

Frontline

Human Resources
Safety & Risk Management
Employee Benefits
Education & Training



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Practical Information for Managers & Supervisors

Performance Evaluations

Conducting annual performance evaluations is an effective way of ensuring that employees are achieving the goals and objectives of their position as well as the company as a whole. Evaluations are a great way to connect one-on-one with employees in order to reflect on previous work completed, provide corrective measures when necessary, offer praise on work well done and set future work related goals. This is a manager's ultimate opportunity to provide workers with meaningful and constructive feedback.

Performance evaluations can be very challenging and many supervisors prefer to avoid them altogether. However, there's no getting around the reality that employees' performance, or lack thereof, can make or break any company. Not reacting when employees are underperforming puts a company at risk of failing to meet its goals and ultimate objectives.

Evaluations have a multitude of benefits when designed and implemented correctly. Performance reviews aid in keeping the employee and the company focused, avoiding potential problems through increased communication, inspiring and rewarding employees for their achievements, improving employee morale, making compensation adjustments, and providing a documented history for legal defense for corrective discipline actions with problem employees.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

- ▲ Facilitate communication between employees and supervisors.
- ▲ Develop and maintain self-esteem of a team.
- ▲ Maintain focus and insight into individual and organizational goals that may change with job function, competition, market developments, organizational growth, etc.
- ▲ Assist in the prompt and precise identification of



training and development needs for both subordinates and managers.

- ▲ Create documentation exhibiting the company's concern for supporting employee development.
- ▲ Help in the training of management.

BEFORE THE REVIEW

- ▲ Prepare - list accomplishments and highlight how

performance stacks up to written objectives. Make a list of key points and bring a copy for the employee. Include objectives for the next review.

- ▲ Review employee history before writing evaluations.
- ▲ Schedule evaluation appointments well in advance.
- ▲ Ask employees to complete self-assessments before their evaluation meetings so that they can have time to reflect on their own performance.
- ▲ Inform employees at the beginning of the discussion what will be covered in the meeting and that their input is encouraged.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Giving evaluations can be difficult. Some workers react to criticism defensively. And, sometimes, no one understands what merits a positive evaluation. If your workers feel that you take it easy on some of them while coming down hard on others, resentment is inevitable. Avoid these problems by following these rules:

- ▲ Be specific. Avoid being vague about both praise and recommendations for improvement. Leaving an employee with inadequate information has the potential to leave performance problems unresolved and can lead to miscommunication. When you set goals and standards for your workers, spell out exactly what they will have to do to achieve them.
- ▲ Give deadlines. If you expect certain tasks or projects

completed by a certain date, be specific about that timeline. If you want to see improvement, give the worker a timeline to turn things around. If you expect something to be done by a certain date, it is your responsibility to set that date clearly.

- ▲ Be realistic. If you set unrealistic or impossible goals and standards, you risk causing decreased employee morale. Workers will have little incentive to do their best if they know they will still fall short. Don't make your standards too easy to achieve, instead, set challenging goals that your team can provide input towards.
- ▲ Be honest. If you avoid telling a worker about performance problems, the worker won't know that he or she needs to improve. Be sure to give the bad news, even if it is uncomfortable.
- ▲ Be complete. Write your evaluation so that any person reading it would be able to understand exactly what happened and why. Remember that evaluations are key documentation resources that will be referred to should any type of dispute or lawsuit arise regarding that employee.
- ▲ Give the employee options for the review time and day. Giving an employee input into the meeting time shows that you value their time and schedule. This also makes them feel more like a partner instead of a passive subject.
- ▲ Provide feedback on things the employee can change, rather than on personality traits.
- ▲ When giving negative feedback, avoid judgments and focus on specific incidents.

WHAT TO AVOID DURING AN EVALUATION

- ▲ Evaluation of attitude, not performance. Vague statements that attack an employee's demeanor could be interpreted as some kind of illegal age, race, gender or disability discrimination. Instead, supervisors should use concrete, job-based examples to illustrate any criticism. Never use the word "attitude" when writing employee reviews. Employment lawyers and courts often see that as a code word for discrimination.
- ▲ Personal relationships that influence the review. Make sure to not allow personal feelings or history with workers dilute the value of the evaluation. The review should be based solely on work accomplished and business-related goals. Having inconsistent standards of excellence is a sure sign of an ineffective manager. Lack of uniform criteria from manager to manager can be detrimental to the organization. Additionally, without safeguards, it is possible to become too friendly with some employees in making evaluations while being too critical with others.
- ▲ Feedback that is vague. Be specific about both praise and recommendations for improvement. Leaving an employee with inadequate information has the

potential to leave performance problems unresolved and can lead to miscommunication.

- ▲ Rating everyone above average. Some managers are uncomfortable providing constructive criticism – make sure that you are completely honest with your employees.
- ▲ Insufficient information about employees and insufficient evaluation time. It is best to get to know employees well enough to accurately evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Also, it is recommended that you take the proper amount of time in the evaluation process for each employee.
- ▲ Failure to evaluate the entire performance period. Some employees, who are aware that a performance evaluation is due, will suddenly improve their work. In such annual reviews, many managers unfortunately look at the most recent behavior instead of the entire performance period. Throughout the year, when an employee does something noteworthy, immediately write it down; when the employee fails in a responsibility make note of it, too. Use good discretion in deciding whether to enter the information in the employee's personnel file.
- ▲ Fear of bosses' disapproval. Some managers are afraid to reveal negative information about employees to their bosses. They don't want to admit that subordinates are ineffective. They often write or say what they think bosses want to hear about staff members, not what is accurate.
- ▲ Middle-curve analysis. There is a tendency by some managers to stick to the middle or average and they do not accurately evaluate employees – they erroneously stick to the middle – average performance grades in every category.
- ▲ Denial syndrome. Some managers make excuses and remain in denial about worker performance.
- ▲ Irrelevant factors. Bias of non job-related factors, such as physical appearance or social standing, sometimes erroneously influences evaluations of employees. Beware that some employees are good at selling themselves.

