



CONNECT

Cigna®: Connect for GrowthSM

The Neuroscience of Leadership Communication



Impact

94% of managers report better leadership skills¹

Scale

4,500 managers

Speed

12 months

The challenge

In 2014, after five years of rapid growth — and projecting even faster growth ahead — the global health service company Cigna decided to revisit its HR policies, starting with its performance management system.

Up to that point, Cigna’s approach to performance management had been fairly traditional: end-of-year performance reviews with numerical ratings. And as they began to evaluate the system, they didn’t assume they’d necessarily need to make changes.

But when Cigna surveyed its people, it found that nearly half of employees felt the performance management process did not benefit them.¹ And when asked to describe their experience with the existing performance management system, the most common words they used were “frustrating,” “inconsistent,” and “unfair.”

The science

- Traditional end-of-year performance ratings throw the brain into a threat state that impairs the ability to think clearly about how to improve.
- By removing ratings, organizations can create a culture of constructive communication — which studies show increases employee motivation and engagement.

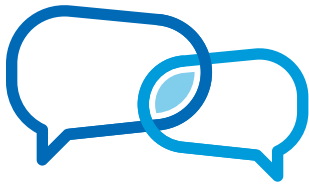
“This approach allows managers to have more open dialogue about their employee’s performance, shifting their focus from a threat to a reward state, and ultimately increasing their engagement.”

- Karla Shores, Performance Management Director at Cigna



Cigna® is the winner of the Brandon Hall award for Best Advance in Corporate Culture Transformation





CONNECT

The Neuroscience of Quality Conversations

CONNECT: How It Works

- The traditional “rewards for performance” system is replaced with a “rewards for contribution” model.
- Employees learn how to use NLI’s SCARF® Model to reduce threat and promote a culture of feedback.

The solution

Cigna realized that its existing performance management system was focused on past performance instead of future results. Emphasis was placed more on deficits rather than on strengths, assuming that an employee’s current performance represented the best they could do, explains Karla Shores, Director of Performance Management.

Realizing a change was necessary, Cigna engaged the NeuroLeadership Institute to overhaul its performance management system — abolishing performance ratings, teaching managers the skills of constructive communication, and equipping all employees with a brain-based framework for giving and receiving feedback.



“The most valuable part of today’s session was how you pulled the two concepts (TAPS™ and SCARF®) together at the end. The joint models really helped me think about how an employee would feel coming into any sort of meeting with me as the leader.”

- David B., Cigna-HealthSpring
Government Programs Pharmacy Operations Senior Manager



92%
voluntary participation among managers²

The results

When Cigna rolled out its new performance management system, the goal was 80 percent voluntary participation. By the end of one year, 92 percent of managers had participated — 94 percent of whom said their leadership skills had improved.¹

Surveys found that once employees were able to discuss their performance without the threat state triggered by traditional ratings, they felt more comfortable communicating their feelings, concerns, and ideas to their managers. In turn, the new system empowered managers to understand and engage with employees, improving the frequency and quality of performance conversations. Employee motivation and engagement rose.¹

“Ultimately, as we considered our approach to performance management, our priority was to identify how we can help our employees thrive,” says Shores. “Following NLI’s approach demonstrates our desire to put employees first and has consistently resulted in positive outcomes.”

1. Cigna internal post- program survey for Connect to Influence. Oct. 26 2015.

2. Completion records from Cigna Internal Learning Management System.

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