

Executives in Africa
making an impact since 2010



 **lightbulb**
PEOPLE PERFORMANCE. MADE SIMPLE.

The 'One Magic Ingredient': Hiring & Managing for **Results**





The Headlines



- 1** **Performance at work** is about how well someone delivers the outcomes their role exists to produce.
- 2** It's not about how **busy, smart or likeable** they are!
- 3** "Organisations concerned about productivity need to focus on **measuring outcomes** instead of simply inputs" - McKinsey
- 4** "Remote work increasingly requires **a results focus**" - Deloitte





Activities and Tasks aren't Outcomes



- **Anyone can take on an activity, task or responsibility.** You can probably kick a football around a pitch, speak to a potential client, contribute an idea to the business, operate a piece of machinery, or write a specific document. But you may do these things badly, inaccurately, late, with no buy-in or with too much help from others.
- You tell others that you are 'managing projects' and write this on your CV. However, your projects may often run late, exceed budget, be full of mistakes and cause unnecessary internal conflict.
- **'Managed' is a verb, a 'doing' word that is often describing the activity.** Here are some more:
 - Built
 - Deployed
 - Launched
 - Developed
 - Contributed
 - Lead
 - Supported
- **These words do not evidence performance. They describe activities, not results: *All of them could have ended badly!***
- **We are not paid to perform activities or complete tasks.** We are paid for the measurable outcomes of those efforts: the **results**. This is where praise, recognition, pay-increases, promotions, and new job offers come into play.
- Results can also be described as **achievements**, particularly when we are proud of them – which is why they are so often referenced on CVs and discussed in job interviews.
- But before we can focus properly on results, we must remove one other bad habit we all drift into at work...





The Problem with Buzzwords



- The use of ‘buzzwords’ and ‘management-speak’ is pervasive across work culture. They sound positive but are vague and avoid measurement. They tell us nothing.
- Buzzwords sound professional, feel safe and often ‘pass at first glance’ with hiring managers and those reviewing performance appraisal paperwork.
- If you want to describe results and achievements, rather than activities and buzzwords, you need to add **one magic ingredient...**

“I focused on streamlining the operation”



“I effectively supported and engaged the team”



“I developed an aligned new system”



“I strengthened and transformed internal controls”





Results and Achievements: Using One Magic Ingredient!

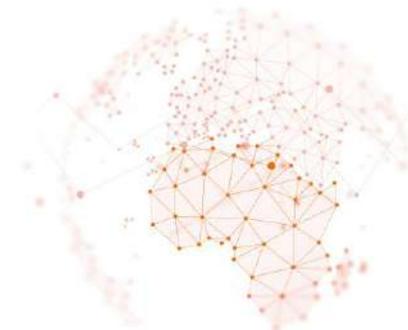


- **It is almost always guaranteed**, and largely within my control, to be able to have a go at any task, activity or responsibility.
- All results and achievements contain an element of **jeopardy** - the risk that something may or may not work out well.
- That is why we receive praise, the “well-done”, and “great work” when we achieve results. Crowds go wild when a goal is scored or business is won because there was no guarantee it would happen!
- **We bring skill, knowledge and attitude to the task and hope they lead to a good result.**



Does what you're writing or saying pass this 'magic ingredient' test?

... And every result/achievement must be measurable:
You can tangibly count, see or hear it!





Putting it all Together



Activities and Buzzwords	Results/Achievements: The “Well-Done”
Streamlined the operation	Reducing costs by 32%
Developed and rolled-out a new system	86% of people are using it
Strengthened controls	Reducing errors and complaints by 18%
Lead a successful team	Beating sales budgets by \$128,000
Increased social media presence	Acquiring 60% increase in followers
Managed the project	On time/budget with zero escalated issues
Engaged the stakeholders	Who adopted two of my proposals
Implemented financial strategies	Improving cashflow
Collaborated with other departments	Budget agreed quicker than last year





Job Descriptions and Screening CVs



Most job descriptions and CVs do not reference the results expected or achieved. Instead, there is a heavy reliance on activities, responsibilities and buzzwords.



- Organisations want to “import” performance, yet most job descriptions fail to describe the results expected from the role.
- Being clear on the desired outcomes, and screening CVs for evidence of those outcomes, helps hiring managers get past style and get closer to the truth. It is also more likely to attract applicants who *have actually done the work*.
- Of course, a candidate can invent a past result. However, as you will see when we turn to interviewing, invented results are much easier to expose than invented activity.
- This is not a foolproof list, but here are some red flags that suggest results and achievements written on a CV may not be completely trustworthy:
 - ‘Increased revenue by 20%’. From what number to what number?
 - Perfectly rounded numbers: e.g. ‘£50,000’
 - Junior roles claiming organisation-level impact
 - Vague, broad statements: eg ‘Delivered transformation across the business’
 - Too much ‘We’ language as opposed to ‘I’.
- Results should also align with the time available to influence them! For example, you may question the validity of significant change claimed over implausibly short periods.
- Comparing the CV with what is written on an individual’s LinkedIn profile can also be useful. The profile may be vague or more conservative, and other discrepancies may become apparent.

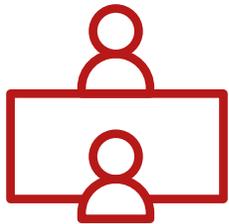




Interviewing Candidates



Focusing on outcomes/results in interviews forces candidates to anchor their experience in *what actually happened*.



- Results only exist if something could have failed. When you interrogate results, you are asking about uncertainty and decisions under pressure. People who have genuinely delivered results remember the risk. Those who haven't tend to fall back on generalities and buzzwords.
- Even if someone invents a claim such as "Increased revenue by 27%", you can probe: from what baseline, in which products/markets, what actually moved the number and what trade-offs were made?
- There will be cases where results and achievements are not obvious from reading a CV. This does not mean the candidate has not achieved anything. It simply means you need to tease them out during the interview.
- You can do this by using questions such as:
 - Why did you specifically receive praise from others when it came to doing X?
 - How did you leave that role/organisation better than you found it?
- In a 'Chat GPT world', a shifting focus towards outcomes forces clarity and creates a hiring advantage. They impose structure, measurement and accountability on both employer and candidate.
- You test reality as opposed to storytelling!

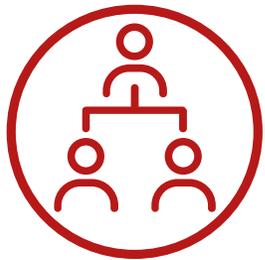




Managing Your People



Many organisations use the SMART objective-setting process to target and manage performance: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.



- SMART alone does not explicitly include a results or outcomes focus. “Hold weekly stakeholder meetings for six months” fits the standard SMART acronym, but it is effectively asking for an activity! A more meaningful ‘can’t be guaranteed’ result would be securing agreement or sign-off on solutions for the majority of issues raised.
- Key Performance Indicators, where used, should also be tied to tangible, measurable results rather than activities.

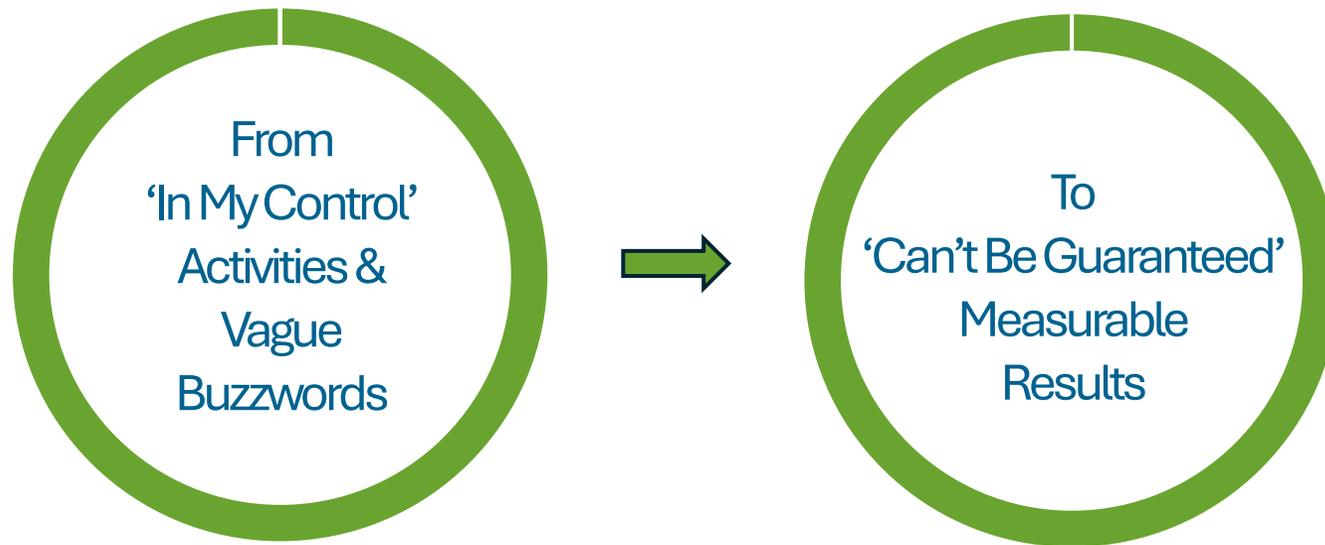
- Result-focused targets and objectives can also be used where one or more of the following three triggers is present, depending on the individual’s situation:
 - Where there is a concerning gap between desired and actual performance
 - Where it will develop the required habits or help focus on specific priorities
 - Where it will stretch high-performers further

- It is important to apply this approach on a regular basis – not just six-monthly or when it is time for the annual performance appraisal or review.
- Managing through results delivers another benefit for the individual: it creates clear, credible evidence for a future CV, interview and selection process.





The New Focus



About Executives in Africa



Our award-winning search team's unique focus is Africa, and we have managed over 1000 assignments across 50+ markets since 2010.

Many of the best leaders are not actively seeking new opportunities - and that's where we come in. Our no-compromise approach attracts unique people to your teams, connecting you with the highest calibre of talent.

Diversity is also a key focus, and our achievements often come as a result of nurturing relationships that others have overlooked.

Choosing to retain a search specialist is the right solution for critical leadership roles and an essential approach for confidential appointments. It's also the best way to identify rare and specific technical skills which are in short supply.

We start by understanding your challenges, vision and strategy, and then provide the creative advice and expertise you need for success.



We have a positive and lasting impact on Africa



About Lightbulb

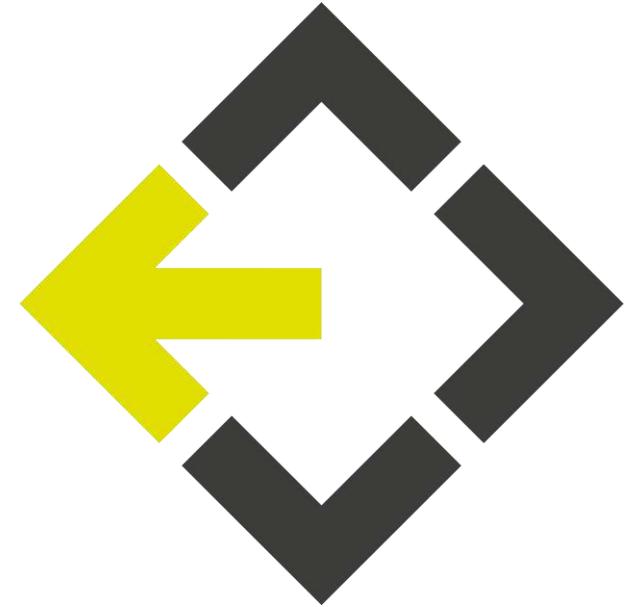
What works at work.

People-management specialists from management training to managing performance.

Lightbulb is home to the Painless People Management Programme. A unique, 'no-fluff', step-by-step modular approach for overnight results.

We also provide consultancy around performance review processes and how to 'ditch' the annual performance appraisal for a more powerful approach.

Our live, online workshops are practical, punchy and can be delivered in as little as sixty minutes. Organisations benefiting from the Lightbulb experience include Google, Mulberry, Zenith Bank, Credit Suisse, Eurostar, Chelsea Football Club, Visit Britain, Jamie Oliver and Conde Nast.





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