

Performance management: system or ceremony?

A 20-point design scorecard for testing whether your performance cycle improves decisions—or only produces forms.

THE TEST

A credible system creates clear role outcomes, regular manager conversations, evidence-based judgement, consistent decisions and visible follow-through. Score ten design tests from 0 to 2, then choose the action the evidence supports.

USE THIS WITH

the chief executive, people leader and functional heads before redesigning the next cycle.

Score the system people actually experience.

0 = absent / 1 = inconsistent / 2 = clear, used and evidenced

01	Role outcomes People know the enduring outcomes their role owns—not only the activities they perform.	0	1	2
02	Objectives Current priorities are few, measurable and within the employee's influence.	0	1	2
03	Manager cadence Progress, barriers and support are discussed monthly in the flow of work.	0	1	2
04	Evidence Judgement uses delivery, stakeholder and work evidence—not recency or confidence.	0	1	2
05	Feedback Employees receive specific guidance early enough to change the outcome.	0	1	2
06	Calibration Leaders test consistency and evidence across teams without forcing a quota.	0	1	2
07	Development Actions address the real gap: capability, clarity, capacity, design or conduct.	0	1	2
08	Consequence Strong and weak performance lead to credible, differentiated decisions.	0	1	2
09	Governance Leaders own decisions while HR governs quality, rhythm and insight.	0	1	2
10	Adoption The system is light enough for managers to sustain without the launch team.	0	1	2

TOTAL

____ / 20

Use the result on page 3 to choose the intervention.

Choose the smallest intervention that fixes the system.

Do not start with software if the underlying decisions, roles or manager routines are unclear.

0–7

CEREMONY

DIAGNOSIS

The cycle produces activity but cannot support fair or useful decisions.

NEXT ACTION

Reset the design brief. Define role outcomes, decision needs, manager rhythm and governance before choosing tools.

8–14

INCONSISTENT

DIAGNOSIS

The architecture exists, but manager use, evidence or consequence varies materially by team.

NEXT ACTION

Pilot the weak components with real teams. Train for judgement and conversations; calibrate early and remove friction.

15–20

OPERATING SYSTEM

DIAGNOSIS

The system is credible and adopted. Improvement should be targeted rather than a wholesale redesign.

NEXT ACTION

Use data to identify exceptions, strengthen talent decisions and connect performance insight to workforce planning.

THE 90-DAY RESET

DAYS 1–20 Diagnose roles, decisions, evidence and manager reality.

DAYS 21–40 Design the minimum viable system and governance.

DAYS 41–65 Pilot with real objectives and performance conversations.

DAYS 66–90 Train, launch, review adoption and fix friction.

READ THE FULL GUIDE

elementmea.com/post/how-to-build-a-performance-management-system-that-works-in-the-uae-2026-guide