

The Do's and Don'ts for Performance Reviews

Less painful, more helpful reviews

Is there anyone in the workplace who has not undergone the torture of a performance review done badly? Performance review systems in most organizations are so poorly designed and conducted that they actually do more harm than good.

You don't have to continue this tradition. Here are 10 tips for avoiding the common mistakes managers make—practical action steps for a performance review system that will actually improve performance!

To maximize the experience, here are some tips to consider:



1

Ask employees to write self-appraisals prior to the meeting to achieve a two-way dialogue. Discussing the gap between your evaluations will be fruitful in getting you both on the same page about future expectations.

2

Establish that the review is for coaching *or* compensation reasons—not both. To coach for improved future performance, unhook feedback from compensation. If you try to do both, employees will only pay attention to the amount of the raise.

3

Choose the supervisor or manager who has the most contact with an employee and is in the best position to accurately assess day-to-day results to perform the review.

4

Give employees advance notice of reviews. Conduct reviews on a regular basis, with a well-publicized schedule known to everyone in the organization.

5

Avoid vagueness and arbitrary numerical “grades.” Be ready for the review with performance feedback—good as well as not-so-good—documented over time. Encourage employees to keep files for themselves, too. Mutual documentation helps keep the focus on the job, not the person.

6

Keep the evaluation focused on behaviors and results, not traits—such as leadership, motivation, conscientiousness or attitude—which are subjective and susceptible to unfairness. Results are observable: She achieved her sales quota, he reduced waste by X%, and so on.

7

Design a meaningful system of coaching that employees welcome—regular feedback on what they're doing well and what needs improvement—and that encourages bosses and employees to engage in two-way conversations throughout the year.

8

Determine the underlying cause of job performance problems and don't jump to conclusions. Ask questions during the review to uncover possible reasons for an employee's failure to meet standards and expectations.

9

Create a follow-up action plan at the end of the appraisal. What three or four steps does the employee need to take to achieve improvement? Keep the action items positive and practical.

10

Evaluate your budget for raises. Tiny differences in pay increases between good and poor performers (3% vs. 4%, for instance) can cause resentment. If there isn't enough for real rewards for good performance, consider giving everyone the same percentage increase.