



Performance management analysis: a case study at a Dutch municipality

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Abstract

Purpose – Recently a tool called the performance management analysis (PMA) was developed, which can help an organisation evaluate its degree of performance drive. The purpose of this article is to describe the application of this tool at a Dutch municipality.

Design/methodology/approach – This article looks at a study undertaken by the University of Amsterdam which performed a performance management analysis at the city of Lelystad in The Netherlands.

Findings – The results of the analysis offered the municipality a clear insight into the areas that needed attention, which enticed the start of several performance management improvement projects.

Originality/value – Researchers are increasingly interested in the relation between behaviour and the use of performance management systems. It is important to study this relation because the use of performance management improves performance driven behaviour, and consequently the results of an organisation.

Keywords Performance management, Behaviour, Government, The Netherlands

Paper type Case study

Introducing the performance management analysis

In order to make a performance management system successful, i.e. it is regularly used by managers and results in improved organisational performance (Moriarty and Kennedy, 2002; Propper and Wilson, 2003; Said *et al.*, 2003; Davis, 2004; Epstein, 2004; Marr, 2004), both the structure of the performance management system and the performance-driven behaviour of an organisation need to be of a high quality (Lipe and Salterio, 2000; Martins, 2000). A method which can be used to assess whether this is the case, is the performance management analysis (PMA) (de Waal, 2004). The PMA looks at both the structural and the behavioural side of performance management. The “structural side” deals with the structure which needs to be implemented in order to use performance management. It usually includes critical success factors, key performance indicators, and often a balanced scorecard. The “behavioural side” deals with organisational members and their use of the performance management system. The PMA is based on the principle that both sides need to be given equal attention in order to establish a performance-driven organisation (de Waal *et al.*, 2004). The analysis enables an organisation to assess its “performance drive” by means of a questionnaire which covers nine dimensions. “Performance drive” is defined as a



strong performance orientation of organisational members resulting in a drive for continuous improvement and better results. The nine dimensions have been derived from criteria that are mentioned in the research literature as being most important for successful performance management (amongst others: Simons, 1995, 2000; Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Merchant, 1998; Neely, 1998, 2000; Lipe and Salterio, 2000; Malina and Selto, 2004; Marchand *et al.*, 2000; de Waal, 2001; Bauer *et al.*, 2004). The nine PMA dimensions are given in Table I. The structural dimensions deal with the content of performance management and the way it is organised in the organisation. The behavioural dimensions deal with the way organizational members apply performance management.

The managers of the organisation rate the criteria for each of the nine PMA dimensions on a scale of one to ten, indicating whether the organisation in their opinion

Dimension	Type	Description
Responsibility structure	Structural	A clear parenting style and tasks and responsibilities have been defined and these are applied consistently at all management levels
Content	Structural	Organisational members use a set of financial and non-financial performance information, which has a strategic focus through the use of critical success factors and key performance indicators
Integrity	Structural	The performance information is reliable, timely and consistent
Manageability	Structural	Management reports and performance management systems are user-friendly and more detailed performance information is easily accessible through ICT systems
Accountability	Behavioural	Organisational members feel responsible for the results of the key performance indicators of both their own responsibility areas and the organisation as a whole
Management style	Behavioural	Senior management is visibly interested and involved in the performance of organisational members and stimulates an improvement culture and proactive behaviour. At the same time, it consistently confronts organisational members with lagging results
Action orientation	Behavioural	Performance information is integrated in the daily activities of organisational members in such a way that problems are immediately addressed and (corrective or preventive) actions taken
Communication	Behavioural	Communication about the results (top-down and bottom-up) takes place at regular intervals as well as the sharing of knowledge and performance information between organisational units.
Alignment	–	Other management systems in the organisation such as the human resource management system, are well aligned with performance management, so what is important to the organisation is regularly evaluated and rewarded on

Table I.
Performance
management analysis:
the nine dimensions

currently does poor (score is between one to five) or well (score is between six to ten) on the criteria. They also rate the criteria on how well the organisation should be doing in the near future (the desired score in three years). After that, they calculate an average score for each dimension by dividing the total criteria scores by the number of criteria (five per dimension, except for “responsibility structure” which has four criteria). After everyone has completed the questionnaire, the scores of all respondents are averaged per dimension and the results are represented in a so-called PMA radar diagram (Figure 1). The structural dimensions are shown on the right in the radar diagram, the behavioural dimensions on the left. The radar diagram clearly indicates which side of the diagram and thus which specific dimensions need to be addressed to improve the organisation’s performance drive (see the “dents” in the PMA-diagram). It is up to the organisation to decide how much it can and wants to improve, and pull up its performance to a score of ten (the desired score).

In theory the more people fill in the questionnaire the better the PMA-diagram will depict the actual performance drive of the company. In practice the scores of between three to five respondents already give quite an accurate picture (de Waal, forthcoming). The PMA-diagram for a particular organisation can be compared with the PMA database which until now contains 195 organisations who filled in the analysis. In this way, the performance drive of a firm can be benchmarked against that of other companies.

Description of Lelystad

The city of Lelystad, a medium-sized Dutch municipality situated in the middle of the country, is a city on the move. Established in 1980, it currently has 71,000 inhabitants and 26,000 jobs. The city council has set itself two goals for 2010: 80,000 inhabitants and a total of 32,000 jobs. With this kind of growth there will be an increased demand on multiple facilities like housing construction, living environment, shopping facilities, infrastructure, and industrial estates. Council officials have therefore decided to concentrate on four themes: living, mobility, safety, health and sustainability; social

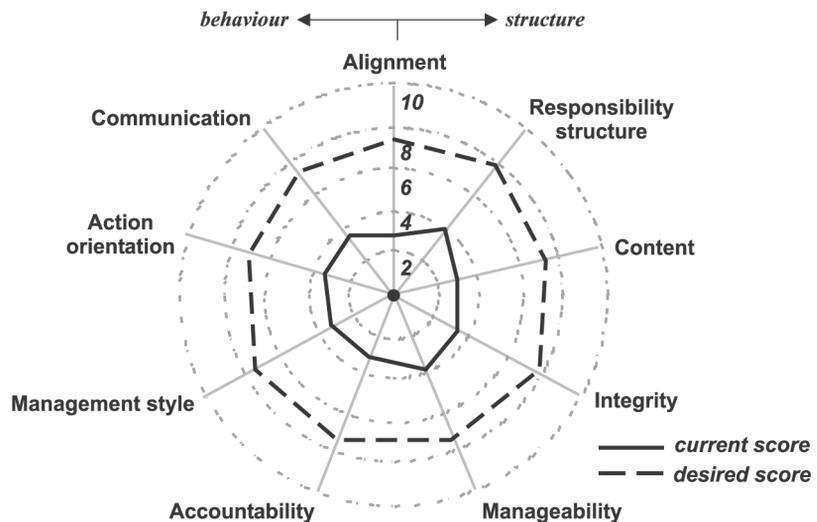


Figure 1.
PMA radar diagram with
the scores of the city of
Lelystad

independence; minimum standard of living; and multiform educational and cultural development.

Lelystad's civil service, employing 750 people, consists of six sectors (City Works, City Development, Construction and Environment, Society, Social Affairs, and Business Support) and two staff departments (Communication and Corporate Staff). The directors of the sectors and the city manager constitute the management team, responsible for the execution of the policies. Part of this responsibility consists of preparing and guiding the policy decision process through the city council. The city manager is chairman of the municipal authority and therefore in charge of the local government officials. The sector directors are responsible for executing accepted policies in their own sectors.

In the current performance management system the emphasis is on financial data. There is little information on results and effects because the current system cannot provide this. The organisation has difficulty making accurate forecasts and addressing people on their results. Bad forecasts and performance does not (immediately) have consequences. All employees have once a year a evaluation and performance interview. However, the accountability process on results achieved (i.e. achievement of policy goals and usage of resources) is a ponderous process. This is partly because politicians are inclined to look to the future rather than in the past, so there is not too much interest in results (not) achieved.

Applying the PMA

As part of a study at the University of Amsterdam, a controller at the Corporate Staff performed the PMA at the city of Lelystad, mainly within the Corporate Staff department. This department was established in 2003 with the aim to improve resource policy and management. It required a new way of managing and steering, viz. collegiate management, integral management, and a strict focus on management control. Corporate Staff supported the city council especially in management control matters. Because the municipality was at the time undertaking two major improvement projects in the area of performance management, the organisation was interested to participate in the study to find out whether additional efforts were needed to improve its performance drive. The PMA was filled in by two management team members, the corporate controller, and five employees of the Corporate Staff department. The resulting PMA radar diagram and the averaged scores are given in Figure 1 and Table II. The Appendix lists the detailed scores.

In the radar diagram both the current and the desired scores form almost optical circles, which indicates that Lelystad divided its attention just about equal over the structural and behavioural dimensions of performance management. At the same time, the average score for all dimensions in the current situation is 3.5 which (on a scale of one to ten) indicates the respondents regard the use of performance management in their city service as insufficient and that it should be improved to an average of 7.5. Looking at the standard deviations, it becomes apparent that especially for the current situation the respondents differ in their opinion. An explanation for this could be that because of the rapid growth of the municipality and the recent establishment of the Corporate Staff department, there has not been enough time for the managers to structurally discuss the quality of the current performance management system.

Table II.
PMA scores of the city of
Lelystad (including
standard deviations)

	Responsibility structure	Content	Integrity	Manageability	Accountability	Management style	Action orientation	Communication	Alignment	Average
Current	4.0	3.1	3.6	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	2.9	3.5
SD	1.5	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	1.1	
Desired	7.8	7.5	7.9	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.2	7.6	7.1	7.5
SD	0.7	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.1	0.7	0.7	1.0	

The need for improvement becomes even more apparent when Lelystad's current scores are compared to the average current scores of the 26 Dutch non-profit organisations included in the PMA database, a database which contains the PMA scores of 170 Dutch and 25 British organisations. Figure 2 shows the average performance drive of these 26 non-profit organisations who have performance management systems of varying degrees of effectiveness and maturity. The fact that Lelystad has lower scores on the PMA dimensions indicates its system has a lower relative maturity than the average of the non-profit organisations in the database.

Discussion of the PMA scores

This section discusses those dimensions of the Lelystad PMA radar diagram that have a current score substantially higher or lower than the average score of 3.5. These are responsibility structure, content, manageability, and alignment.

Responsibility structure

The score on responsibility structure is higher than the average score. Shortly after the arrival of the new city manager in 2002, a programme called "Manifest Integral Management" was started. The focus of this programme was to make sector directors fully accountable for policy execution, required resources, and the results. This would increase the feeling of responsibility for the organisation's performance throughout the municipality. The programme was the start of a continuous improvement process which entailed a transition from a sector model with six directors to a director model with three directors. This effort was called "Leadership with Guts" and aimed to improve integration between policy making and execution, make tasks and responsibilities more clear, increase accountability, improve customer orientation, increase the quality of management and employees, and improve communication across the organisation. The improvement programmes have created renewed interest

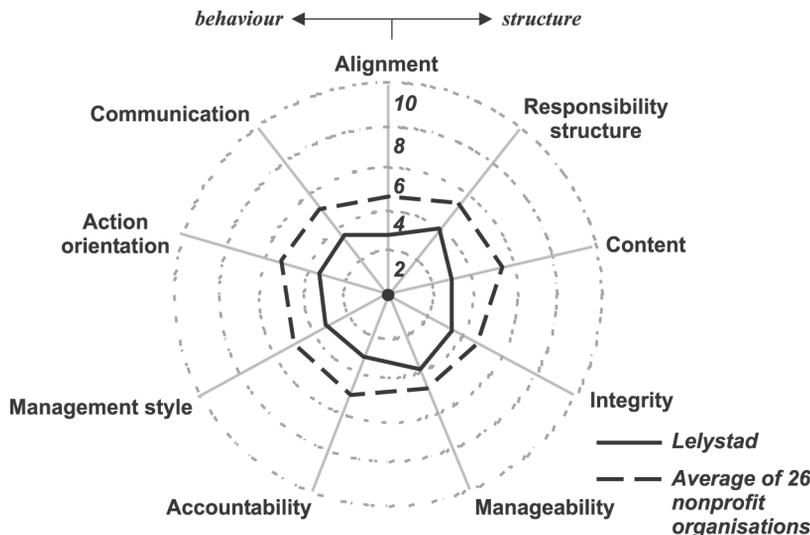


Figure 2.
PMA radar diagram with the current scores of Lelystad and the average current scores of 26 non-profit organisations in the PMA database

in and focus on the responsibility structure of Lelystad's Civil Service. Yet several managers who participated in the PMA mentioned that the right tools to fully implement integral management were still not available and that the organisation showed a lack of "integral thinking": many managers focused predominantly on the results of their own responsibility area (i.e. "functional thinking") instead of that of the organisation as a whole. In addition, the management team made too many ad hoc decisions, under pressure of day-to-day operations.

Content

In the PMA, the city of Lelystad scored slightly below the average with respect to content. A possible explanation for this may be the aforementioned "functional thinking" that is prevalent in the organisation. In functional thinking, organisational performance is of secondary importance and as a consequence management reports usually include little strategic information. In addition, there is insufficient strategic alignment between the management reporting sets of the various organisational units. Another issue is that city council members were uncertain about their strategic priorities for the city, which made it difficult for the civil servants to anticipate developments and adapt the performance management system accordingly. As a result, Lelystad's management information had low added value.

Manageability

The municipality had a management information tool at its disposal which allowed financial analyses from different angles. Also, the drill-down function of this tool helped to quickly get more detailed information. Many civil servants, including financial specialists and general managers, have been trained in using this tool, so many people within the organisation were able to use it. This explains why the score for manageability is above the average current score.

Alignment

At Lelystad, performance information was hardly ever used for evaluating employees. There certainly was not a culture of "settling scores", and people were seldom "officially" held accountable for their performance. This basically is characteristic for the culture within Dutch municipalities. It is reinforced by the fact that the reward structure of (local) government is often still based on the length of service and on earned rights, thus not on achieved results. To improve its alignment, Lelystad had started, in one sector, a pilot called "Competences and Personal Development Plans" (PDP). This pilot focussed on the career and development of individual employees: how does he or she develop, which ambitions does he or she have, and which training is he or she interested in. The pilot's goal is to connect result-oriented agreements to employees' PDPs, so that agreements can be made with each individual employee about the results he or she has to achieve in the next period. If this pilot turns out to be a success, Lelystad intends to implement PDPs in the entire organisation.

Improvement projects related to the PMA results

At the time of the PMA, the city of Lelystad had two major improvement projects up and running: "Leadership with Guts" and "Competences and Personal Development Plans". These were important because they addressed several of the areas which

showed up as dimensions that needed improvement in the PMA radar diagram (Table III).

However, to balance the structural and behavioural sides of performance management, Lelystad has to make sure that additional projects are initiated for those dimensions of the PMA that are not covered by improvement projects. Consequently, a project is proposed called “Lelystad, Performance-Driven”, which covers both the structural side of performance management and action orientation. The project target is to introduce performance indicators which can help to actively monitor the municipal’s programme budget. The introduction of the concept of dualisation several years ago, which separated execution of policies from control of execution, had increased the interest in the set-up and results of the programme budget (Boorsma, 2001). A programme budget is a coherent set of products, activities and resources aimed at achieving specific, agreed upon social outcomes. Questions in relation to the programme budget are (de Waal and Kerklaan, 2004): What do we want to achieve (which effects and results)? What do we need to do for that (which products and services)? What are the costs? Have we achieved what we wanted to achieve? Have we done what we said we would do? Have the costs been what we thought they would be? Critical success factors (CSFs) and key performance indicators (KPIs) are an effective tool to answer these questions. The following gives an example:

Objective: Make Lelystad an attractive city to live in

Critical success factor: A clean city

Key performance indicator 1: Complaints of citizens about city cleanliness

Key performance indicator 2: Average number of sweeps per year

By converting the programme budget into concrete and tangible objectives and translating them at all organisational levels into CSFs and KPIs, Lelystad will increase the strategic relevance of its performance management system (Ho and Chan, 2002). If Lelystad additionally develops a method to obtain reliable data for measuring the KPIs, using the existing management information system, it will also improve the PMA dimensions content, integrity and manageability.

To make sure that sectors and departments focus on executing policies effectively and efficiently, performance alignment is of crucial importance. It can be achieved by translating the municipality’s strategic objectives, CSFs and KPIs into sector and department objectives, CSFs and KPIs (Figure 3). A clear focus of all organisational levels will have a positive influence on action orientation (Mihm, 2003).

Type	PMA-dimension	Improvement project
Structural	Responsibility structure	Leadership with guts
	Content	
Behavioural	Integrity	Leadership with guts
	Manageability	
	Accountability	Leadership with guts
	Management style	Leadership with guts
	Action orientation	Leadership with guts
	Communication	Leadership with guts
	Alignment	Competences and personal development plans

Table III.
Comparing between the
PMA and Lelystad’s
running improvement
projects

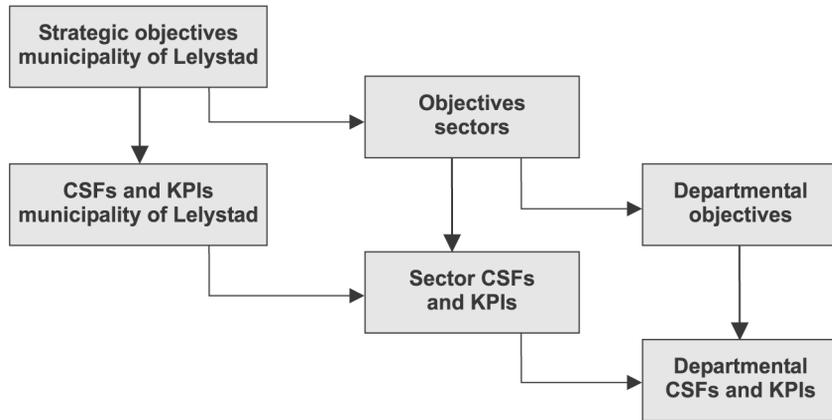


Figure 3.
Strategic alignment in the municipality

Implementation and preconditions

To make sure that the “Lelystad, Performance-Driven” project will be executed in an efficient manner, the city of Lelystad formulated a high level activity plan (Table IV).

There are several conditions which Lelystad has to fulfil to make the project a success (Dowson *et al.*, 2004). Firstly, the city council has to commit itself to clearly formulating priorities and goals including its expectations of the civil service, and to introducing and using performance management (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2001). Secondly, the management team of the municipality has to be totally committed to improving the PMA dimensions. The sector directors have to take the lead in

Phase	Activities
1. Preparation	Set project goal Formulate project plan Establish project organisation/team
2. Analysis	Analyse current strategic documents (council programmes, programme budgets etc.) Analyse current performance information (statistics, indicators, surveys, complaints etc.) Formulate and streamline strategic objectives
3. MT workshop	Discuss results of the analysis Prepare council workshop
4. 1st Council workshop	Discuss strategic objectives Develop strategic CSFs and KPIs
5. Deepening	Translate strategic objectives into sector and department objectives, CSFs and KPIs Formulate definitions for all developed KPIs
6. 2nd Council workshop	Agree on definitions Determine targets for strategic KPIs Determine targets for sector and department KPIs
7. Performance alignment	Update planning & control cycle Draw up guidelines for review meetings on all levels Draw up guidelines for performance-driven behaviour

Table IV.
Implementation plan:
“Lelystad,
Performance-Driven”
project

developing and using CSFs and KPIs in their accountability areas, for instance by providing resources for the project, even if this means cutting other projects, and training people how to use the system. Management team members have to serve as the role model for others in the organisation: they have to visibly use the improved performance management system and give staff freedom in their use of performance management.

Conclusion and reflection

The last few years have been hectic for the city of Lelystad as it has had many different projects running at the same time. This has forced the city council and council officials to review all projects and set priorities. It was decided to first finalise a limited number of programmes, as a result of which several projects were either combined or deleted. The PMA analysis confirmed that Lelystad was on the right track with some of its projects. In addition, it showed that Lelystad has to expand its activities to improve the performance management system in order to make optimal use of it. The results of the PMA analysis gave the municipality a clear indication of how to proceed and consequently the “Lelystad, Performance-Driven” project has been scheduled for the following year.

The PMA performed in Lelystad was subject to a number of limitations. First, only a limited number of civil servants completed the questionnaire, most of whom worked at the Corporate Staff department. As a consequence, the PMA radar diagram of Lelystad may not be indicative of the opinion of other civil servants in Lelystad. Second, neither politicians nor city councillors participated directly in the PMA, so their views on Lelystad’s performance drive are not included. Finally, it is impossible at this stage to ascertain the impact of Lelystad’s running projects, “Leadership with Guts” and “Competences and Personal Development Plans”. This means that these two projects alone may not be enough to raise the performance drive of the municipality of Lelystad to the desired standard.

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Appendix. PMA-scores for municipality Lelystad

This appendix (see Tables AI-AIX) lists the PMA criteria on a high level and gives the average current and desired scores of the respondents. For research purposes, the detailed PMA criteria and PMA questionnaire can be obtained from A.A. de Waal.

	Unclear and inconsistent (1–5)	Clear and consistent (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Parenting style	Not clear	Clear	3.5	7.8
Tasks and responsibilities	Not clear	Clear	4.3	8.1
Guidelines	None	Strategic	5.1	7.8
Application	Inconsistent	Consistent	3.1	7.8
		Average score	4.0	7.8

Table AI.
Structure: responsibility structure of the organisation

	Low quality information (1–5)	High quality information (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Balance	Financial	Balanced	3.3	8.0
Strategic focus	Lacking	In place	2.6	7.4
Strategic alignment	Hardly	Structured	3.6	8.0
Targets	Incremental and fixed	Ambitious and relative	3.0	7.6
Ranking	Not applied	Applied	2.9	6.4
		Average score	3.1	7.5

Table AII.
Structure: content of the performance information

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Table AIII.

Structure: integrity of the performance information

		Low quality information (1–5)	High quality information (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Reliability	Low		High	4.5	8.3
User needs	Ad-hoc inventarisisation		Regular inventarisisation	3.3	7.2
On time	No		Yes	3.4	8.1
Consistency	Low		High	2.8	8
Standardisation	Limited or not		For relevant data elements	4.1	7.9
			Average score	3.6	7.9

Table AIV.

Structure: manageability of the performance information

		Difficult to access (1–5)	User friendly (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
User friendliness	Low		High	3.4	7.3
Volume	Large		Limited	3.5	7.6
Exception reporting	Not used		Used	4.4	7.5
Accessibility	Low		High	5.0	7.5
Presentation tools	Multiple		Integrated	3.5	7.4
			Average score	4.0	7.5

Table AV.

Behaviour: accountability

		Discouraged (1-5)	Fostered and stimulated (6-10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Relevance	Low		High	3.9	7.8
Management	Limited		Continuously	3.4	7.5
Influence	Low		High	3.9	7.1
Commitment	Low		High	2.8	8.1
Changes	No involvement		High involvement	3.6	7.4
			Average score	3.5	7.6

Table AVI.

Behaviour: management style

		Distant (1–5)	Committed (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Commitment	Not visible		Very visible	3.5	7.5
Interest	Limited		Continuously	4.1	7.6
Organisational culture	Settling accounts		Continuous improvement	3.3	7.5
Coaching	Limited		Stimulated	3.1	7.6
Consistency	Low		High	3.3	7.5
			Average score	3.5	7.6

	Inactive (1–5)	Pro-active (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Analysis	Limited	Frequent	3.1	7.6
Daily use	Limited	Continuously	3.6	7.5
Corrective action	Limited	Always	3.5	7.5
Prognosis	Limited	Rolling forecasts	3.4	6.1
Decision making	Limited	Always	4.0	7.3
		Average score	3.5	7.2

Table AVII.
Behaviour: action
orientation of the
organisation

	Ad-hoc (1–5)	Open and continuously (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Top-down communication	Limited	Frequent	3.4	7.5
Bottom-up communication	Limited	Frequent	4.1	7.4
Communication structure	Closed	Open	3.5	7.8
Knowledge sharing	Limited	Frequent	3.3	7.9
Strategy formulation	Limited	Structured	3.5	7.5
		Average score	3.6	7.6

Table AVIII.
Behaviour:
communication about
performance

	Stand-alone systems (1–5)	Aligned systems (6–10)	Lelystad current	Lelystad desired
Evaluations	Limited	Always	3.0	7.1
Rewards	Limited	Always	2.6	6.8
Training	Limited	Always	3.1	7.3
Improved results	No	Yes	3.0	7.3
Attitude towards performance management	Negative	Positive	3.0	7.3
		Average score	2.9	7.1

Table AIX.
Alignment

Corresponding author

A.A. de Waal is the corresponding author.