

Effective Performance Appraisals

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Determining Your Performance Appraisal Mind Set

1. Before my performance appraisal I typically:
 - a) try not to think about it T__ F__
 - b) do a self-assessment of my strengths and areas where I could use improvement T__ F__
 - c) make sure I can justify all mistakes or incidents of poor performance T__ F__

2. When it comes to Performance Appraisals, my strategy is:
 - a) argue or negotiate for the highest rating T__ F__
 - b) let the boss have his/her say and get it over with as quickly and painlessly as possible T__ F__
 - c) learn as much as I can--it's a good tool for professional growth and development T__ F__

3. Based on my experience, I generally assume that most bosses:
 - a) will put as little time and effort into my Performance Appraisal as possible (so why should I waste my time?) T__ F__
 - b) will use Performance Appraisal as a power play (so I need a few tricks of my own) T__ F__
 - c) will have good intentions and will try their best (but may need my help) T__ F__

4. When my boss criticizes me, I feel:
 - a) he/she cares enough to tell me where I need to improve T__ F__
 - b) I have to defend myself T__ F__
 - d) I should just ignore or forget it because my boss usually doesn't know what he/she is talking- about T__ F__

5. From my experience, in the days immediately following a Performance Appraisal discussion, I should:
 - a) stay clear of my boss for a few days because there are usually ill feelings T__ F__
 - b) write up a plan of action for areas needing improvement T__ F__
 - c) look for chances to take advantage of the fact that my boss usually feels guilty T__ F__

Performance Evaluation

Ways to Guarantee Its Failure

Supervisors:

- When you get the evaluation forms, put them on the bottom of the pile and forget them.
- Don't bother preparing for the evaluation interview - after all, you see the person every day, anyway.
- Let employees know that the whole thing is just more paperwork and wasted time but "they" want you to do it.
- Use the occasion as a golden opportunity to remind the employee who's boss.
- Hint darkly that a negative evaluation in the files can haunt the employee forever.
- Talk about the employee's family, the pennant race, the latest James Bond movie anything as long as you don't mention the job.
- Send in nothing but glowing reports - do you want them to think you're running a crummy department?
- Do all the talking - you know what your employees need better than they do, that's why you're the boss.
- Be vague about what you expect from the employee during the next year - that way he/she will be able to feel justified in forgetting the whole interview as soon as it's over.
- Make promises - if you can't deliver later, you can always say they wouldn't approve your request.
- Don't waste your valuable time on a lengthy interview - start looking at your watch after three minutes.
- Or better still, skip the interview entirely - just send in the report.

Subordinates:

- Don't take the evaluation seriously - you know it's just a meaningless gimmick.
- Be sure to blame somebody else for any inadequacies in your performance - don't admit that you could be doing anything wrong.
- Figure out what your boss wants to bear, and then give him/her a snow job - that should keep the supervisor off your back for a while.
- Don't ask the supervisor any questions about the job - after all, you don't want him/her to think you're stupid.

Ways to Make It a Success

Supervisors:

- Prepare thoroughly for each evaluation interview. As soon as you finish an interview, it's time to start preparing for the next one. Keep running notes on each employee's performance during the year - just before evaluation time you'll be able to review them and get a clear picture of what the person has done and where he/she needs improvement.
- Let the employees know that you're really interested in making the interviews as productive as possible both for them and for the department.
- Set goals together with each employee, and make sure they are specific.
- Give employees a chance to tell you what they expect, and how they think their talents can be used to best advantage.
- Give employees balanced pictures of their past performance - don't equip them with either halos or pairs of horns.
- Don't let the evaluations take the place of day-to-day coaching, criticism, and counseling.
- Remember that the best way for you to develop yourself for promotion is to develop the subordinates under you.

Subordinates:

- Do your share of preparation for the evaluation interview. Think through what you want to cover. This is the best chance you'll ever get to have a thorough talk about your future.
- Don't absorb the compliments on your work and close your ears to any unfavorable judgments - be willing to listen to criticism and evaluate it as objectively as you can.

General Ideas About Performance Appraisal

The following items ask your opinion about performance appraisal in general and as it is carried out within your organization as a whole. For these items, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each by circling the number which most closely corresponds to your opinion.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Slightly Disagree 4 – Neither Disagree Nor Agree
 5 – Slightly Agree 6 – Agree 7 – Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Performance appraisal cannot be objectively and unemotionally carried out by managers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. Few people really understand what the objectives of performance appraisal are. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Most people have a real understanding of how performance appraisal results are used in my organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. In my organization, <i>salary</i> decisions are based on performance appraisal results. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. In my organization, <i>promotion</i> decisions are based on performance appraisal results. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. Supervisors and subordinates pretty much agree on what constitutes good or poor performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Current performance appraisal practices provide accurate feedback to the subordinates. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. Most supervisors are not rewarded for doing performance appraisal well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Most managers would not carry out performance appraisal of their subordinates unless the organization required them to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Most subordinates would not practice in performance appraisal unless the organization required them to. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. Performance appraisals are fairly and honestly done in this organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. Performance appraisal motivates individuals to improve their performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. It wouldn't make much difference to our business if performance appraisals were not done. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Performance appraisal typically leads to productive changes in the subordinate's behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. Overall, subordinates (i.e., appraisees) are satisfied with our performance appraisal system. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. Overall, supervisors (i.e., appraisers) are satisfied with our performance appraisal system. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. Performance appraisals lead to better supervisor and subordinate understanding of what the subordinate's role should be. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. Salary decisions <i>should</i> be based on performance appraisal results. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. Promotion decisions <i>should</i> be based on performance appraisal results. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. A subordinate's self-appraisal <i>should</i> be based on goals previously agreed to by the supervisor and subordinate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. Performance appraisals <i>should</i> be based on goals previously agreed to by the supervisor and subordinate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. Performance appraisal <i>should</i> be done only for the subordinate's personal development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Problems with Evaluation Interviews

The performance ratings are of little value until the supervisor communicates the results to the employees. In our experience, most supervisors do this very poorly. Our suggestions for improvements include 1) hints for conducting the interview, and (2) guidelines for giving constructive feedback.

Hints for Conducting the Evaluation Interview

Supervisors who go into evaluation interviews with a plan are much more effective. A good plan includes the following:

- _____ **Preparation** -- Be ready to discuss past performance against your expectations.
- _____ **Put employee at ease** -- Reduce stress by telling the employee that this is a time to review past work and look for improvements in performance, satisfaction, and development.
- _____ **Budget time** -- Allow about half of the time for the employee to discuss his/her behavior and make suggestions.
- _____ **Balance** -- Be sure your positive and negative comments are in balance with your ratings. If you employee is 90 percent effective, make 90 percent of your comments positive.
- _____ **Focus on future** -- Toward the end of the interview, focus on future objectives and how you can help the employee achieve them.

Guidelines for Giving Constructive Feedback

It is not enough to tell employees what they can do to improve. We have to say it in a way that they can receive it. The following guidelines and good and bad examples should help. "Mark "X" for bad examples "/" for good examples."

1. Focus on behavior rather than the person.
 - _____ "You are just too irresponsible."
 - _____ "You have been absent six times and late eight times in six months. That is too much."
2. Focus on actual experiences rather than judgment.
 - _____ "Your quality is too far below average."
 - _____ "Your records shows 10 percent more rejected work than standard."
3. Focus on sharing information rather than giving advice.
 - _____ "You must start using another method."
 - _____ "I have found this method to be more effective in my experience."
4. Focus on time and place.
 - _____ "You have had this problem all along."
 - _____ "We had a conversation about this June 4 and then again on July 8 in your office."
5. Focus on the amount of information the employee can receive.
 - _____ "I've got a list of 15 things we need to discuss."
 - _____ "For now, let's try to work on these three items."
6. Focus on alternatives rather than single answers.
 - _____ "This is the way you should do it."
 - _____ "We have discussed three possible alternatives. If the first one does not work, we'll try to other two."
7. Focus feedback on the value it has to the receiver rather than on the relief it provides for the sender.
 - _____ "I've been waiting for three weeks to get this off my chest."
 - _____ "I think what I have to share may help with your problem."

Preparation for the Appraisal

1. Familiarize yourself with the contents of the evaluation form. Analyze its general scope as well as the detailed instructions.
2. Understand thoroughly the duties and requirements of the particular position held by the employee to be appraised.
3. Review the employee's record and the job anecdotal file with its compliments and criticisms.
4. Consider seniority apart from performance. An employee with a short service record may not necessarily be less effective than one with a longer term of employment.
5. Consider the requirements in terms of the level of the position. A clerk may very well be meeting the requirements of his/her position more effectively than his/her immediate supervisor does in his/her position in a higher classification.
6. Evaluate on the experience of the entire appraisal period. It is better not to consider only single accomplishments or failure or the most recent performance. Important single instances of faulty or brilliant performance should also not be ignored, but should be considered in context with the total performance for the period.

The Performance Appraisal Interview

1. Over a long period of time, build up an atmosphere which encourages the exchange of ideas and feelings about the job.
2. Formulate, in advance, your portion of the review. Determine what you want to accomplish in the interview and plan your discussion accordingly.
3. Tell the employee ahead of time --- at least several days --- when he/she will be inter-viewed.
4. Make sure that the physical arrangements are suitable. There should be privacy and a reasonable degree of physical comfort.
5. Some employees will resent the evaluation; prepare for this by having all the facts and avoid surprises, if possible.
6. Throughout the interview, emphasize the employee's personal development and growth.
7. Let the employee understand that your opinion or appraisal may not be perfect.
8. Be open-minded about the opinions and facts presented by the employee.
9. Do not dominate or cross-examine. Avoid arguments; listen attentively as well as politely.
10. Remember that the employee must do most of the talking at some point t of the interview.
11. Control the interview. Do not let it get out of hand. Pull the employee back from detours, escapes, or fruitless conversation.
11. You should close when you have made clear whatever points you intended to cover. Always reassure the employee of your interest in his/her progress, and indicate willingness to take up the discussion again at any time.
12. Permit the employee to review the appraisal form, secure his/her signature and forward a copy to the Personnel Office. A copy of the appraisal will be retained by the department.

A Case Study: Which Supervisor is the Most Effective Evaluator?

Study carefully the characteristics of each of the following supervisors.

MARY: Mary is easy going and gets along well with most everyone. She is very cooperative and knowledgeable about the work. She has an even temper and rarely gets stirred up even when subordinates take advantage of her. Mary is extremely patient, cautious, and conservative. She believes that the best way for employees to improve is to let them discover their own weaknesses. Mary encourages her people to look for their problems and try to find ways to improve themselves. She believes that there is not too much the supervisor can do to help a person improve unless the person really wants to. She gets a lot of input from subordinates during evaluations and generally agrees with their judgments of themselves.

HENRY: Henry is a very friendly supervisor. He believes that a "pat on the back" is about the best thing a supervisor can do for employees. When Henry walks through the place, he speaks and smiles to almost everyone, and they seem to enjoy his company. He believes that employees will perform if they like you. He does not like to say negative things to employees for fear that they will get discouraged. During evaluations, he does most of the talking, praising employees about what good work they have done. Although he mentions the negatives, he downplays these because he does not want to hurt his employees' feelings.

JIM: Jim is a hard charger. He feels fully qualified to evaluate his people and thinks he should point out their mistakes clearly so they can improve. Jim takes pride in being able to influence his people, and they know that Jim knows the best way to do the jobs in his department. Employees frequently ask his advice on how to do their jobs. Jim sizes up problems quickly and comes down pretty hard when an employee makes the same mistake several times.

HELEN: Helen spends a lot of time seeking out ideas and opinions of her subordinates. But it is clear that she is the decision maker of the group. She believes that discussing job problems lead to improvements. She listens well and often summarizes employees' ideas accurately. Helen is careful to recognize the positive things that employees do but she does not go overboard on it. Most of her evaluation sessions are discussions between her and a subordinate. Employees often remark that Helen has a knack for putting her finger directly on their problem. When mistakes occur repeatedly, she will discipline an employee firmly. But she constantly looks for ways to improve.

Rank these supervisors "1" through "4" according to which you think is the most effective evaluator. Briefly, tell why you ranked each person as you did.