacity to learning to learn, and it is this ability in individuals which must precede any effective learning. Francis (1997, pg 169) suggests that “deutero learning is the mechanism which forces learning to become explicit, and it is the avenue for organizations to leverage a continuing commitment to learning”.

All employee needs are different and learning to learn will be difficult on a personal level. With this in mind motivation to learn and to seek feedback on one’s performance differs from individuals greatly. Brutus et al (2008, pg 285) states that “feedback seeking allows employees to gather critical information about their behaviours and performance relative to their goals, and when discrepancies are identified, to alter their behaviours to reduce the goal performance discrepancy”. Steelman et al (2004, pg 6) further enhances this theory stating that “meaningful feedback can be used to guide, motivate and reinforce effective behaviors and put a halt to ineffective behaviors.....negative feedback is assumed to create awareness and motivate individuals to change behaviors”. When examining motivation although

complex when intertwined with feedback and performance is even more difficult to examine. However Higgins Theory (1997) proposed that people have two basic self-regulation systems. One system tries and avoids punishment and focuses on a prevention goal, while the other focus on the achievement of rewards. This theory compares to many other theorists such as Maslow hierarchy of needs (1943), Deci and Ryan Self – Determination Theory (1985) distinguished between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. According to Christie et al (2000, pg 41) “many people are becoming quite serious about finding work they find personally fulfilling”.

If one were to choose a single term for what most people mean by motivation, however, it would probably be the verb “to want” (Higgins et al, 2000, pg 2). This simple term can be applied to all theories associated with motivation and performance. By applying the “want” the employee can focus more on his / her job. The role an individual’s motivation and overall organisational culture plays a significant role in enhancing performance combined with commitment. Hartmann (2005, pg 161, highlighted in Figure 6 such a connection linking the organisational culture and motivation.

Figure 6 The link between organisational culture and motivation.



2.7 Conclusion

Overall whether or not organizations can truly manage or monitor its employees effectively is questionable. However what is important is that they be aware that performance can be lacking. The organisation needs to be aware of this factor and have solutions in place to help counteract the drop in performance. Organisations need to be proactive in this regard and be able to adapt to the changing environments and the needs of current employees. Possible ways organisations can do this as outlined above, coaching, mentoring or whatever term is used to help develop the individual. These methods can be reinforced by having in place a process by where they are working collectively both management and employees. In order to achieve the overall goal of the organisation a single strategy developed by all members within an organisation should be adhered to at all times, in order to develop and sustain high performance.

Although there is numerous advantages associated with the use of technology especially e - learning there is also disadvantages if not implemented and used in a manner in which it was designated initially. Technology and e - learning are here to stay and this will require a different mindset among employees and managers from times past. E – Learning shows that technology can enhance the learning experience. However Brown et al (2006, pg 424) notes “that the eLearning is about exploiting the technology to enhance the learning as opposed to using the technology just because it is available”. Recent trends seem to indicate such an issue in some organisations.

When examining the effects of culture, motivation and the effect that they have on feedback and performance, it is clear from the studies above that numerous factors intertwine and impact significantly on the overall performance of an organisation. From the illustration (see Figure 1) given by CIMA in 2008 *Developing and Sustaining High Performance*, it highlighted individual responsibility as key indicator. On from this and putting together motivation and culture and its impacts, it seems that although certain factors have a bearing on feedback and performance, there are strong indications that it is necessary that each and every one individual within any organisation must be willing to look at oneself first. By applying the want as indicated above to his / her job it will greatly enhance responsibility, staff buy in and a unity amongst employees throughout the organisation. If this objective can be achieved factors such as culture may not be as interfering as suggested above.

Chapter 3
The Research Methodology

Chapter 3: The Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to critically analyse the relationship between feedback and technology in developing and sustaining high performance in organisations. It was in this regard, a number of executive coaches, HR managers and other such professionals were interviewed about their thoughts and opinions with regard to the relationship between feedback and performance. The following chapter will analyse research design, the various methods used to collect and analyse data. It will also discuss the criteria needed for selection of the participants, ethical considerations, and the write up of the research are discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

Due to the large study to be undertaken a number of research instruments techniques and methods were used to obtain the relevant information required to complete such a study. The data collected varied considerably in their characteristics. For example:

- Data may be numerical, or consist of words or can be an amalgamation of the two.
- Data may also be original, information collected never before collected or it may be secondary, already put together by someone else but can be reused by others.
- Data may also consist of responses to a questionnaire or interviews carried out, notes, observations, documents and materials or all of these things.

A variety of sampling strategies were available to use. Options varied greatly, however they were broken down into two main groups, probability and non – probability sampling. The most widely understood probability sampling approach is random sampling, where individuals or objects in the population of interest have an equal chance of being chosen for the study. Other approaches within probability sampling include

- Systematic sampling: selecting every nth case
- Stratified sampling: sampling within groups of the population
- Cluster sampling: surveying whole clusters of the population sampled at random
- Stage sampling: sampling clusters sampled at random

Non – probability sampling may be used when a lack of sufficient sample frame for the population in question. Such techniques include

- Convenience sampling: sampling those most convenient.
- Voluntary sampling: the sample is self selected.
- Quota sampling: convenience sampling within groups of the population.
- Purposive sampling: handpicking supposedly typical or interesting cases.
- Dimensional sampling: multidimensional quota sampling.
- Snowball sampling: building up a sample through informants.

Overall random sampling methods will include a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative research should allow for certain aspects to be separated easily so that they can be counted and modeled statistically whilst qualitative research will allow the author be more subjective. However a different perspective may be reflected using the grounded theory. Thomas (2003, pg 3)

suggests that the term indicates that the researcher does not bring any preconceived theory to the interpretation of collected information, instead, grounded theory investigators extract theory out of the collected information itself. Carrying on from this secondary research and primary research will be utilised. Primary research will be essential to obtain the views of a number of professionals within their respected fields, and that of employees within Medtronic Ireland. The two main instruments to be employed in the primary research will be the use of interviews and questionnaires. Interviews can provide confidential information that may not be in the public domain while a far larger number of people can partake in a questionnaire while focusing what is happening at ground level. The questionnaire will be anonymous which will allow for candidates to be true and fair to each question without any judgmental consequences.

3.3.1 The Participants

As stated earlier, interviews will be carried to complete some of the primary research. The author has chosen four professionals to interview. The first interviewee is Mr. Peter Bluckert previous managing director of PB coaching, highly trained in organisational psychology, leadership development and change management. By interviewing an established consultant in coaching, his opinion on feedback and performance and where he sees the essential elements in enhancing through feedback were critical. The second is Mr. Niall O Reilly, whom runs his own company Ignite coaching. Again Mr. O Reilly has numerous years of experience in the field of coaching with a particular passion for senior team development along with individuals. The purpose of the having two established executive coaches were to get

a clearer picture of this phenomenon which has become widely used in organisations today. The third interviewee is John McGuire, founder of Active Mind, a clinic designed to help people establish both personal and professional excellence in life and work. The purpose of this interview was to establish his opinion on a number of matters; the most critical was the psychology aspects in relation to performance and effects of feedback on individual performance. The fourth and final interviewee was David Morris, Human Resource Manager within Medtronic Galway. By interviewing Mr. Morris it was felt that he would be able to give a more definite answer in relation to the procedures and policies implemented by Medtronic to enhance performance. By handpicking interviewees provided the author with a broad and balanced scope

3.3.2 Survey Participants

Questionnaires were also distributed on line using Survey Monkey, to employees within Medtronic, a multinational company within Galway which has a worldwide reputation as been a high performance organisation. The survey participants within Medtronic included operational level employees and managerial staff. The questionnaire was designed to obtain employees thoughts in relation to the topic of feedback and its advantages and disadvantages. The survey also allowed for individuals to express their opinions openly to some questions. This allowed for further insights into some key areas within the study. Due to the large number of staff within Medtronic and gaining access to all those required, it was felt a questionnaire was more suitable compared to face – to – face interviews which are very time consuming. Due to the sensitive nature of the study and personal attitudes and thoughts it was felt a questionnaire would be more effective than using focus groups as individuals may not be as open among their peers. Overall the Medtronic sample

group allowed the author to collect a large quantity of information from a world renowned high performance organisation which was critical to the overall study. The author obtained a response rate of over 64% which was satisfactory.

3.4 Research Tools – Interviews

According to Hamilton (2008, pg 189) the term “interview, we are referring to all types of planned, face – to – face encounters in which at least one of the participants has a specific objective in mind”. It should be noted that there is many different types of interviews and should be based on research purposes and questions. With this in mind the author has designed a semi – structured interview. Cousin (2009, pg 71) suggests that “semi – structured interviews allow researchers to develop in – depth accounts of experiences and perceptions with individuals”. Such an interview technique allows the author to structure the main theme of the research which serves as a guide to facilitate conversations with interviewees. This allowed the author to redirect the flow of the interview while focusing in on key issues which may be vitally important to the research

3.4.1 Research Tools – Questionnaires

The author implied a survey mainly due the main advantage associated with questionnaires, the ease of which to collect a large quantity of data in a short period of time. Thomas (2003, pg 69) continued on from this by suggesting that “furthermore, a wide variety of information can be gathered from respondents, particularly if the questions are multiple – choice types that allow people to express their opinions by merely marking one or more items in a list of options”. The design of the

questionnaire included open – end questions and closed – end questions. Peterson (2000,pg 32) suggested that “open – end questions, however, take more time and effort to answer than closed – end questions, and answers take more time and effort to analyse and interpret”. However the author felt that to truly get honest opinions open questions were to be included as it allowed participants more freedom in their response, which enhanced the overall research.

3.5 Reliability and Bias

In relation to the interviews there were numerous issues which arose during the research. The author felt that although competent in interviewing techniques, there were some elements of the interviewer effect in terms of reliability. Individuals can respond to different situations depending on what they are asked and the intent behind the question. Although the author used semi structured interviews which has been questioned over its reliability compared to structured interviews it was felt that on examination of the transcripts that the views expressed were truthful and accurate.

One central issue in considering the reliability of questionnaires is that of the sampling. Most issues arise due to poor response rate or a skewed sample. Cohen et al (2007, pg 158) suggested that “there is a need, therefore, to pilot questionnaires and refine their contents, wording length, etc, as appropriate for the sample group”. Issues of a poor response were also an issue, however over fifty questionnaires were distributed in conjunction with the HR manager in order to achieve a greater response rate.

At all times the author tried to remain non judgmental. However, the interviewer effect could also lead to a biased position on the interview as the interviewer can

sometimes bring his/her own past experiences, unfairness and unfounded assumptions to the research. In order to achieve non judgmental views, Diamond (1999, pg 83) suggested that “a bias – free interview is one in which the subject feels comfortable and safe, where there is no implied prejudgment or criticism by the interviewer, and where the subject feels unhampered in answering the questions in an open and honest manner”. With meticulous research and preparation of questions prior to the interviews, the author intended to eradicate as much as possible a biased opinion.

As with so many questionnaires subjects are conscious that they are being monitored and as a result may feel obliged to give answers that may not be the truth resulting in bias result. Dornyei (2008, pg 10) further enhances this argument by stating that “questionnaire items are often ‘transparent’ that is, respondents can have a fairly good guess about what the desirable/ acceptable / expected answer is, and some of them will provide this response even if it is not true”. As a result of this can in turn have a knock on effect of the validity of the data collected. In order to remove such bias thoughts the design of the survey was relatively short, easy to complete and understand. A short description was given at the start of the survey encouraging respondents to be truthful and honest and that all information given would be kept in the strictest confidence. Such an element was obtained by using the programme Survey Monkey which allowed anonymity to each individual whom completed the survey.

3.5.1 Pilot Study

To increase reliability of the questionnaire a pilot study was carried with a sample group from Medtronic whilst also working in conjunction with the HR manager in order to re – phase any wording that may have been misunderstood by staff. In

addition to this a pilot interview was also completed in order highlight potential errors or problems associated with the interview.

3.5.2 Data Gathering Phases

With regards to the organisation of the questionnaire and interviews, were all relatively easy to arrange and control. The research tool, the interview, was however, very time consuming. Due to the in dept requirements needed to fulfill the research, interviews consumed a lot of time. Large quantities of information were also collected from the numerous interviews completed which need to be transcribed before analysing such data. By transcribing the recorded interviews, the black and white transcriptions provided the author with the possibility of analysing the text in more detail.

Questionnaires were administered through the HR manager within Medtronic by creating an authentic e - mail in order to increase the response rate. The survey was transferred in electronic format through the program Survey Monkey which allowed for constant updates on participation rates and reminders of e – mails to candidates if needed. In addition to this was the benefit as stated previously of candidates being able to complete it on – line without ambiguity.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

A major component of the research was to obtain the permission and co – operation of the employees and managers of Medtronic medical company. This can also be said also in obtaining the four professionals in their respected fields. Any study even if no risks are involved still has an element of inconvenience to the candidates which in a sense can be ill-mannered. This dictated that from an early stage of the research being open about the authors work and requirements of each and every participant and thus

having mutual respect. According to DeRenzo (2006, pg 18) “the principle of respect for persons requires respect for each individuals values, perspectives and capacities; assisting individuals in exercising self – determination; and the provision of appropriate protections for individuals who have limitations on autonomous behaviour”. By being transparent, the author’s expectations of the level of commitment required from the start allowed a greater sense of togetherness of all parties involved in the research.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

As stated earlier the data gathered from the interviews was transcribed, than compared and contrasted among the professionals interviewed and indexed according to emerging themes and patterns. The relevant themes and information were analysed and used to supplement the data gathered via the questionnaires. The findings provided using such techniques allowed for a greater discussion in Chapter Four.

Due to the questionnaire being completed in electronic format the programme allowed the author to analysis the data more efficiently and at a higher level due to the large amounts of information collected.

3.8 Limitations of the Research

By deciding to develop a questionnaire was a challenging aspect of the research. Respondents have a tendency to become less inclined to complete a full survey which can lead to a poor response rate. The survey proposed targeted a very small proportion of the business organization that have a large employee base, thus findings may only represent larger organizations within the business sector, thus excluding smaller

organizations. This is problematic in itself as most studies in relation to feedback have focused on larger organizations due to the feedback techniques used in smaller organizations differ greatly from larger organizations. Other limitations included gaining access to higher managerial staff members within Medtronic in order to get their view on the topic in question. Not only were these likely to be issues at the start of the study but were also cause for concern throughout the process of data collection. Another limitation which arose during the research was the accuracy of the information attained from those in managerial positions within the organization due to the sensitivity of this research.

Due to commitment to other extra activities the time constraints associated with completing this study were limitation in itself. Also due to personal commitments financial restraints impacted significantly on the overall study.

As previous mentioned it was stated that Peter Bluckert was to be interviewed, however due to a family emergency Mr Bluckert was a late withdrawal from the interviewees. Due to this unforeseen circumstance, the author replaced Mr Bluckert with another professional Mr Philip Matthews president of the National College Ireland. However due to timing issues and availability Mr Matthews was only available through e – mail. Although the author was grateful to Mr Matthews for his help in this matter, the author was unable to investigate fully Mr Matthews opinion on certain topics which needed further questioning face – to – face.

3.9 The research timelines

The time period for each activity which was performed to complete the study is highlighted below:

- Research: Months 1 – 3 (February – April)

- Writing and revising the dissertation: Months 3 – 9 (January – September)
- Data Gathering (Pilot Study): Weeks 1 – 2 (June)
- Data Gathering (Questionnaire): Months 0 – 1 (June)
- Data Gathering (Interviews): Months 1 – 2 (June – July)
- Data Analysis: Months 1 – 2 (June – July)

Chapter 4

Research Findings

Chapter 4 Research Findings

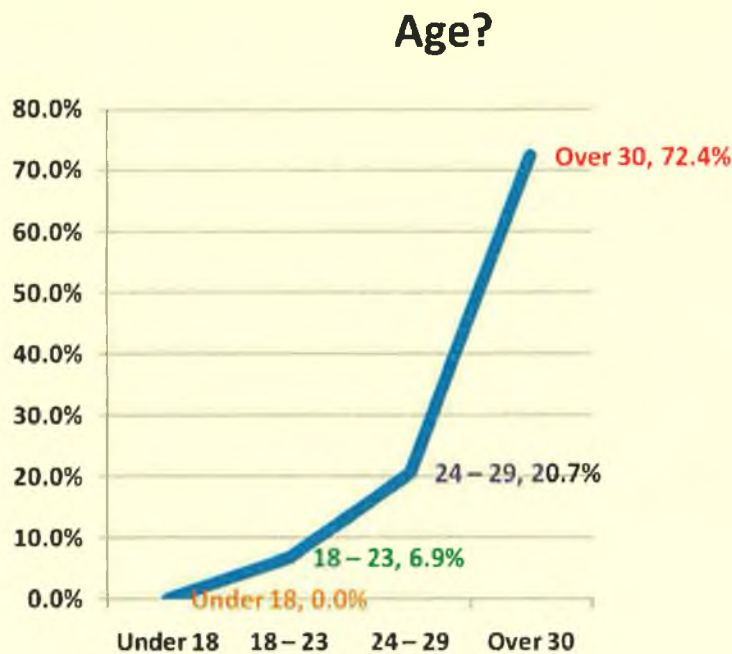
4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the findings of the primary research stage of the dissertation as clearly as possible. The findings of this survey are based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The results will be presented in mainly diagrammatic format in this chapter. The results mainly come from the respondents answers to the questionnaire. A brief overview will be given of the interviews. Further analysis on all findings will take place in Chapter 5.

4.2 Questionnaire Findings - Age

The age structure of the respondents is displayed in Figure 7. The age structure varies from 24 to over 30's of the participants from the survey.

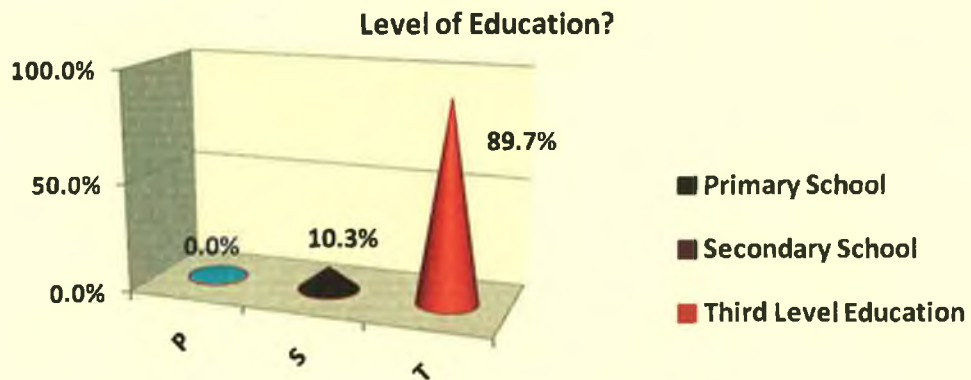
Figure 7 Respondents Age



4.2.1 Education

The following diagram shows the education levels of the respondents. As illustrated the level of education varies from second level to third level.

Figure 8 Breakdown of Education Level

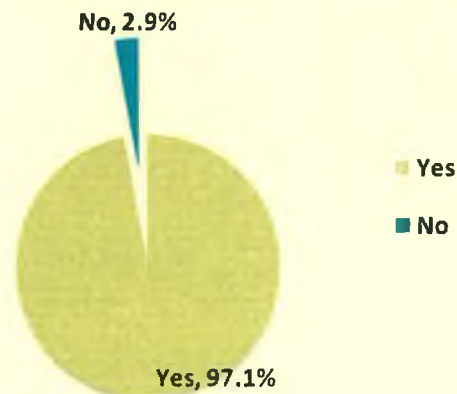


4.2.2 Training and Development Initiatives

The pie chart below highlights the proportion of respondents who were aware of training initiatives in Medtronic.

Figure 9 Initiatives in Training and Development

Does your company have any policies or procedures in relation to providing training and learning development within your working environment?



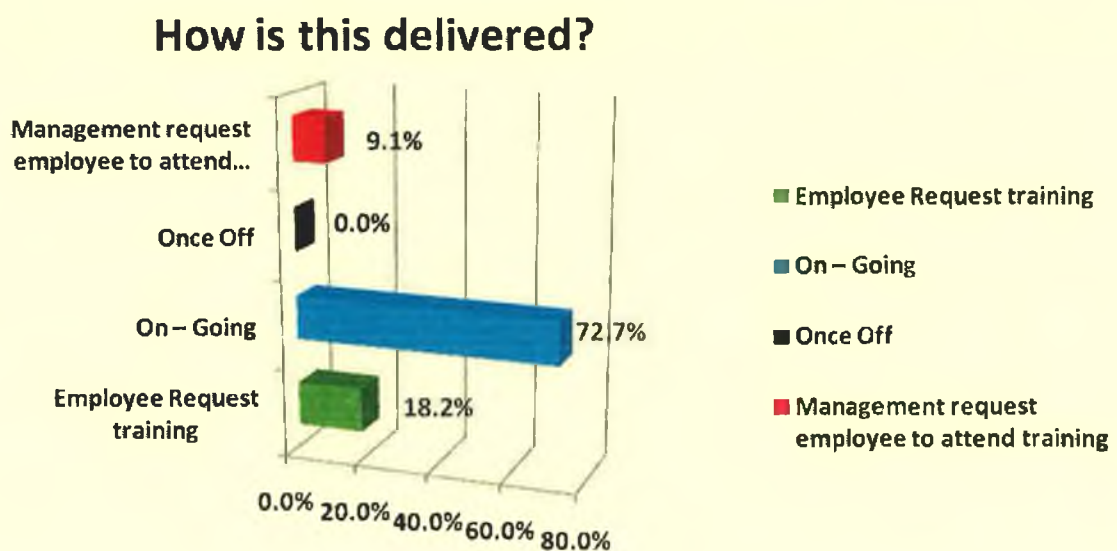
In addition to their awareness of training initiatives respondents were asked to comment on their answers and to give an overview and thier thoughts on such polices.

A summary can be seen from Table 1 (See appendices)

4.2.3 Delivery of Training

The next question that was posed was in regard to how training was being delivered within the company. It is apparent from Figure 10 that over three quarters (73%) felt that within the organisation training and development was being continuously being developed. The graph also illustrates the feelings that training and development was not just a once off procedure (0%). It should be noted that 18% of employees were willing to request training in order to produce their performance.

Figure 10 Delivery of Training



4.2.4 Encouragement by Management

Figure 11, it shows the results of respondent's feelings to a question asking if participation is encouraged by your supervisor / manger with regards to training and development. Results would suggest that training and development plays a key role in the overall culture. Just over 97% believed that management encouraged individuals to par – take in training and development. Fewer than 3% suggested that this was not the case.

Figure 11 Encouragement by management to develop

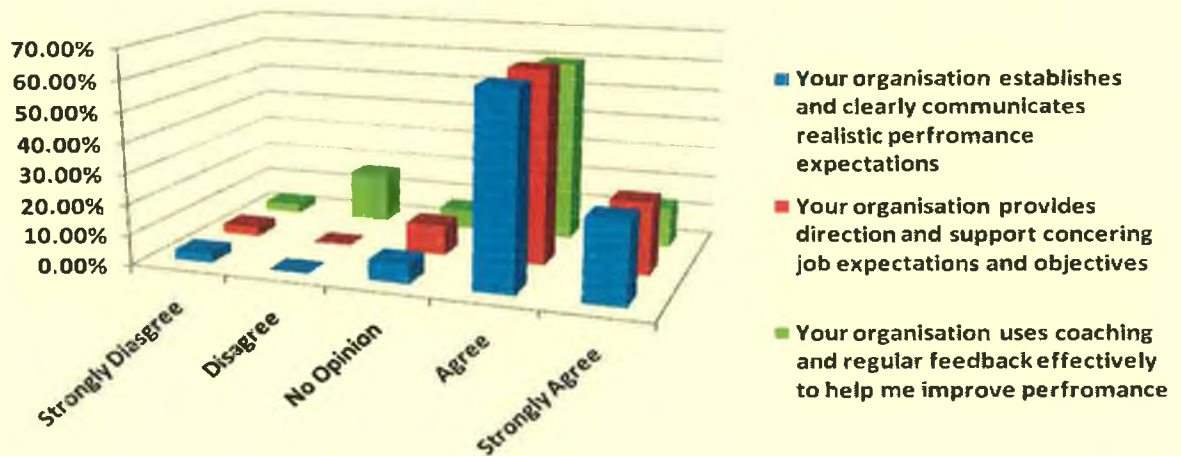
Is the participation encouraged by your supervisor / manager with regards to training and development?



4.2.5 Opinions on Organisation

When the figures are broken down, in Figure 12, it is apparent, that employees agree with the list of options available. Just over 63% agreed that the organisation clearly establishes and communicates realistic performance expectations, while 63% of respondents felt that the organisation provides direction and support concerning job expectations and objectives. The graph also illustrates that only 60% felt that the organisation uses coaching and regular feedback effectively to improve performance. However it should be noted that fewer than 17% disagreed with this statement raising questions on the usage of coaching and feedback frequency.

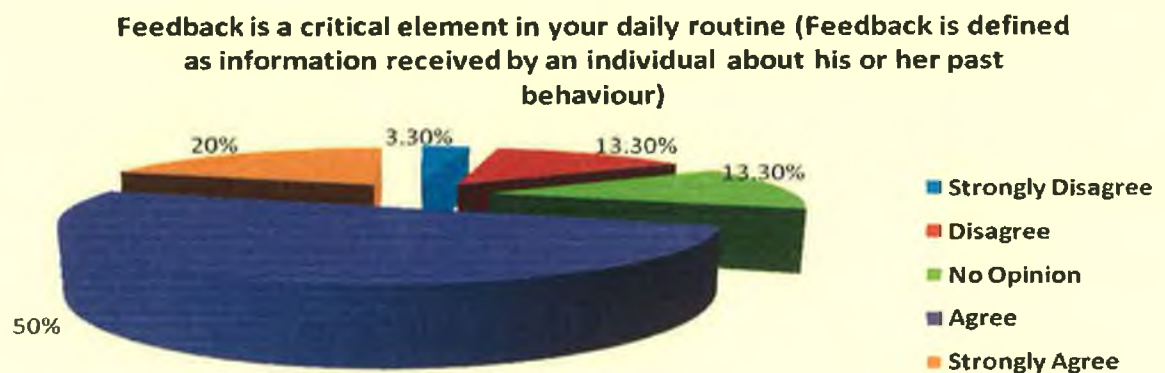
Figure 12 Opinions on organisation



4.2.6 Daily Feedback

Figure 13 shows the results of respondent’s feelings to a statement suggesting the feedback is a critical element in an employee’s daily routine. It is apparent that over 50% of employees agree that feedback is essential to maintain a level of performance, while a further 20% strongly agreed. A small number (17%) disagreed with such a statement, while 13% had no opinion on the subject.

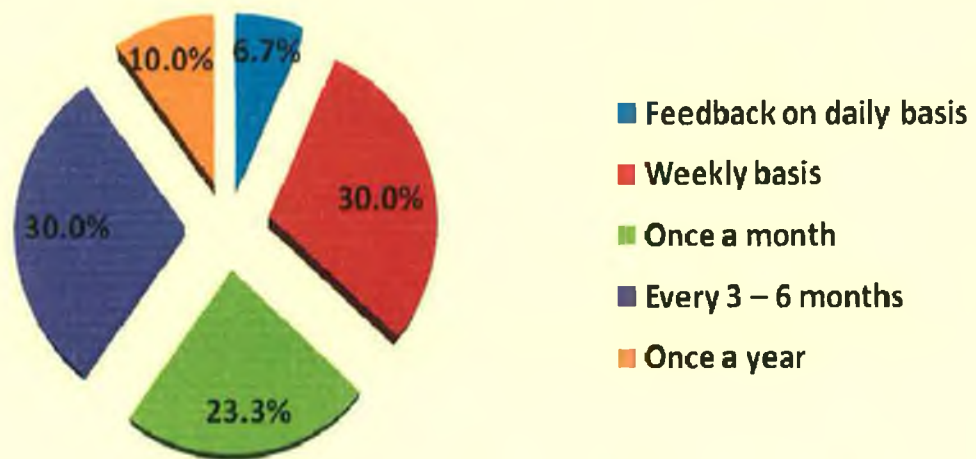
Figure 13 Feedback critical in daily routine



4.2.7 Frequency of Feedback

In Figure 14, below, highlights the frequency of feedback to staff within the organisation. The Figure shows that only 6.7% of workers received feedback on daily basis. On a more positive note, 30% received feedback on a weekly basis, while this decreased to 23% obtaining feedback once a month. It should be noted that a high portion (30%) receive feedback every 3 – 6 months while 10% only receive it once a year.

Figure 14 Frequency of Feedback

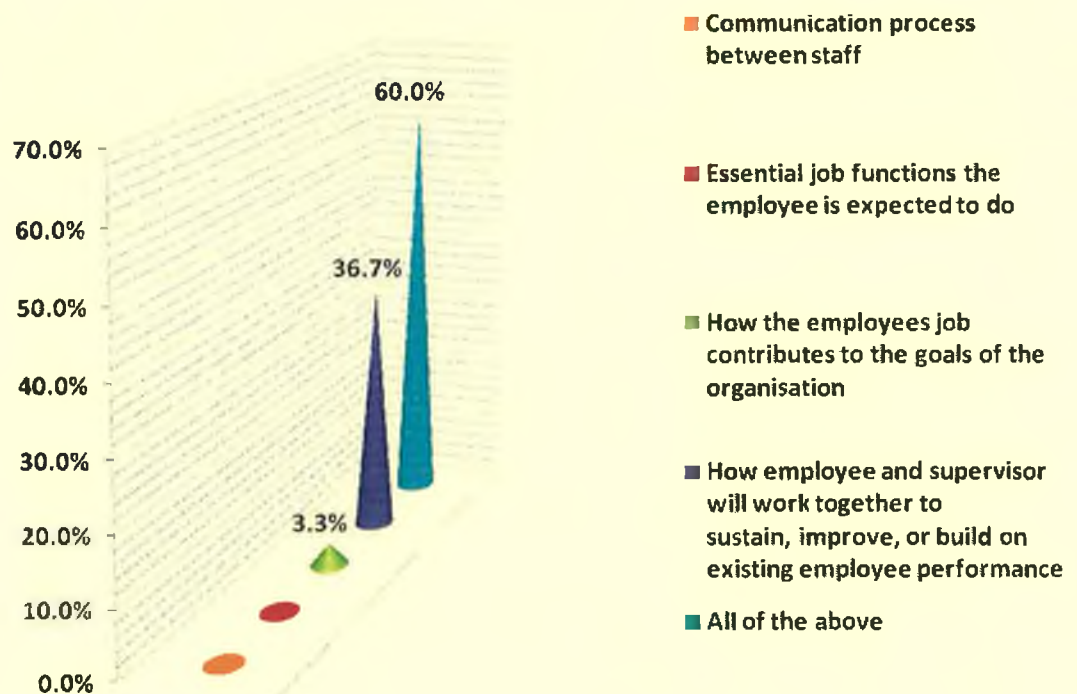


4.2.8 Performance Management

The diagram below illustrates the results from the questionnaire in relation to employees understanding of the term performance management (Figure 15). Results indicated that employees had strong knowledge of the term performance management as 60% give a correct answer compared to the 37% which felt performance management to mean how employee and supervisor will work together to sustain,

improve, or build on existing employee performance. Just 3% felt that it was a term described as to how the employees job contributes to the goals of the organisation.

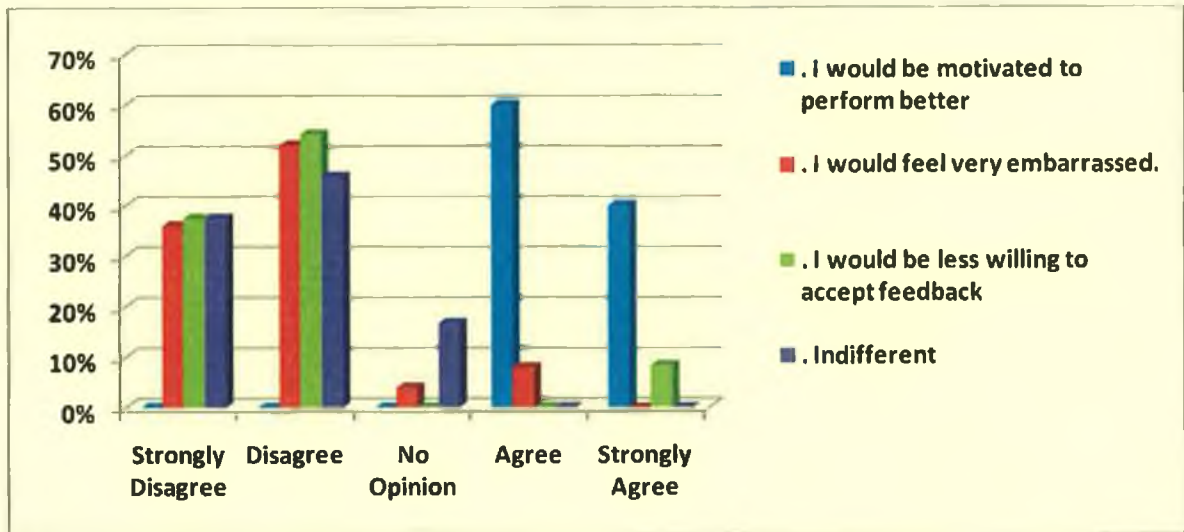
Figure 15 Understanding of Performance Management



4.3 Positive Feedback

Figure 16 illustrates results relating to positive feedback. Candidates had a list of feelings from which to choose from and could either strongly disagree, disagree, no opinion, agree or strongly agree with options available to them about feedback. Over half (60%) agreed that they would be motivated to perform better if they were to receive positive feedback, while a further 40% strongly agreed with this phase. In relation to being embarrassed only a small minority (8%) felt this way. Interestingly 54% disagreed with the option of being less willing to accept, while a further 38% strongly disagreed totaling 92%.

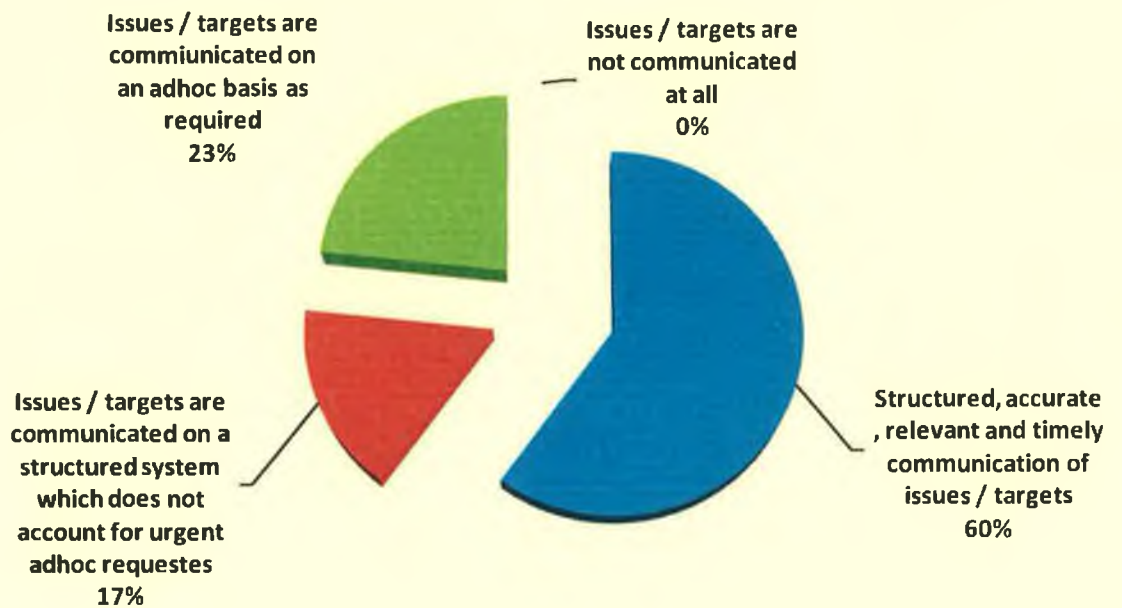
Figure 16 Positive Feedback



4.3.1 Communication Process

Figure 17 illustrates the respondents attitudes towards how issues are communicated within the organisation.

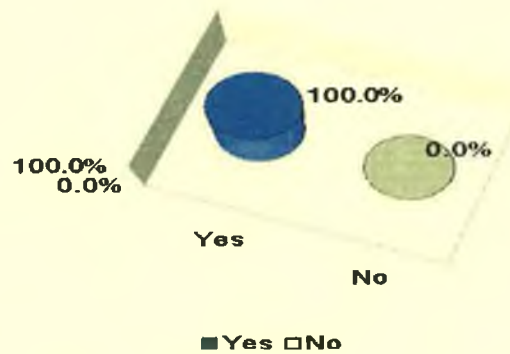
Figure 17 Communication Process



4.3.2 Negative Feedback

The findings under this question were the most extraordinary as can be seen from Figure 18. All employees surveyed (100%) suggested that they were willing to accept negative feedback even if it showed them in negative way. Employees were then asked to comment on why they found negative feedback helpful. From Table 2, (See appendices) highlights some of the key points raised by employees.

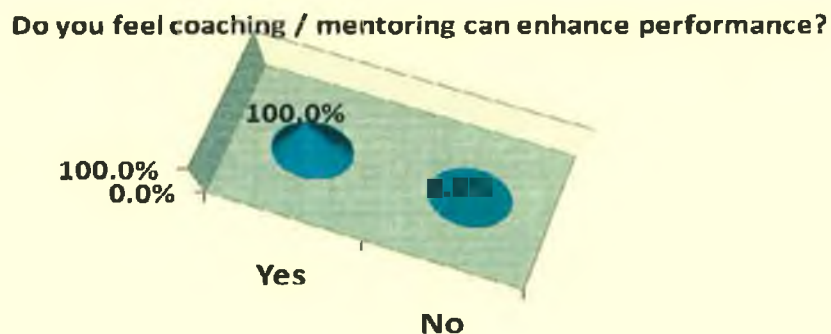
Figure 18 Negative Feedback



4.4 Coaching / Mentoring

Figure 19 displays the respondent's feelings towards coaching and mentoring with regard to enhancing performance. All employees (100%) felt that coaching and mentoring can indeed help to improve performance.

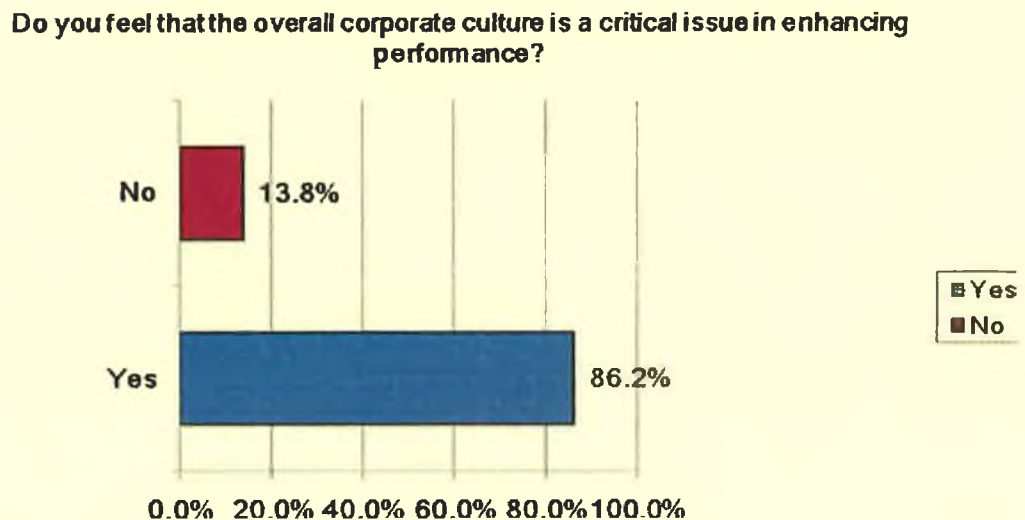
Figure 19 Coaching / Mentoring to enhance performance



4.5 Corporate Culture

It was important to find if the overall culture was influential in enhancing the overall performance or is it possibly an over exaggerated claim made by some. It was put to respondents if they felt that the corporate culture be a useful medium for building and enhancing performance. Figure 20 illustrates how respondents felt. It is clear to see that 86% agreed that the overall culture was essential in enhancing performance while just under 14% disagreed with such a statement.

Figure 20 Corporate culture affecting performance



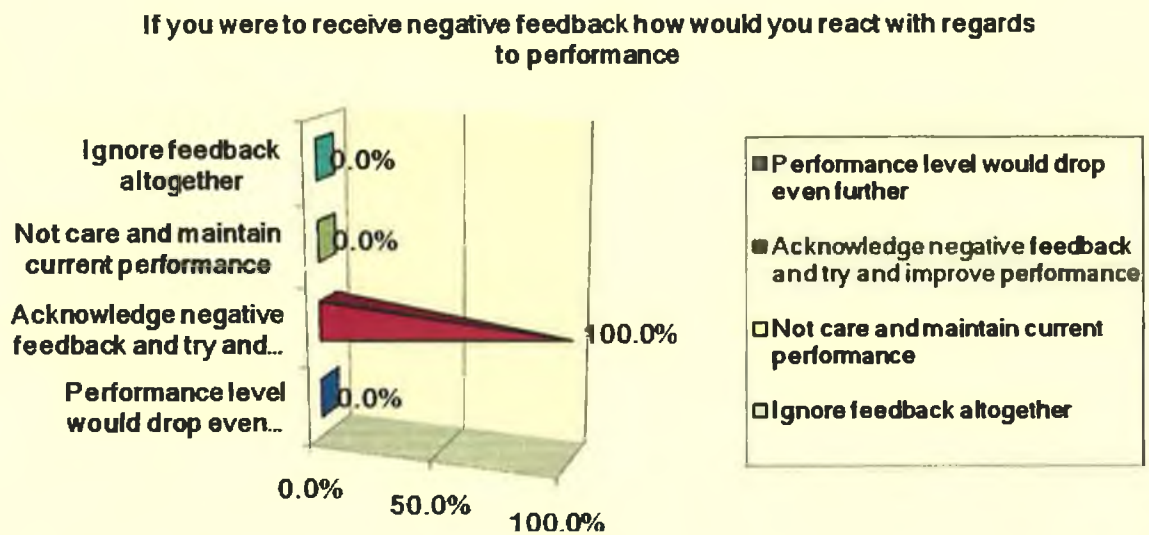
4.5.1 Culture and Performance

Employees also asked to comment on any issues which they felt were important in relation to culture and performance. An overview of the comments are outlined in Table 3 (See appendices). The comments seem to indicate from an employee's point of view that culture must include top level management and a strong unity among employees and a buy in to the overall system within the organisation is a must.

4.5.2 Negative Feedback and Performance

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion in relation to whether they felt their performance would be affected if they were to receive negative feedback. From Figure 21, it is important to note that none of the respondents felt that even receiving negative feedback they would not ignore the feedback. This finding is interesting as studies have shown that individuals that receive negative feedback are less inclined to acknowledge negative feedback. From the options available 100% of respondents indicated that they would acknowledge the negative feedback and try and improve their performance.

Figure 21 Negative feedback affecting performance

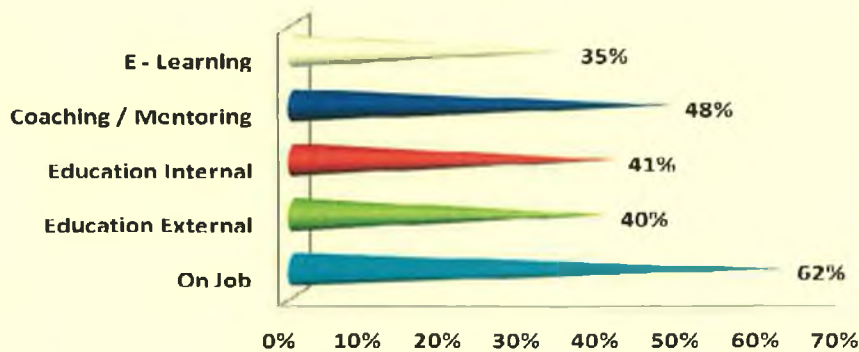


4.6 Methods in Training

Figure 22 illustrates the various training methods which are most common within Medtronic. What is important to note from these findings is that they respondents

were asked to rank methods from one to five. This is why the percentages do not total 100%

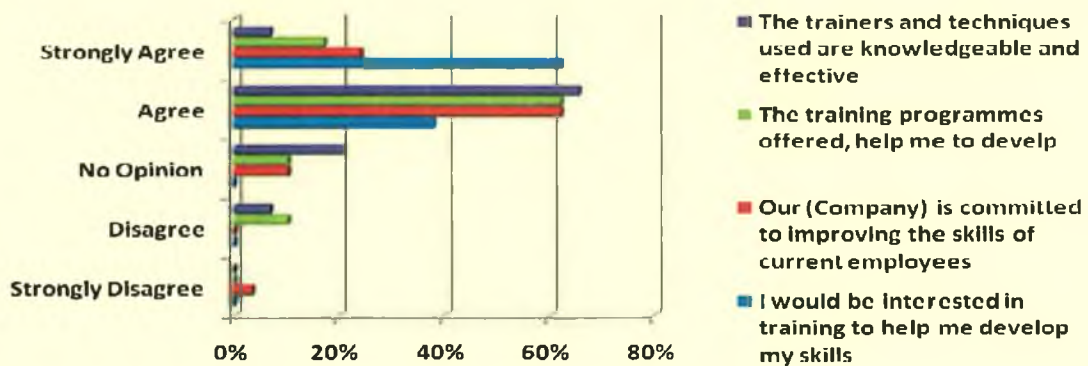
Figure 22 Methods in providing training



4.6.1 Attitudes towards Training

Figure 23 highlights respondent's attitudes towards training and development. Results indicated that 66% agreed that the training and techniques provided within the organisation were knowledgeable and effective. It is also noticeable that 62% strongly agreed that they would be interested in training while a further 38% agreed also that they would be interested. Further analysis also highlights that 62% agreed that the organisation was committed to improving the skills of employees, while 24% strongly agreed.

Figure 23 Attitudes towards training and development



4.7 Technology

The remainder of the questionnaire focused on technology. Figure 24, illustrates the response rate when employees were asked if they were aware of the term e – learning. Overall 93% were aware of the term e – learning, while just fewer than 7% were not. It was interesting to note that such a high number were aware of e – learning compared to that earlier of only 35% as a means of leaning and development.

Following on from this employees were then asked what they understood by the term e – learning. The options available to them were Computer Based Training, Internet Based Training, and Web Based Training or all of the options available to them.

Figure 25, indicates respondents understanding of the term E – leaning. Over two third of the respondents (81%) opted to select all of the above which suggest that all employees have some basic knowledge of e – learning and the way it is utilised. However in contrast to this 12% selected Web Based Training which would suggest that there is some element of misunderstanding surrounding e – learning.

Respondents were also asked if they believed that the initiative worked. Over 85% believed that yes e – learning methods introduced worked, while a further 15% suggested that e – learning didn't work at all. Some comments from employees which has been identified in other studies why e – learning failed highlighted that employees are not fully engaged in the learning process.

Figure 24 Awareness of E – Learning

Are you aware of the term E - Learning?

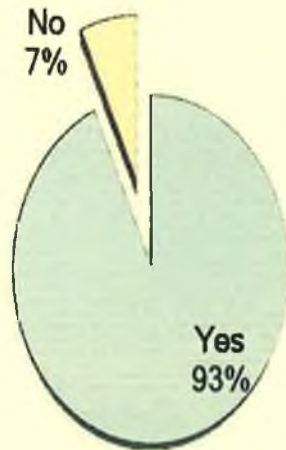
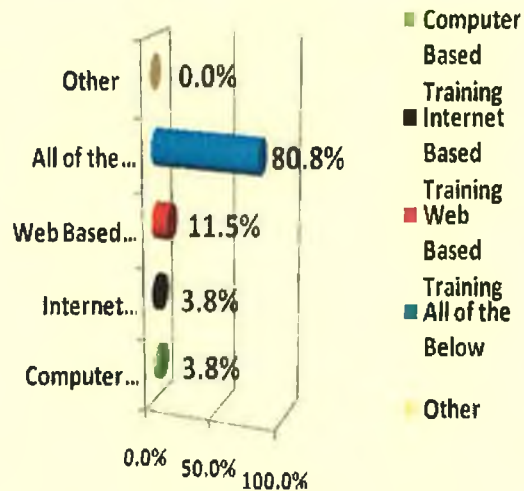


Figure 25 Understanding E - Learning

From the following list of statements what do you understand by the term E - Learning?



4.8 Research Findings of Interviews.

In order to further develop the authors theory of feedback enhancing performance and the use of technology, various and key individuals with widespread knowledge on the various topics involved in the study were interviewed. In order to avoid bias opinion and to get a rounded view of the topic individuals from the a variety of professional backgrounds such as HR managers on the front line, business coaches and physiologists were asked to par take in the interviews. It was critical to get individuals with an non judgmental attitude, wider knowledge, and an deep insight and an understanding of the hypothesis being presented by the author. Interviews were analysed separately and collectively to investigate all of their opinions and thoughts. See appendix for overview of interview questions.

4.8.1 David Morris; HR Manger of Medtronic Ireland

From interviewing Mr Morris, he believed that in order for the company to be successful and remain competitive it was critical. He also commented that with no education being provided in any sector how than could the organisation perform to a high standard continuously. He suggested also that in order to remain on an upward curve that employees needed to be engaged in the overall process. In his profession he described feedback as *"a report on a employees or a mangers or a person's potential performance, it should be an aid to performance and its aim should be improve the performance of that person"*. When asked about the influence of coaching Mr Morris also suggested that *"an employee's coach is going to be their supervisor and they are actually better than some, as not everybody is a mentor"*. When discussing negative and positive feedback Mr Morris stated that *"the whole feedback process and performance improvement... the main word is positive feedback"*.

Mr Morris believed that to create a learning culture in order to achieve a high performance organisation, *"mangers needed coaching to be able to give them the framework to provide structure"*, he also suggested that *"it is also up to the organisation to have a culture where people can be open and transparent and speak their mind"*. Mr Morris decided to not to comment on the Balanced Score Card due to the fact that Medtronic had their own metrics in place to measure performance. When giving negative feedback Mr Morris felt that managers needed to be a good listener but also *"it should be open ended questions"* in order to get the employees opinion on his / her performance. He also suggested that *"negative feedback is an opportunity to improve or an area of consideration rather than a slap on the wrist"*. When examined about the use of technology showed a positive attitude towards the use of technology however within his organisation *"most technology we use is system*

orientated". However when asked about the usage of E – Learning he was very skeptical of how effective it was. Mr Morris stated that *"it just has not taken off,"* while also suggesting *"we are just not getting value"*. When asked further did he believe that it could ever replace face o face training, he suggested that *"it may shift that it may be 80% E – Learning and 20% face to face....it will never fully replace it"*. When discussing how to transfer feedback into performance, Mr Morris believed that after feedback it was essential to measure and control to make sure that there is an improvement in place. Mr Morris showed some appreciation for the use of 360 degree feedback but *"as a development tool"*. He also suggested that *"an employee has more trust in it than it was coming from one person"*. (See Table 4 in appendices for key issues raised)

4.8.2 Nial O Reilly; Director of Ignite Coaching

Niall had some issues with the term knowledgeable employees, stating that "we do not have the scale" compared to BRIC countries. However he suggested that by trying to get the competitive edge it is by *"finding a way to engage our people through work it is through growing and developing them"*. When defining feedback he stated that *"be information that informs the performer, which is delivered in a non emotional non confrontational way....information to people to allow them regulate, to self regulate"*. Mr O Reilly was a strong advocate of coaching but did also raise some issues on this topic. His definition of coaching is *"facilitation....it is facilitation of improved performance in another person"*. He formed the opinion that coaching was akin to leadership. He focused on two types of leadership, *"dissedant leadership is driving them ahead of you,* however more importantly was *"resident leadership is where you*

lead people on, so visionary leadership coaching style, democratic styles, where you engage people and generate the energy in them as supposed to pushing it into them”.

When discussing the effects of positive and negative feedback the key point Mr O Reilly thought was that regardless positive or negative it allows people to self regulate. When questioned on the importance of a coaching / learning culture to close the performance gap he stated that *“awareness of the gap is important”* but also important is to recognise where the individual is and where they want to get too. He suggested that when employees analyse themselves more and become self aware than closing the performance gap becomes easier. He stated also that *“performance equals potential minus interference”* while also suggesting that *“the average employee delivers about 40% of their capacity at any given point”*. It was interesting to note that stated *“motivation”* would play a key part in this regard. Also a change in the culture because *“most of our managers in our organisations, they come from a command and control style”*.

With regards to learning is suggested that there was too much emphasis on it and not enough on understanding. When discussing the effectiveness of the use of the Balanced Score Card he stated that *“it is a good methodology but I have rarely seen it used well”*. He also went to state that *“companies miss use it”* and a lot of the problem is the *“belief that if it gets measured it gets done”*. He found a common trend among business that if they can't measure something it must not be important. When providing negative feedback he stated that *“essential elements are emotional intelligence would be number one, how he is before he gives the feedback and how is the feedback affecting the person who is getting it”*.

He did make the point that if you are unable to change the person, you need to change the people. When discussing the impact of technology he noted that *“technology has got to get to a point where we have real time information about how the people are, because how they are today affects how they deliver today and once today is over that opportunity is gone”*. Mr O Reilly stated that with regards to E – Learning it also has its *“advantages”* and *“disadvantages”*. When providing training practices not all techniques will be as effective compared to when they are alone. However a combination of numerous practices may be sufficient to develop and train employees. He stated however *“that E – Learning would not replace face to face training”*. By creating a strong positive culture and a *“way of doing things around here”* could help improve performance. He suggested that 360 degree feedback plays a pivotal role among many organisations however there is issues with *“trust”*. (See Table 5 in appendices for key issues raised)

4.8.3 John McGuire; Founder of ActiveMind

When it came to the importance of knowledgeable employees, Mr McGuire suggested that if he *“does not have employees who do not understand what they are doing I am trouble”*, while stating that *“you need the best people on the front line to get the job done”*. When describing the term feedback he states *“feedback is positioning a statement in such a way that you are getting the other people to think about something that needs to be resolved”*. He felt that feedback was more *“about asking open ended questions”*. Mr McGuire felt that when giving feedback having a rapport and having the best interests of all involved can be of benefit to both involved. He suggested that *“executive coaching has been in existence for a long period of time just people are*

putting different terms on things". Mr McGuire was of the opinion that when the executive coach is involved and is there asking questions even open ended question *"may get you to think what the solution might be without jumping in to tell you what the solution is, this develops better thinking, better critical thinking"*. When discussing the effects of negative and positive feedback Mr McGuire suggested that it is *"critical you need to frame your feedback in a positive manner. There is no reason why you need to give negative feedback it just needs to be framed in a positive manner"*.

When analysing the performance gap he stated that *"it is important to understand where that performance gap is"*. From a personal view in relation to businesses which he is currently involved in he was closing his own performance gap from *"learning from others"*. He stated that *"anything that can be monitored and visualised over time can be improved"*. He used the Hawthorne Effect as a means of describing that monitoring performance did have an impact on the overall performance of employees. He concluded that *"to have full visibility in what you are doing you need to be able to be measuring and monitor"*. He believed that having a rapport with employees where people can be honest when providing negative feedback. However he did feel if there was a lack of rapport or no trust than anything that has any sort of negative connotation will be taken as an attack. People will automatically put up defences. He suggested that when this happens there is *"no learning"* and *"there is no behavioural change other than blockage"*. Again he suggested reframing negative feedback in a way that is positive. When discussing the use of technology Mr McGuire raised the issue about the internet *"that there is so much information that the filtering of this information is becoming a critical thing"*. When questioned about the use of e – learning he believed all traditional methods had a place. He stated that *"a mix of the lot combined with on*

the job experience is critical". He was unsure if it *"will never replace face to face but it was important to get the right blend"*. When examining the transference of feedback to performance he believed that in order for this to happen *"your peers telling you where they think you can improve and enough of them saying the same thing, a message will come out of that"*. In relation to 360 degree feedback he felt there could be an issue with honesty and some bias associated with such a tool, however he did agree with such a method as it was a *"good structure for feedback"*. (See Table 6 in appendices for key issues raised)

4.8.4 Philip Matthews; President of the National College Ireland

Mr Matthews suggested the term knowledgeable employees was a very broad term, however *"it was important also as resilience, 'can do', positive outlook, enthusiasm, application"*. He described feedback as *"authentic, honest and evidence-based dialogue about the performance/attitude/behaviour of an individual or team"*. When asked about coaching he felt it was a *"minimum"* to have with any organisation even *"if only a personal competency"*. Mr Matthews believed negative or positive feedback was essential however he suggested that *"doesn't mean that people (as individuals) can't improve their performance without feedback, but to consistently improve and for an organisation to improve, it is essential"*. In order to close the performance gap having clear objectives, regular measurement, honest, open feedback and a trust based relationship were essential if to close the gap. When asked about the use of the Balanced Score Card he felt was an effective way of measuring performance but as mentioned previously such things as honest, trust and feedback are

also required to enhance performance. He felt that when providing negative feedback “trust” essential but also *“recognising those things that are positive as well”*. Mr Matthews showed some admiration for technology “in facilitating KPI’s” however believed *“technology is not a solution on its own”* as a way of enhancing performance. He also expressed a concern over e – learning, although *“useful for certain skill or knowledge training but not for coaching”*. Mr Matthews believed in order to transfer feedback into performance “a well-constructed performance management system and a coaching culture within the organisation” was needed. He also agreed with the use of 360 degree feedback but “needs to be supported by a trust based and ‘adult’ organisational culture”. (See Table 7 in appendices for key issues raised)

Chapter 5

Discussion of Results

Chapter 5 Discussion of results

5.1 Introduction

In the following chapter a detailed analysis of the findings will be discussed. This discussion will examine the relevant research objectives that have been outlined earlier. Within this chapter the author will also link, where possible, the primary research to the literature review. As stated earlier the primary research consisted of a questionnaire and that of face – to – face interviews.

5.1.2 Respondents

In the first section of the findings in relation to the questionnaire, a breakdown of the respondent's age highlighted that the average age of the participants was 28.7 years. When examining the level of education undertaken by the participants 90% of all respondents had completed third level education. This would seem to suggest that a young educated work force was critical to the success of the company. There could also be an issue with the older work force having very little education as 10% of all respondents had only completed secondary education.

5.1.3 Procedures

The sample group was asked if they were aware of any policies or procedures in relation to providing training and development within their working environment. Overall 97% were aware of such initiatives, while 3% stated that they were not aware. The probability of their being a high amount of employees who were unaware of the initiatives was going to be low, due to the high performance nature of Medtronic Ireland. Results indicated that Medtronic Ireland's Learning and Development department was very influential in delivering training and development. From Table 1

(see appendices Table 1) numerous respondents highlighted the department as a key factor in providing opportunities to develop personally. Such responses suggested that learning and development is key within Medtronic to create knowledgeable employees. From the interviews Morris, Reilly, McGuire and Matthews all agreed that in order for an organisation to remain competitive having educated staff was critical. Mr McGuire said that *“knowledgeable employees are critical to the success of this business they have got to know what they are supposed to know”* while also going on to state *“you need the best people on the front line”*.

5.1.4 Delivery of Training

Due to the renowned reputation of Medtronic as a high performance organisation respondents of the questionnaire were asked as to “how was training delivered within such a company?” Overall 73% stated that training was an on – going process, while a further 18% suggested that employees request training. 9% stated that management requested employees to attend training. 0% felt that training was not regarded as a once off. When questioned about the learning culture to close the performance gap, Mr Morris suggested that *“employees create opportunities...set specific goals with their manger but this can't be driven by a manger”*. From this statement and the results from the questionnaire indicate that learning and development is a common practice within this organisation. From the literature review on employees reaching optimal performance Baron and Kreps (1999, p. 189) described high performance/commitment practices as *“an ensemble of human resource practices that aim at getting more from workers by giving more to them.”* The 73% which suggested that training was an on – going process and the 0% which felt training was not a once off rerates the theme that by providing learning and development can be of benefit to the company as a whole.

5.1.5 Employee Encouragement

Respondents were asked if the participation in training and development was encouraged by managers and supervisors. The findings from the questionnaire highlighted that 97% felt that encouragement was right throughout the organisation. A plausible explanation for this might be due to the fact pay packages are related to performance. The result could indicate the more an employee develops and learns the more benefit it is to both the individual and organisation. Mr Morris concurred with such a thought when suggesting that reviews are compiled on individuals on monthly basis, which ensure continuous feedback in their goals and objectives. He also stated that *“this perspective has benefit to those employees who has specific goals in mind and is getting feedback and performance improvement, the benefit is enormous to the company”*. The 3% which felt there wasn't encouragement to develop and learn may be only working for their pay-packet and may see no future personal development for themselves. This raises other questions should such individuals being employed by the organisation however an interesting statement from Mr O Reilly suggested that *“if you are unable to change the person, you need to change the people”*.

5.1.6 Experiences within organisation

The respondents were asked their opinions on how they saw their organisation in relation to job expectations, performance expectations and the use of regular feedback effectively. 63% felt that the organisation clearly establishes and communicates realistic performance expectations, while another 27% strongly agreed. As Medtronic is a product related organisation the requirement to meet supply and demand needs from a global outlook, on a regular basis, this result is not surprising. Again it is

interesting to note that exactly the same amount of respondents (63%) agreed while a further 27% strongly agreed that the organisation provides direction and support concerning job expectations. Due to the safety standard associated with Medtronic direction from Medtronic and regulations met, the provision of direction and job expectations would be regarded as must within the industry. The most interesting fact that came from this question was that only 60% felt the organisations uses coaching and regular feedback effectively to improve performance. 20% felt that organisation was poor in this regard. It was interesting to note a comment within Mr Matthews interview when he stated that *"many mangers don't know how to give feedback and have little or no development in this area"*. The results and this comment would be suggesting that either there is poor feedback system in place or mangers are not as capable as some believe to provide accurate, trustworthy and on time feedback which are essential when discussing feedback

5.2 Daily Feedback

Of the total number of respondents half (50%) agreed that feedback was a critically element in their daily routine. This statement was further heightened when another 20% strongly agreed. Results indicate that many employees now are seeking feedback on a regular basis. Madzar (1995, pg 246) stated that *"up until about ten years ago, feedback was seen as exclusively for mangers....more recently, the view that some employees go out of their way to seek information on their performance has become widely accepted"*. Results indicate that within the organisation feedback seeking employees is the norm within a high performance organisation. It should be noted that 17% felt feedback wasn't necessary while 13% had no opinion. Although 17% felt they didn't require feedback could be as result of production metrics already provide

feedback. However 13% had no opinion on the matter would give the impression that a problem exists on the awareness and positives associated with using feedback on a regular basis. On defining feedback Mr O Reilly suggested that the use of “real time” to allow them to “self regulate” would suggest that any performance needs feedback in a timely manner.

5.2.1 Frequency of Feedback

The frequency of feedback can affect the overall performance. Although it was not the purpose of this study to examine the frequency of feedback and its effects, the author felt that to get an overview from a high performance organisation was necessary. The findings from the questionnaire indicated that only 7% of workers received feedback on daily basis. On a more positive note, 30% received feedback on a weekly basis, while this decreased to 23% obtaining feedback once a month. It should be noted that a high portion (30%) receive feedback every 3 – 6 months while 10% only receive it once a year. As stated earlier as Medtronic is a product related organisation, product development and progression happens at various stages and this could skew the result of the frequency of feedback. Also due to the sample group consisting of middle management and operational staff, both parties would have varying structures in relation to the frequency of feedback.

5.3 Understanding Performance Management

The sample group was asked what they understood by term performance management. Results indicated that employees had strong knowledge of the term performance management as 60% give a correct answer compared to the 37% which felt performance management to mean how employee and supervisor will work together to sustain, improve, or build on existing employee performance. Just 3% felt

that it was a term described as to how the employee's job contributes to the goals of the organisation. Although 60% selected all of the above which Bacal (1999, pg3) used to define performance management. It is worrying to find that 40% selected different options. This would indicate that employees and managers may have some issues and may not be as unified as some believe i.e. us against them approach . Most traditionally manager's sole effort is to ensure greater return from its employees. However as stated Harrison (2005, pg 110 – 111) there has been "*a shift from a directive to a supportive approach to the management of performance*". In his interview Mr O Reilly also concurred with such a statement when discussing performance and coaching within organisation stating that "*resident leadership is where you lead people on, so visionary leadership coaching style, democratic styles, where you engage people and generate the energy in them as supposed to pushing it into them*". As mentioned earlier although 40% selected different options 60% picked correctly suggesting that there is a strong element of unity and trust between staff and management.

5.4 Positive Feedback

The respondents were asked if they were to receive positive feedback what emotions would follow. They were also asked if they were to receive negative feedback, what effect would it have on their overall performance. Research has indicated that the perception of the feedback and response depends upon his / her personal characteristics, nature of the message and the characteristics of the source of the feedback. All of the respondents (100%) stated that they would be motivated to perform better if they were to receive positive feedback. Interestingly 54% disagreed with the option of being less willing to accept, while a further 38% strongly disagreed totaling 92%. This could be due to a number of facts, employees are more sensitive to

negative feedback and as a result do not fully accept negative feedback. Morrison (cited in Tourish et al 2004, pg 190) suggested however *“there are a range of considerations that influence the extent to which we actively look for feedback”*, which has a knock on effect when employees go seeking feedback when performance is off a high standard compared to not seeking when having delivery poor performance.

5.4.1 Negative Feedback

However it was interesting to note the comparison when employees received negative feedback which showed them in a negative light. All employees surveyed (100%) stated that they were willing to accept negative feedback even if it showed them in negative way. This finding raises serious questions about managers trying to avoid giving negative feedback in order not to cause conflict amongst managers and employees. As mentioned negative feedback is seen as less accurate and less accepted by employees. Pratto & John (cited in Toursih et al, 2004, pg 196) suggested *“that this must be taken into account intentionally or otherwise it appears that people are especially sensitive to negative input – what has been termed the automatic vigilance effect”*. Results from the survey do not align to this principle, and this is further developed when questioning Mr Morris about the effects of positive and negative feedback stated *“the whole feedback process and performance improvement...the main word is positive feedback”*. Mr McGuire was of the opinion also *“there was no reason why you need to give negative feedback, it just needs to be framed in a positive manner”*. These thoughts compare to the secondary research in performance management when Houldsworth et al (2006, pg 162) suggested that *“there are two main types of feedback that are appropriate in performance management: positive feedback (praise), which tells the person what he or she did well; and constructive*

feedback (advice), which tells the person what needs to be changed and how to do it”.

In comparison to this in Mr Matthews interview although there may be a need for negative feedback *“trust was essential but also recognising those things that are positive as well”*. Comments from employees seem to indicate that they are willing to accept negative feedback but re – phase it *“constructive feedback”*.

5.4.2 Comparisons between negative and positive feedback

From the findings in the survey and the comparisons made in the interviews there would appear to be high level of trust between management and staff in relation to providing and receiving feedback. It was also to interesting to note when questioned further on negative feedback Mr Morris concluded that *“in general if you can encourage people of you foster belief in someone, if you can develop trust and if you give people responsibility then mostly human beings will arise to whatever it is, and that is why positive feedback is so important”*. This belief, trust and unity seem to play a key role within Medtronic feedback system.

5.6 Communication Process

The sample group was asked to comment on the communication process within the organisation. Respondents felt that the process was structured, accurate, relevant and timely communication of issues / targets (60%). However 23% felt issues and targets are communicated on an adhoc basis as required which would suggest that there is an open communication culture and not just from the top down. It should be noted that 17% felt that the communication structure did not account for urgent adhoc requests which is slightly concerning, suggesting that not all communication channels are not open to everyone. This could be as a result of poor relationships between managers and staff. However the main of examining the communication process was to identify

if a learning organisation such as Medtronic can change, which Murray et al suggests that a *“learning orientation can lead to a favorable culture for innovation and improving the behaviour and capability of individuals so that the organization can more effectively respond to its environment”*. The result would indicate that although Medtronic has a structured communication process which would indicate that it does have the necessary capabilities in place to maintain or adjust its communication when the need arises. This process can be only of benefit to feedback seeking behaviors.

5.7 Coaching Culture

From the literature review when examining coaching and its importance to performance, Ulrich (2008, pg 105) comments that *“coaches will not make change happen or stick; they will simply help set conditions and circumstances that help others change”*. This view seems to be of the same opinion of Mr O Reilly whom suggested *“My definition of coaching is facilitation. It is facilitation of improved performance in another person”*. Respondents were asked their thoughts if they felt coaching or mentoring could indeed enhance performance. All of the respondents (100%) answered yes to the question would same to suggest that this method plays a key role within the organisation in order to provide numerous opportunities in learning and development. As mentioned earlier Medtronic’s supervisors were regarded as coaches but it was also said *“not everybody is a mentor”*. The results from the questionnaire strongly indicate that such a practice works. However findings from the interviews seem to highlight that such a term or practice is not fully understood as there seems to be varying spins put on the overall concept. Mr O Reilly indicated that

"whether the word coaching will take off I am not sure as it is not understood". As Mr Morris suggested "it depends what is defined by coaching I think the whole feedback, mentoring will get a lot stronger. I am not sure what brand, it will probably be reinvented as another brand going forward but the actual word coaching I am unsure whether that will last". Such views highlight that there are many forms of coaching / mentoring however it should be noted that although varying terms used its methodology is critical for enhancing performance. It should be also noted that secondary research indicated that *"a good coach can also be instrumental in spreading a 'coaching culture' throughout the organisation"* King et al (1999, pg 147).

5.7.1 Overall effect of Culture

An examination of the overall culture to see if it was influential in enhancing the overall performance or is it possibly an over exaggerated claim. From the results it was evident that 86% felt the culture had an impact of the building and enhancing of performance, while a further 14% disagreed with this claim. The literature review stated that *"if an organization does not have an appropriate culture, knowledge-sharing processes will be very difficult and very limited"*, (Tseng 2009, pg 273). The results from the questionnaire seem to point to that a positive culture is important within Medtronic and this view was enhanced further by Mr Morris stating that *"culture is a big part of this company and feedback gives employees an opportunity to improve and the employees themselves know this first hand"*. Although 14% stated that culture was not important this could have been as a result of some respondents been new to organisation and had not fully integrated yet into the organisation. It was

interesting to note some of the comments regarding culture. The theme which seemed to be most common was that *"it should be structured from the top down"*. This aspect suggests that unity among management and staff can be and is cause for concern when individuals are not involved in the overall process

5.7.2 Culture and Performance

It was important to review the attitudes towards training and development provided by the organisation which can also have an effect on culture and performance. All of the respondents (100%) indicated that they would be interested in training in helping them develop. This could be as a result of performance affecting pay, or as Mr Morris suggested when discussing about generation Y that there needs are not based fully on pay incentives. He stated "that they want information fast and they want it now and they want instant rewards but also gratification. A comparison can be made between how committed the organisation is to improving the skills of its current employees and that of the use of its trainers and techniques used which are knowledgeable. 62% agreed that the organisation was committed to improving the skills of its employees, while 65% stated that the trainers and techniques used were knowledgeable and effective. Such a comparison highlights that the training being provided is of high standard and employees regard it as such.

5.7.3 Training Culture

Another comparison can also be made as respondents were asked which method of training was the most common. From the results 62% selected on the job training as being the most common. This was followed closely by coaching and mentoring (48%). education internal (41%), education external (40%) were regard as being fairly similar with regard to usage patterns. The most uncommon practices consisted of E –

Learning receiving 35% of the votes. From the results of 65% of employees' stating that trainers and techniques used were knowledgeable and effective and the results from the most common practice would indicate that the use of on the job and coaching and mentoring are best practices in order to maintain and develop high performance. This would appear to be a "coaching culture" which suggested previously in the literature review can only enhance performance. By providing the right training and development can only be of benefit to the organisation. This point can also be compared to that of the literature DeGeus (1997, pg 28) states that "*within companies, our success depends on our skill with human beings: building and developing the consistent knowledge base of our enterprise*". Overall the findings seem to point to the fact that Medtronic provide a high level of commitment with regards to training and development. This finding can also be compared to that of a strong positive culture which research suggests can have an impact on performance.

5.8 Technology and E - Learning

The study was examining the use of technology and more specifically that of E - Learning. From the sample group 93% were aware of the term while just fewer than 7% were not. When comparing this result to that of 35% suggesting that it was a common practice of learning and development would suggest that there are some issues with E - Learning. It was interesting to note such findings that although the vast amount of respondents knew E - learning only one third felt it was appropriate for learning and development. Such a finding would suggest that E - learning although common practice may not be as beneficial as some suggest. Respondents were also asked if they felt that E - Learning initiatives worked. 85% stated yes, however 15% suggested that it didn't work. Ali et al (2008, pg 40 - 41) stated that "*the barriers to the adoption and implementation of e-learning are related to either*

to organizational or technical issues". Some of the comments from respondents, the main theme was they felt that they were not fully engaged when using E – Learning in contrast to Ali et al (2008). This would point to the individual itself and not organisational or technical issues. Although 81% knew what E – Learning was all about there also seemed to be misunderstanding (19%) surrounding E – Learning. From the findings it would seem that E – learning has failed to live to its big billing. Mr Morris in his interview confirmed such thoughts stating that "*E learning is something that is coming in at the moment, again it is not working as well in this organisation as people still have not grasped the whole area*". Rossett (2002, pg 23) suggested that "*to be effective, companies should pursue e - learning with an informed approach that balances hope and hype, addresses the needs of the learner, and recognises that e – learning is one, albeit critical, part of the overall learning strategy*". Mr McGuire was also of similar opinion that a combination of methods with regards to training employees was essential. Such results indicate that no single method of training or technology can be regarded as the number one technique.

Below, is a synopsis of the interviewee's opinions on the Balanced Scorecard and 360 degree Feedback. Such opinions were not asked of the survey candidates. The author felt it was important to get professionals opinions on such methods as they would have a greater knowledge of practices used within organisations and not have a biased opinion on such methods used which could have impacted employees negatively.

5.9 Balanced Scorecard

On discussing the Balanced Scorecard, Mr O Reilly felt that although it "*is a good methodology it is rarely used well...companies miss – use it*". A report by Hackett

Group (cited in White, 2005, pg 6) reported that *“70 percent of balanced scorecard implementations are failing because they do not provide concise, predictive and actionable information about how a company is performing and may perform in the future”*. It is worth noting that Medtronic HR manager had not known about this process and did not comment on it. He did state however that *“Medtronic had their own metrics and that were developed internally”*. Mr McGuire was of the view in relation to measuring performance that *“anything that can be monitored and visualised over time can be improved”*. From such views it appears that although the BSC is a very structured process it has flaws. As Medtronic has its own metric it would suggest that it is important for any organisation to have its own metric in which it can follow and revise. Mr O Reilly sums up such thoughts by suggesting that the BSC be used as a framework.

5.9.1 360 Degree Feedback

All the interviewees concurred that 360 degree feedback was very effective to enhance performance. However Mr Morris liked it as a development tool *“not so much as performance tool”*. Such thoughts can be compared to Rogers et al (cited in Carson, 2006, pg 397) stated that *“organizations that used 360-feedback for purposes other than personal or organizational development often failed”*. Mr McGuire suggested *“it is a good structure for feedback”*. Such findings show that the professionals feel that such a method should be used as a means to enhance learning and development not as a way of providing negative aspects. All interviewees suggested that trust among all those involved when using 360 degree feedback was critical in order for it to be an effective tool.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The overall findings and analysis in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 support the theory that feedback can assist in enhancing performance. The hypothesis that was put forward in Chapter 1 has been ultimately been proven to be true.

This has been done by completing both the primary and secondary objectives that were outlined in Chapter 1. In addition to these objectives this research has given further insight into the experiences and attitudes of operational employees at the front of one of the most well – know organisation in Ireland. The study shows the key principles which should be applied within most organisation who want to develop and sustain a high performance. Results indicate that feedback is necessary but also this feeds into other areas which are imperative to enhance performance. By understanding employees ‘wants’ this can promote more commitment, unity and staff buy – in to the overall process. As mentioned in the literature the whole process of feedback and performance is a two way street. That is feedback cannot happen without some element of performance and performance will not matter if any individual does not know if he / she is meeting the required standards. Organisations are then required to have in place initiatives which can are both beneficial to the employees and in turn to the success of the organisation.

The study highlighted the use of technology as a mechanism however the results indicated that this method needed to be used in the appropriate manner not just because of its availability. The results indicate that feedback positive or negative can indeed enhance performance but what was interesting to note that all employees were wiling accept negative feedback. As stated in the literature review people were less

willing to accept negative feedback however from the sample group this was not the case. There was a high element of trust between management and employees within the organisation. By creating such a trust and unity seemed to enhance the overall culture which in turn helped individuals develop and learn. The use of coaches / mentors although popular among many organisations the author feels that from the primary research conducted this term may become lost in the future and a new spin on the initiative. However the principle will remain unchanged, that is to help individuals reach their optimal potential. Coaching as a means of enhancing performance as highlighted in the findings should not be the only method made available of a way of enhancing performance. Thus the examination of alternative methods or more specifically as implied by the interviewees a combination of a number of methods should be looked at more closely by the respective organisations. Listed below are some recommendations that have been developed in accordance with the objectives.

6.2 Recommendations

1. The author is of the opinion that a combination of both technology and face – to – face initiatives with regards to developing and learning be strategically incorporated into an individual's personal goals and that of the organisation itself. Considering the advantages of E – Learning it will continue to grow but only if implemented in a manner which is suited to the individual needs.
2. On implementation of such initiatives, the author recommends that the organisation have a framework in place to create individual responsibility for his / her development where it can be monitored by the organisation on a full time basis and not when issues arise i.e. lack of skilled, knowledgeable employees

3. In order for an organisation such as Medtronic to be successful the overall culture seems to play a key role in the success of the company. The author recommends that organisations should develop an open and honest culture by developing strategies with employees as to create a strong unity among the workforce as highlighted in the findings.
4. As shown in Chapter Four individuals were willing to accept negative feedback. The author would advise that management ensure that the term negative feedback be withdrawn from its performance appraisal systems and that it be structured in a positive manner and create individual responsibility to enhance performance.
5. From Chapter Two it was highlighted that the BSC was common practice among firms. However this was not the case for Medtronic which has developed its own metrics to measure performance. The author recommends that organisations trying to implement the BSC should do so with caution. In the author's opinion they should avoid trying to implement it so rigorously and use it as a framework to meet the needs of its own organisation. It should avoid trying to implement the BSC on its organisation instead incorporate its needs on the BSC framework.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

The following issues were not initially investigated however arose during the research process and the author feels they would merit further study.

- Further research could be carried out in relation to the frequency of feedback and its effects on performance.

- Further research could be also carried out to examine the effectiveness of motivation and certain attitudes and personal development and performance.
- The trustworthiness of policies such as the BSC and 360 degree feedback and the impacts it has on the overall performance of organisations.
- An investigation into the usage patterns of technology more specifically E – Learning and the personal impact it has on individuals in organisations.

To conclude feedback and performance have a direct correlation which proves the hypothesis put forward in designing this research. The hypothesis that was undertaken for this dissertation was “that there is a relationship between feedback and technology (E – Learning) in developing and sustaining high performance”.

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And
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Appendices
Appendix 1 Tables 2 - 7

Table 1 Awareness of Policies and Procedures

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning and Development policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes but it is very limited with funds. Not up to standard of other companies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• L&D department responsibility for delivering training for procedures and work instructions relevant to the industry. Individual responsible for creating their own individual development plan and will tie in with L&D department who will organise courses etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• L and D Dept. send out e-mails to let people know about upcoming programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training In House and through Learning and Development, also financial assistance is granted for college courses relevant to the line of work we are in
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a L&D department in the company that takes care of this
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• continual opportunities to attend relevant courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an L & D dept who co-ordinate and promote same
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive training for all employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• email newsletter
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning and Development Department and Individual development plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning and development department set up by Medtronic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a learning development department that provides various internal courses and also support external courses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees can request, Managers can request
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific learning & Development dept

- Documented procedures and training is provided on an on-going basis by the Medtronic Learning and Development department.

- Dedicated L&D function offer suite of training courses

Table 2 Employees comments on negative feedback

- All feedback is necessary to help improve procedures and performances be it positive or negative as long as negative feedback is conveyed in an appropriate way

- It opens up a formal opportunity to review and objectively discuss / solve any potential issue.

- This type of feedback establishes areas of improvement to focus on in future, how to improve and learn from it

- Feedback cannot always be positive. Constructive feedback will help an employee to learn and develop

- Gives you direction on how to improve

- Feedback enhances self development and continuous improvement

- Identifies that your manager is aware of your work activities and they are willing to provide coaching on activities

- I believe constructive criticism is essential to help me perform better

- Communication is key to allow the employee develops.

- It helps me know where I need to improve and highlights areas where I am blinkered to what's going on around me

- Feedback is important either way

Table 3 Employees comments on corporate culture

It should be structured from the top down.

People look to their peers for leadership qualities and good communication links.

It has some impact in my opinion because it is your working environment

Performance is dictated by the overall corporate culture. If that culture is looking for continuous improvement then this will feed down to lower level staff, but if it isn't then performance will be static and may even drop.

A positive corporate culture has a strong influence on enhancing performance

Must be top down approach

Feedback and performance management need to be part of corporate culture to be effective.

IF there is no buy in from the top and everyone then it will fade away

I believe this comes down to each individual's perception of what the culture of their organisation is.

A company that encourages communication and has structures to allow this happen is more likely to prosper and grow.

I don't see how a corporate culture has any impact either negative or positive on performance

Always want to perform to the highest standard and the culture drives this

Table 4 Dave Morris Key Issues

Key Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educated, engaged employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaching within Medtronic is supervisors but not everybody is a mentor
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback affecting performance the main word is positive feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning Culture needs structure, openness, transparent, tell it as it is
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negative feedback – key to get employee to talk about his / her performance (I Statement), self aware of employee
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technology – positive attitude towards E – Learning however certain negative opinions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 360 degree feedback – Trust essential

Table 5 Nial O Reilly Key Issues

Key Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledgeable employees needed to be engaged through growing and developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaching is facilitation. However leadership needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback affecting performance - allow people to self regulate, manager self aware
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness, Motivation to close gap however performance equals potential minus interference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Balanced Score Card – Not used well
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technology – Needs to be real time information, also problems with e -

learning

- 360 degree feedback – Trust essential

Table 6 John McGuire Key Issues

Key Issues
• Critical to have knowledgeable employees on the front line
• Coaching develops critical thinking
• Frame feedback in positive manner
• Awareness of performance gap but also need to learn from others to close gap
• Balanced Score Card effective but regardless of framework critical to have full visibility and be able to measure and monitor
• Use of internet massive but filtering of information key
• 360 degree feedback – information from peers more effective, good structure

Table 7 Philip Matthews Key Issues

Key Issues
• Can do attitude
• Coaching minimum within any organisation
• Feedback critical to consistently improve
• Need honest, open feedback with trust based relationship, coaching culture to enhance performance
• Balanced Score Card effective but needs solid structure. Also trust, honest based relationship
• Technology not a solution on its own . Good for identifying KPI's
• 360 degree feedback – trust issues

Appendix 2 Interviews

Attitudes towards employees and feedback

- **In today's competitive environment how important is it to have knowledgeable employees compared to times gone by?**

I believe that in order for the company to be successful and remain competitive it is critical to have such employees. Without no education being provided in any sector how than could the organisation perform to a high standard continuously. In order to remain on upward curve employees need to be engaged in the overall process

- **In your profession how would you define feedback?**

A report on a employees or a mangers or a person's potential performance it should be an aid to performance and its aim should be improve the performance of that person

- **Recent trends have suggested that coaching within organisations has gained significantly in recent times. How important is it to have coaching available and does it really work or is it just another fad?**

There are many external coaches out there who charge for their services and they have put a particular spin on this, an employee's coach is going to be their supervisor and they are actually bigger than some, as not everybody is a mentor. It depends what is defined by coaching I think the whole feedback, mentoring will get a lot stronger. I am not sure what brand, it will probably be reinvented as another brand going forward but the actual word coaching I am unsure whether that will last.

- **Studies have shown that feedback can enhance performance. In your opinion how important is feedback positive or negative and can it really affect the overall performance?**

The whole feedback process and performance improvement if you like what I would classify it in, the main word is positive feedback. In our performance management cycle we set our goals and objectives at the start of the year. They are then measured at the end of the year. From the employees perspective that measurement results in their rewards package, so they get either high or low increase. In addition to this they get a six month review but as part of our cycle we have continuous feedback where the manager should review the employees' performance. This is done on a monthly basis and ensures continuous feedback in their goals and objectives this perspective has benefit to those employees who has specific goals in mind and is getting feedback and performance improvement the benefit is enormous for the company.

- **A coaching or learning culture seems to be of great importance in a high performance organisation with regards to reaching optimal performance, but what elements do you believe are critical in closing the performance gap?**

This is linked to the last question and the employee create opportunities they need to play an important part and set specific goals with their manager this can't be driven by a manager it and not by an employee it has to be done by both. Managers need coaching to be able to give the framework to provide that structure. It is also up to the organisation to have a culture where people can be open and transparent and speak their mind. The tendency about it is Cander which means you tell it as it is, this is a very important culture to have. The important thing about this is having coaching and education in place for managers to control of their own. We have a very

comprehensive interview and a psycho metric score card that I am unfortunately I am not too familiar with to help identify employees that have this type of culture.

- **The Balanced Score Card is one of the main tools by companies measuring performance within the organisation; do you feel this is an effect way of measuring performance?**

We have on our own metrics? This was developed internally and we currently are looking at refining them again.

- **Timing, trustworthiness, accuracy are just some of the key elements of feedback. What do you feel are the essential elements a manager should be aware of in providing feedback to employees if it is negative feedback?**

I think all managers should know their employee, that is critical. They must also be a good listener, so in order to give good feedback I think the first thing you have to be is a good listener that is the key skill. It is important that you use active listening. So that you understand, where the employee is coming from. If it is negative feedback it is important that the manger is very careful, so understanding the individual is important. I would say to be an active listener is critical. You need to hear the employees side first. For instance the way a feedback session might go you ask the employee how do they think they have performed. We use a I statement here, called a three bird I statement. Which might be to be honest I was disappointed or I noticed that you did not meet this deadline on time which has left me feeling disappointed because my manager came down heavy on me because we missed the time. It should be open ended maybe three part I questions but we listen first before giving feedback because you have to understand the full situation and there may be something

personal going on, they may be some work related issues that the I as a manager may not have sorted for that employee so it is important to listen.

- **Would Medtronic ever review the overall atmosphere of the work force?**

We have a global voices survey which is every two years and that gives us the best feeling for how employees are feeling. One of the questions would be pertain to regular feedback. That then is broken down by each different department this allows us then to get a fair idea regarding opinions on managers. We also do an annual survey on the great place to work survey and that question is asked in their as well. Culture is a big part of this company and feedback gives employees to the opportunity to improve and the employees themselves know this first hand. Therefore negative feedback is an opportunity to improve or an area of consideration rather than a slap on the wrist.

Use of technology and other methods to enhance performance

- **Technology has become part of everyday business life, is the use of technology an effective way in enhancing performance?**

Technology can be a way of enhancing performance if it makes the job easier and more efficient it is.

- **Is it a major part of Medtronic?**

It can be fairly labour intensive but most technology we use is system orientated particularly on the floor there is affair bit of manual work in it. But there are some systems there, for support of all systems all the work is done via laptop.

- **Do you feel that e – learning can in fact help develop and train employees more effectively and efficiently compared to traditional methods such as coaching manuals, in house training and even the executive coach?**

E learning is something that is coming in at the moment, again it is not working as well in this organisation as people still have not grasped the whole area that for E - learning you need to be in charge of your development, you want to develop. And some people see e learning as managers sending them on course rather than them saying that this would be good for me. With e learning because it is left up to individual some of them do not follow through on it. That is what we are seeing in this company that it just has not taken off. We have some fantastic resources in e learning but we are just not getting value for them. Because wither people do not have time or have other priorities.

- **Is a financial strain on the company having these resources in place?**

No because they are global programs and the good thing about e learning is that can spend many geographies it does not make any difference. E learning is the most cost effective method you could have. It takes out the interaction between in house training and mixing with other functions which I think is very useful as well.

- **Do you think it has the potential to replace face to face coaching?**

The view of coaching may shift in that it may be 80% e learning and 20% class room face to face. In my view though no it will never fully replace it.

- **Employees are now seeking feedback more than ever with regards to performance. How in your opinion is the best way in communicating such feedback as in to transfer it into performance?**

The best way of communicating feedback is face to face starting with listening , it also very important to be a good observer and then to provide accurate concise feedback in a timely manner. After you feedback one of the key things is how you measure and control and that there is an improvement in place. So it is regular monitoring after that would be the key and a control process. We are lucky in Medtronic that because we are in a regulatory environment and there are so many controls around quality and that sort of stuff that it kind of feeds into the rest of your work. So people would say when they are giving you feedback and they are correcting something that we will monitor it and come back in three weeks and let me know how it is going.

- **360 degree feedback has become very popular with regards to performance appraisal. Do you agree with such a method?**

We really like it as a developmental tool, not so much as performance tool. The benefits are you are getting great feedback from multiple areas. It is very good because it is from different levels within the organisation an employee has more trust in it than it was just coming from one person. So there is more trust there. In a 360 there will be more than five people usual giving feedback, there are systems and processes in place that the best and the worst would be taken away and you work with the other three in order to ensure a good average of feedback. It is a lot better than having only performance review carried out by a manager and if that manager does not like the employee or does not get on with the employee then there is far greater chance of an unfair or inconsistent performance review than 360 degree feedback.

- **What methods are used in Medtronic?**

360 degree developmental for some people, this would be the primary source. Performance appraisal is one on one, manager gives performance appraisal to an employee. So an employee rates themselves and then a manager comes in and provides feedback on that. We also carry out 360 performance reviews in certain circumstances but we prefer to focus on the developmental because that is very much focused on what are the areas of improvement, rather than what are the negative areas. That this person did in the past year, which is more kind of the review. So we like looking at what this person can improve on in the future. The problem with 360 degree feedback is that it just takes so much time. So instead on just person reviewing, you are in the situation where you have five people reviewing, and then this information has to be correlated. And put into a report. Then the manager has to give this information to the employee. If everyone on site was getting a 360 appraisal you are exponentially multiply your time spent on performance management by five at least so that is a major problem for us.

- **Do you feel there any other key issues in relation to feedback and performance?**

They used to be issues in diversity, where giving feedback to someone and saying no someone is totally different in many different languages that you come from. So if you have a provider from a different country and you ask can I do such a thing and they just said no, you could deem that to be aggressive, when it is part of their culture as being very standard. That was a huge issue for us in training on cultural differences. Now we are starting to see is generation differences. We are currently doing research on generational differences and this is a huge change. Take someone from the generation X and the baby boomers who were very loyal to the company, while generation Y, who see things moving so slowly who in their own life have

Facebook information exchanges and most of their conversations are done over instant messenger or chat on Facebook and things like this where other people might like face to face. So we need to provide forums where people can vent their views more, it is not all about face to face and we need to align to these generational differences which is really becoming huge at the moment. Medtronic have recently embraced Facebook, it allows people to go on line in work. It has its own internal Facebook site and there are links that you can network with other people right throughout the world. This highlights how technology and communications and the generations are changing. This is a big area going forward and I think it will have a huge impact on feedback and performance. It is the one critical area that this generation Y coming up and the speed that they work at is phenomenal. They want information fast and they want it now and they want instant rewards and gratification.

Attitudes towards employees and feedback

- **In today's competitive environment how important is it to have knowledgeable employees compared to times gone by?**

The knowledge economy this talk about the knowledge economy I think scientifically and I have seen some presentations on this, we do not have the where withal at present in this country. At best we can be a subsidiary to other knowledge economies that have all the elements but we do not have the scale. The point is whatever economic activity that we have going forward what is absolutely central to it is a knowledgeable engaged people in particular because China, Brazil, India these brick countries have an endless supply of labour. Where are we going to get a competitive edge, that is how we going to get it, by finding a way to engage our people through work it is through growing and developing them. In today's competitive environment I think it is critical to engage our workforce.

- **In your profession how would you define feedback?**

My definition of feedback would be text book stuff would be information that informs the performer, which is delivered in a non emotional non confrontational way. In other words you are just giving the person information. If you give people information that allows them then to self regulate. While if I start giving out to you and I come at you in an emotional way there is something else going on in the discussions. So it needs to be clean and clear and it needs to be just information that allows you to self regulate. I have an exercise that I use with teams. I am getting geared up to use it tomorrow where I put a lad sitting on the chair throwing tennis balls into a bucket. If you look at the way people respond to the different versions of that exercise where people are roaring and shouting at a fella it just gets hyper, he gets no better and that

is why even in the GAA there should be a study done around the county on the side lines and what goes on. It is criminal it is no use to the performers no use at all. So what I would define as real time the quicker you can the information to people to allow them to regulate, to self regulate. If people get information and it is accurate and it is delivered in a non emotive way they can take it on board.

- **Are there different aspects on the person giving the information?**

I use a little model on confrontation, a study has shown that if I want to confront you about something, example if the coffee we received was cold and I needed to bring the waiter over and tell him, I would be anxious about doing that on some level or another. Because this is the thing about giving feedback to people it causes anxiety from the person who is giving the feedback. That anxiety can then lead to distortion in their behaviour. Typically the model that I use the guy argues that at two extremes what happens is that if I have to confront somebody and give them negative feedback I am liable to either clobber or to pussy foot around. So I might be either fluting around or I may not tell them directly I may tell him to tell him and that sort of thing. Or else I come straight down the line and hit you over the head and say look you are this wrong. Both of those ways of giving feedback are a distortion and that distortion is caused by my anxiety so what I have to do is manage that anxiety and to recognise that for the feedback to be useful. I either go straight up the middle and tell the guy and give the guy the feedback on the basis that it is valuable to him and valuable to me. The other thing that is in that case study the man suggests that the person who is the confrontee so if I confront the waiter and call him over here, the minute that I call him over he gets a shock and he becomes anxious about the interaction So those two dynamics make feedback difficult to give.

- **Recent trends have suggested that coaching within organisations has gained significantly in recent times. How important is it to have coaching available and does it really work or is it just another fad?**

Yes this absolutely works if the coach knows what he is doing. My definition of coaching is facilitation. It is facilitation of improved performance in another person. Too often coaching is misinterpreted as management. So in other words I would manage you or I would control you, that is seen as coaching but that is not coaching. I would see coaching as an akin to a form of leadership, where if you are familiar with Daniel Goldmans work? Intelligence. There is a book called the new leaders by Daniel Goldman. Goldman suggests that there are two types of leadership. There is what you call dissendant leadership and resident leadership. Dissendant leadership would be described as command and control, this is done in a case setting, may also be used in the context of carrot and stick. Dissendant leadership is driving them on ahead of you, trying to control the situation. You would see different managers trying to do that. Resident leadership is where you lead people on, so visionary leadership coaching style, democratic styles, where you engage people and generate the energy in them as supposed to pushing it into them. So for me the answer to that question is a no brainer. Proper coaching, the right coaching in the proper circumstances is invaluable and it absolutely does work. Whether the word coaching will take off I am not sure as it is not understood. There are many variations of it out there. . There are four things that are closely related. If you are going to buy a bike, you hire a consultant to tell you which bike to buy, you hire a mentor to show you how to cycle the biike previously and to show you the best techniques to cycle the bike. You will hire a psychotherapist to help you get over your fear of cycling and help you get on the bike. You will hire a coach to help you on the bike and hold the saddle and run along beside you as you are getting on. There is kind of a system which has very

subtle differences. I think what is at play in all this is, there is an emerging discipline known as positive psychology, it is going to suffer because of the use of the word positive. Positive psychology is the application for what psychology has learned over the years for good as opposed to the treatment of illness. If you go study psychology the vast majority of people who study psychology get drawn off into dealing with people who are sick. They end up working in hospitals or in therapy, where there is a whole body of knowledge that could be applied in business. The driver of that is called Martin Seligman, he wrote a book called Learned Optimism a few years ago he is based in Penn State University. I have a feeling that if that coaching word does get lost that it will fade into that Positive Psychology movement as that continues to develop.

- **Studies have shown that feedback can enhance performance. In your opinion how important is feedback positive or negative and can it really affect the overall performance?**

My belief is that feedback allows people self regulate. Be it positive or negative feedback is feedback. How it is given and how it is received as the potential to affect it, but it most definitely contributes to performance.

- **A coaching or learning culture seems to be of great importance in a high performance organisation with regards to reaching optimal performance, but what elements do you believe are critical in closing the performance gap?**

First of all an awareness of the gap is important, an awareness of where I am versus where I want to be and an appreciation of the size of that gap. Now if you look at those two places where I am and where I want to be they are two opposite places. People need to be spending a bit of time looking at where they are, why they are there

and how they have come to be there. This will help facilitate the behaviour change that is needed to get them up to here.

Where would this come? The HR Manager? The thing about the employee is that most of us do not understand ourselves, to start off and if we spent more time analysing ourselves and becoming more self aware, then closing the gap to performance becomes easy then as, because awareness is the cure. The differences between, and I would often use the equation performance equals potential minus interference John Quakmore I think came up with that. So performance at any given time equals potential minus interference and they say that on average the average performer be it a sportsman or an employee on average delivers about 40% of their capacity at any given point in time. Motivation would also have a key part to play in this, but the interference and if you look at what makes up that that interference lack of motivation would be one thing but mostly the interference comes from self limiting beliefs. All behaviour is driven by your belief system. Therefore I could well have beliefs back in my subconscious that I do not know are back there. So the stuff back there that I do not necessarily exist, so until I get to know that this exists, my behaviour will not be changed in a sustainable way. What goes on in a lot of performance cases is that, what HR people at work see is the systems of the belief. So they are trying to attack the symptoms. It is like if you were overweight and you wanted to lose weight. What happens with most of these diets is that they go after the root cause not the root the symptoms. They are only tactical systems. There is a book called Immunity to Change by Keegan and Lahey, they have unearthed a absolutely brilliant but very simple framework for tackling what I am talking about there. It is that book as I mentioned above.

The challenge then is changing the culture because most of our managers in our organisations they come from a command and control style. I had a team of three guys from senior management into me last week and they it was kind of a clearing the air session. We were out of the office for about four hours, we met early in the morning and we had a good session at the end of the session I said to them when you go back in what will have happen when you were gone and the answers from each were nothing, nothing done unless we are there. That for me is very telling if that business requires them to be there for the work to be done there is something wrong, and it is wrong from the top. Sometimes set the workplace up this way though to sustain their engagement with the workplace. So that they do really well when I am there but they do nothing when I am not.

- **The Balanced Score Card is one of the main tools by companies measuring performance within the organisation; do you feel this is an effect way of measuring performance?**

I use this on regular basis and I define what I do using the balance scorecard. I think it is a good methodology but I have rarely seen it well used. . I think companies mis-use it, I think the root of a lot of our problems in business is that we have fallen victim to the belief that if it gets measured it gets done. That feeds in to your topics on feedback. Measuring stuff and giving people feedback is important but what has happened is that , what gets measured is that which is easily measurable, and an assumption is made if you cannot measure it, it is not important. So if you say to a guy how is your workforce today, how are they feeling? The response usual is how would I know how they are feeling. So if I can't measure it, it must not be important. This is a big mistake. Another anecdote, I went to visit a company in the Midlands a couple of months back. I was meeting the head of operations and as I was going in to the factory I could see him standing. They were all kitted out in their blue hats, their

lab coats for the day, they were talking their instructions for the day from him. This was called their morning huddle. When I met the guy I said to him, I saw that there was a meeting going on what was the story behind that? He said we meet every morning so that everyone is clear about what has to be done each day, the schedule, what is coming in, what's going out all of the that stuff. So I asked him then how were the performers this morning? He responded how do you mean how are they. We have a performance measurement system and performance management system and a disciplinary system and that is the way it works. That man in my opinion is living in cloud cuckoo land because they are humans they are not machines and he is missing a massive piece of the jigsaw. Because if they are feeling good about themselves then they will perform well. There is a theory in psychotherapy that if more than one person works together that how the way everyone is feeling will affect the system. So this is also related to culture and can have a massive impact on performance.

I would recommend the balance scorecard as a framework but what is missing in most HR departments is Learning and Development. There is too much emphasis put on learning and gathering knowledge and not enough on understanding and. So for me knowledge is filling people's heads with information and development is making people bigger vessels for holding knowledge. So people can gather knowledge and never develop it. So there should be a balance and for the country at the moment that is critical point. We are pumping millions into retraining, and it is a waste of time. Unless we develop the people along with it. There is no point filling their heads with knowledge if they are unable to apply it. The stuff that prevents them from applying

it is emotional stuff. It is about self belief, conviction, motivation, you cannot learn it in a book.

- **Timing, trustworthiness, accuracy are just some of the key elements of feedback. What do you feel are the essential elements a manager should be aware of in providing feedback to employees if it is negative feedback?**

I think that the essential elements are that the manager is self aware of his impact, of how his message is being received. A lot of that is covered in this concept of emotional intelligence. Goldmans take on that is that there are four elements to emotional intelligence the main ones that affect the above question would be (1) self awareness- aware of how I am, am I in good form or bad form or whatever (2) self management is next –when I get upset or annoyed about something how do I manage that, or am I aware of it at all, how good am I at building relationships. Therefore essential elements emotional intelligence would be number one how he is before he gives the feedback, and how is the feedback affecting the person who is getting it.

The impact of negative feedback depends on the recipient. It is important to give both types of feedback. No performance is totally bad and if it is feedback is the wrong solution regardless. What is important to realise is that if you are unable to change the person, you need to change the people.

Use of technology and other methods to enhance performance

- **Technology has become part of everyday business life, is the use of technology an effective way in enhancing performance?**

I have studied this in great detail but I have come across a product called Limeade, it is an American developed product, which is not finished yet. What I like about this

product is that it is an Iphone Application and in ten seconds in the morning I can do a quick upload of how things are for me, and I can give myself a score, and if everybody on the business is on Limeade, the business can get a temperature reading of how things are in the organisation. I can screen what I share but I have to allow my score to go out to others on the network. It allows the business to see if there is stuff going on or not. At the moment the technology we have is hopelessly inadequate, we do a staff survey once a year or once a quarter, this is a waste of time. Technology has got to get to a point where we have real time information about how the people are, because how they are today affects how they deliver today and once today is over that opportunity is gone.

There is a book by Barbara Frederickson she is part of the involved in this positive psychology movement, it is called Positivity and from her research she acknowledges that negativity. Positivity and negativity are the opposite ends of the same charge; you cannot have one without the other. So one of the follies that we have been living for the last number of years is this idea that if you think positive, does not listen to negativity. But this is nonsense there is a thin line between positivity and delusion, not facing the book of facts. I think we need to maintain a positive outlook, whatever happens we will be able to cope and ultimately if we are not able to cope we will be dead anyway. So we will be able to cope that is the positive outlook, but in the mean time we have to face the book of facts. Her research has shown that if we can maintain a ratio of 3:1 a day, something will happen today that will annoy the hell out of you and you get annoyed. The risk with that is that when one bad thing happens you go into that cycle of negativity. Because negativity slows down your perspective, and loads of positive things could happen that day but you may not necessarily may attention to them. This is a big culture that exists in Ireland. Frederick is saying that if

we get a ratio of 3:1 and can reflect at the end of the day and acknowledge that such a thing happened and was bad, but we should also acknowledge that at least three good things happened today no matter how small or insignificant. She has an online test that you can complete every day, and she will send you an email and you go on line and reflect on your previous day.

Attitudes towards employees and feedback

- **In today's competitive environment how important is it to have knowledgeable employees compared to times gone by?**

As an example to answer the question we are developing golf a hybrid device that feeds an online environment. In that online environment there are a number of different features such as golfers route around a golf course, in the market place there is a recommendations engine, in the social side of things where people can compete independent of golf course. So i need employees who can figure out how to do that, so be it software developers they have to figure out how to code that or a cheap technology officer who understands Gps, coordinates, in Gps it is not always accurate so you have to write Algorithms to ensure that it is accurate. So if i do not have employees who do not understand what they are doing i am in trouble. The product development will get delayed and it will cost more, and will not produce a satisfactory product. So therefore knowledgeable employees are critical to the success of this business they have got to know what they are supposed to know. The times gone by is not as relevant to me. You always have competitiveness in both the good and the bad times, so it is all relative, you still have to be providing serious value to your customers and if your competitor comes out with a product that adds better value or they love it more, well then you have to figure out how to react. You need the best people on the front line to get the job done.

- **In your profession how would you define feedback?**

For me feedback is positioning a statement in such a way that you are getting the other people to think about something that needs to be resolved. You have positive

feedback and negative feedback. For me feedback is more about asking open ended questions like 'How do you think you did?' 'Where do you think you can do better?' 'On a scale of one to ten where do you think you are?' This then gives the other person the chance to give you the feedback. It should be a way of helping someone get better or at least it should be.

- **Do think it is better coming from a manager?**

Well i am coming at it from a CEO's perspective, so really it depends on the relationship, the trust. If you have a very good relationship with someone and they know that you have their best interests at heart, then depending on the rapport that is established you can feedback directly to the employee. But in general you have to be careful with feedback as you can offend people. But if they are doing something wrong you have to ask yourself why they are in that role in the first place.

- **Recent trends have suggested that coaching within organisations has gained significantly in recent times. How important is it to have coaching available and does it really work or is it just another fad?**

As a CEO when you have taken on an investment and you have shareholders and you are responsible to the Board and the shareholders delivering and driving that can be sometimes a lonely place that is when having an executive coach or a board of advisors or mentors that you basically sit down and off load where they maybe just listen and even during this process you may figure things out yourself. Or they may even ask questions that are open ended or ask questions that may get you to think what the solution might be without jumping in to tell you what the solution is, this develops better thinking, better critical thinking. So therefore in my opinion executive

coaching or coaching philosophies applied to business is not another fad but has been in existence for a long period of time just people are putting different terms on things.

- **Studies have shown that feedback can enhance performance. In your opinion how important is feedback positive or negative and can it really affect the overall performance?**

To show how feedback can enhance performance you get someone sitting in a chair with their back to a bin and they have tennis balls. If you have a group of people saying to you left, to your left, or to your right then that person can adjust their performance to put the tennis ball in the bin. If there is a group of people shouting abuse at that person and nobody giving action orientated feedback that person is going to get overwhelmed, embarrassed and their performance will drop. This can be physically demonstrated with the tennis ball example. So yes absolutely it affects performance. It is critical you need to frame your feedback in a positive manner. There is no reason why you need to give negative feedback it just needs to be framed in a positive manner.

- **What if the situation is terrible and negative feedback or sacking the employee are the only solutions?**

It depends if the person is on false pretences and completely lied and have got through all the different scenarios a) they should not have and b) if that is the situation then you not have to give negative feedback you just have to tell them that there is no role for them in the business that should be the situation. In general if you can encourage people of you foster belief in someone, if you can develop trust and if you give people responsibility then mostly human beings will arise to whatever it is, and that is why positive feedback is so important.

- **A coaching or learning culture seems to be of great importance in a high performance organisation with regards to reaching optimal performance, but what elements do you believe are critical in closing the performance gap?**

If there is a performance gap, it is important to understand where that performance gap is, trying to parallel best practice so looking across different organisations or teams, looking at what they do. If they are the standard that you trying to get to well then you need to look at what they are doing. You need to try and understand what they are doing and how they are doing things. So for me in this business i am at a certain level and i am trying to get to another level. So i am surrounding myself in CEO's that are at a much higher level than me, that have raised much more money than me, that are bringing business to IPO's and i am learning from those guys so i am reading the books attending the courses but more importantly i am getting face time with these guys. I am getting advice and mentoring from those guys. I think that dramatically increases the speed when closing the performance gap.

- **The Balanced Score Card is one of the main tools by companies measuring performance within the organisation; do you feel this is an effect way of measuring performance?**

I believe that anything that can be monitored and visualised over time can be improved. This came from the Hawthorne effect, where they did studies years ago in a factory, where they changed all the elements slightly and examined the changes in the workers. They found that none of these changes affected the performance of the workers, but actual what did have an impact was the fact that the activity was being

monitored. To have full visibility in what you are doing you need to be able to measuring and monitoring.

- **Timing, trustworthiness, accuracy are just some of the key elements of feedback. What do you feel are the essential elements a manager should be aware of in providing feedback to employees if it is negative feedback?**

I think it is very important that if there is a rapport if the trust has been built up, then people can be very honest. But if there is no trust no rapport then anything that you say that will have any sort of a negative connotation will be taken as an attack and the first thing people do when they attack is that they defend. Your defensives are up, ego's are involved and then there is no learning and there is probably no behaviour change other than blockage. Therefore i would reframe negative feedback in a way that it would be positive. For example 'you are really, really good in this area now here is an area where i think that you improve, you are not meeting your taken here but i think that you have the capability of improving. I would get their opinion on that and ask them how they are going to go about improving and this then will get them close the gap. You are putting the onus back on the person and you allowing them the opportunity to improve.

Use of technology and other methods to enhance performance

- **Technology has become part of everyday business life, is the use of technology an effective way in enhancing performance?**

Absolutely the internet in particular as it becomes pervasive in everyday life, everything that you need to know from a business point of view is on the internet. If you want to construct a competitor analysis, there is so much information you can get

off the internet. If you want to look at what best practice is there are sites that are gathering that information. There are sites for everything now. The biggest problem with technology and the internet right now is that there is so much information that the filtering of this information is becoming the critical thing. There is just so much information that where people are going to win in the next couple of years is those that come out with stuff that actually removes the crap the excess.

- **Do you feel that e – learning can in fact help develop and train employees more effectively and efficiently compared to traditional methods such as coaching manuals, in house training and even the executive coach?**

I believe that each of these have a place. I do not believe that one is better than the other. I believe that a mix of the lot combined with on the job experience, because i know that when i worked in Nortel that i would go on different courses for a week before ever having done work experience in that area. I would on the course and come back and it would never have been applied and they would have paid huge money for me to go on these courses, it was a waste of money it was not relevant. Therefore i believe for any sort of training if you compare yourself with anyone who is doing that job that understand it and is very good at it then that combined with e-learning is the way to do it. It very similar in sport if you want to go out in the pitch and practice side line cuts or high balls, it is good to have someone to pair off with that can actually deliver what you need so that you can practice. I am unsure though if it will ever replace face to face but with skype face to face can be done over the internet. So it depends what you are training, if it requires you to understand mannerism and tone and all that stuff it is harder to do it through the internet. Where as if it is more technical competency you are trying to build then e learning could be just as good as going off site. It is important to try and get the right blend.

- **Employees are now seeking feedback more than ever with regards to performance. How in your opinion is the best way in communicating such feedback as in to transfer it into performance?**

The best way i can answer this is to give you an example with a team that i worked with. We would get thirty in a team, so we would have fifteen facing fifteen, so like in speed dating. I would have to say to the person facing me what i felt about them in their position. They would not be able to say anything back. The important thing here is that they all start off positive so that they are not getting at their ego. Then you bring in the negative inferences but again it is shaped in a way where they think that person can improve. This lasts for twenty seconds at which point Sean writes down quickly the main parts that has been said to him. This rotates so that each person gets fifteen players evaluating each other. What Sean has to do then if fifteen out of the thirty people say to Sean the same thing, more than likely that will get through his defences and eventually he will walk away and say you know what i need to work on what they have said. That is feedback, a manager giving out that is not feedback. Your peers telling you where they think you can improve and enough of them saying the same thing, a message will come out of that. That same principle will apply across a work place. In the workplace of X and Y do not like each other, they should not be in this position. There should be a situation where the team are all aligned towards the vision of the company. That they are excited by it and that everyone is heading in the same direction, now that is easier said than done but if everyone is excited and everyone has their role and if there is respect and trust then you are not going to have X and Y hating each other then you need to look very carefully at how you neutralise that situation because that will affect other team members and it is the same for sport.

- **360 degree feedback has become very popular with regards to performance appraisal. Do you agree with such a method?**

Yes i agree with this method, it is a good structure for feedback. Again there are pros and cons like in the example above where X and Y do not get on. Here it is important to send it out to a number of people to ensure that you get proper, valid, accurate responses. So you may have one person that hates but the others information should not contain bias.

- **Do you feel there any other key issues in relation to feedback and performance?**

People go around with filters on in front of their heads. Everyone has a filter, and you only allow through that filter what you believe in here. So if you believe that something is not going to improve your performance, no matter what anyone says you will take that in. A good example would be Roger Banister when he broke the four minute mile. At the time people believed that it was not physically possible to break that four minute mile but he had the capability of removing that filter for long enough to allow him to actually him to train and say to himself i am going to break that four minute mile and then he did and he broke it. Now because then he broke it within the same year, ten or twelve more people broke it but up to then nobody had broken it. All of sudden there was this belief that actually it could be broken, what people do not realise around performance is that your belief dictates everything. The way it works is that your thoughts, the way you think creates your feelings. So if you do not believe in yourself over something and then you come face to face with it, you become anxious, apprehensive, and you will not be sleeping right. All of these create a reduction in energy, if you think about something long enough you add emotion to it you will

build the belief that says you cannot do it. So whatever you believe to be true will have an impact on the way that you act. People have to be aware that this is the way that we work.

Attitudes towards employees and feedback

- **In today's competitive environment how important is it to have knowledgeable employees compared to times gone by?**

That's a very broad term (knowledgeable). It's just as important as ever, but as important are resilience, 'can do', positive outlook, enthusiasm, application, etc. i.e. soft skills.

- **In your profession how would you define feedback?**

Authentic, honest and evidence-based dialogue about the performance/attitude/behaviour of an individual or team.

- **Recent trends have suggested that coaching within organisations has gained significantly in recent times. How important is it to have coaching available and does it really work or is it just another fad?**

It's not a fad, it's not critical but it a minimum it's an important tool for managers and leaders to have at their disposal if only a personal competency.

- **Studies have shown that feedback can enhance performance. In your opinion how important is feedback positive or negative and can it really affect the overall performance?**

It is absolutely essential. That doesn't mean that people (as individuals) can't improve their performance without feedback, but to consistently improve and for an organisation to improve, it is essential.

- **A coaching or learning culture seems to be of great importance in a high performance organisation with regards to reaching optimal performance, but what elements do you believe are critical in closing the performance gap?**

Clear objectives, regular measurement/tracking, regular honest and open feedback and trust-based relationships between individuals.

- **The Balanced Score Card is one of the main tools by companies measuring performance within the organisation; do you feel this is an effect way of measuring performance?**

Yes I do albeit that there are others things that are necessary in order to improve (mentioned above).

- **Timing, trustworthiness, accuracy are just some of the key elements of feedback. What do you feel are the essential elements a manager should be aware of in providing feedback to employees if it is negative feedback?**

Exactly the same things. Trust is built however is noticing and recognising those things that are positive as well as those things that need to be improved.

Use of technology and other methods to enhance performance

- **Technology has become part of everyday business life, is the use of technology an effective way in enhancing performance?**

In facilitating KPI's, etc. yes it is not technology is not a solution on it's own.

- **Do you feel that e – learning can in fact help develop and train employees more effectively and efficiently compared to traditional methods such as coaching manuals, in house training and even the executive coach?**

E-learning can be very useful for certain skill or knowledge training but not for coaching.

- **Employees are now seeking feedback more than ever with regards to performance. How in your opinion is the best way in communicating such feedback as in to transfer it into performance?**

A well-constructed performance management system and a coaching culture within the organisation

- **360 degree feedback has become very popular with regards to performance appraisal. Do you agree with such a method?**

Yes but it needs to be supported by a trust-based and 'adult' organisational culture.

- **Do you feel there any other key issues in relation to feedback and performance?**

Many managers don't know how to give feedback and have had little or no development in this area.

Appendix 3 Questionnaire

Sample of Questionnaire

1. (A) Does your company have any initiatives in providing training and learning within your working environment?

Yes No If Yes please give details / If No go to question 2

(B) How is this delivered?

(Please tick box)

Employee Approach Management for training

On – Going

Once Off

2. Is the participation encouraged by your department with regards to training and development?

Yes No

3. If yes, what activities does your department engage in to encourage participation in training and development?

Section 1

Attitudes towards feedback

1. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements with regard to an organisation providing feedback on performance

Using the scale provided circle the number that best indicates how you feel about the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Your organisation establishes and clearly communicates realistic performance expectations.

SD	D	NO	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

Your organisation provides direction and support concerning job expectations and objectives.

SD	D	NO	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

Your organisation uses coaching and regular feedback effectively to help me improve performance

SD	D	NO	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

Your organisation could provide more services and mentoring to achieve greater performance.

SD	D	NO	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

2. Do you feel that feedback is a critically element in your daily routine

(Feedback is defined as information received by an individual about his or her past behaviour).

Yes No

3. Positive feedback at frequent intervals has been shown to enhance performance. From this statement, what in your opinion is the current trend regarding feedback in your organisation?

Feedback on daily basis

Once a month

Every 3 – 6 months

Once a year

4. From the following list of statements what do you understand by the term performance management? Please tick one box.

- Communication process between staff
- Essential job functions the employee is expected to do
- How the employees job contributes to the goals of the organisation
- How employee and supervisor will work together to sustain, improve, or build on existi
employee performance
- All of the above

5. If you were to receive feedback positive or negative how would you feel?

(Feedback is defined as information received by an individual about his or her past behaviour).

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Using the scale provided circle the number that best indicates how you feel:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I would be motivated to perform better.	SD	D	NO	A	SA
			1	2	3
				4	5
2. I would feel very embarrassed.	SD	D	NO	A	SA
			1	2	3
				4	5

Please answer part (A).

2. (A) In relation to you answer from question one why do you think feedback is helpful?

3. Do you feel coaching / mentoring can enhance performance?

Yes No

4. Do you believe that the overall corporate culture is a critical issue in enhancing performance

Yes No

Please comment on your answer as to why you answered yes or no?

5. If you were to receive **negative** feedback from your fellow staff members and management, what would your reaction be?

From the statement above please answer from the scale below. This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions.

Strongly Disagree Disagree No opinion Agree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5

7. With regards to training / learning in a business environment, in a rating 1 – 4, one been the most common and four been the least, which do you feel is the most prominent for providing such training?

Education Internal	
Educational External	
On – Line (E – Learning)	
Coaching / Mentoring	

8. From the following statement decide how much you either agree or disagree. Using the scale provided circle the number that best indicates how you feel.

Strongly Disagree Disagree No opinion Agree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5

1. I would be interested in training to help me develop my skills

SD D NO A SA

1 2 3 4 5

2. Our [Company] is committed to improving the skills of current employees

SD D NO A SA

1 2 3 4 5

3. The training programs offered help me to develop

SD	D	NO	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

4. The trainers and techniques used are knowledgeable and effective.

SD	D	NO	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

Section 3

Technology enhancing performance / Personal details

9. With regards to technology, do you feel it is reliable way to enhance performance and provide on - going feedback?

Yes No

10. (A) Are you aware of the term E - Learning?

Yes No If Yes please answer part B and C / If No go to question 11

(B) From the following list of statements what do you understand by the term E - Learning? Please tick one box.

- Computer Based Training
- Internet Based Training
- Web Based Training
- All of the above

(C) Do you think this initiative worked?

Yes No

11. Age?

(Please tick box)

Under 18

18 – 23

24 – 29

Over 30

12. Level of Education?

(Please tick box)

Primary School

Secondary School

Third Level Education