

# ***Employee Performance Reviews - Tips, & Tactics***

## **What Small Business Needs to Know about Employee Performance Reviews**

One of the best tools to boost productivity, increase morale and get better business outcomes is an employee performance evaluation ... if they are done correctly.

Get them wrong and you risk losing your best staff - Get them right and the sky is the limit.

## **What are employee performance reviews all about?**

Many people feel about Employee performance reviews the same way they feel about the dentist - fear, avoidance and running in the other direction as fast as they can.

But, done properly employee performance reviews are all about gaining a shared understanding of:

What has to be done?

How is it to be done? (which includes information, resources or riding instructions);

How you know that it has been done successfully?

The strengths, challenges and interests of the team member.

Areas for performance improvement

Any rewards and incentives for great performance?

## **The emphasis is on shared understanding.**

Performance reviews are not a one way street. It should not be about sitting in a darkened room with a harsh light shining on an employee while you tell them for hours everything that is wrong with them.

Performance reviews or performance appraisals are a two way street. You need to listen, accept feedback about yourself as well as provide feedback.

## **The 4 stages of performance appraisal**

All performance management systems in business (no matter the type) are made up of just four basic stages - everything else is just window dressing.

### **These 4 stages are:**

- **Setting clear goals or targets**
- **Doing the work**
- **Reviewing and reflecting on how the work went against the goals or targets**
- **Setting new goals or targets**

It is just that most performance review systems focus on step 3 and forget the rest of the stages.

Each stage is important if you want to get the best out of your employees.

But ... there is one step that underpins all of these stages. You need to form strong relationships with your employees.

Reviews will only be as deep and as productive as your relationship with your employee. If your relationship is shallow or strained the performance review will also be shallow and strained.

So before you leap into any performance review processes take the time to get to know your team (unless of course you don't want to get the best out of the review, in which case go in cold).

## **It's not about the forms!**

Performance reviews are not about the forms. They are about the discussion and the shared understanding.

Too many processes focus on filling in forms, clicking on websites and filing paper. They totally miss the point!

Forms are essentially irrelevant - they just summaries the discussion and the outcomes.

They are not an outcome in themselves.

It is really hard to listen and engage in conversation if you are focused on writing things down!

## **Focus on the person, the observable behaviors and the future goals and targets.**

If you have to - lose the paper until the end of the review if that makes it easier to focus on the person.

No Surprises!

If your employee is surprised by your feedback during the review - you are the one who stuffed up!

### **If the employee is surprised you have failed!**

My motto is there should be no surprises during a review. If you have done your job right during the year and had regular feedback sessions with your employee they should know exactly what you think of their performance.

If you get to review time and they are totally "gob smacked" by your feedback you may want to book into some communication training.

Remember the "no surprises" rule during the year and the reviews will be much more productive.

### **Focus on observable behaviors**

When giving feedback focus only on directly observable behaviors. By that I mean comments such as "You were late back from lunch for the past 3 Fridays" compared to "I think you are out getting plastered every Friday".

By focusing on the behaviors you will be better placed to correct the issue. The second you drop into hearsay, assumption or

generalizations - the power of your performance review sinks into the ground.

Keep it specific, detailed and observed.

## **Get your process understood & documented**

Whatever process you use to do performance reviews with your employees, you need to have it documented, shared and understood by your employees.

They need to know exactly what the process will be, what to expect, how to participate to the best of their ability, how you will assess their performance, what outcomes will come from the review and what sort of things will go on their personnel file.

The more open you are about the process, the better the review will be as the employee will be less stressed.

## **Employee Performance Review terms**

**... And what they REALLY mean**

Average Employee.....Not Too Bright

Exceptionally Well Qualified.....Made No Major Blunders Yet

Active Socially.....Drinks a Lot

Character above Reproach.....Still One Step Ahead Of the Law

Quick Thinking.....Offers Plausible Excuses  
Careful Thinker.....Won't Make a Decision  
Plans for Advancement.....Buys Drinks for All the Boys  
Aggressive.....Obnoxious  
Uses Logic on Difficult Jobs.....Gets Someone Else To Do It  
Expresses Themselves Well.....Speaks English  
Meticulous Attention to Detail.....A Nit Picker  
Has Leadership Qualities.....Is Tall or Has A Loud Voice  
Exceptionally Good Judgement.....Lucky  
Keen Sense of Humor.....Knows a Lot of Dirty Jokes  
Career Minded.....Back Stabber  
Of Great Value to the Organization.....Gets To Work on Time  
Relaxed Attitude.....Sleeps At Desk  
Work Is First Priority.....Too Ugly To Get A Date  
Independent Worker.....Nobody Knows What He/She Does  
Great Presentation Skills.....Able To Bullshit  
Good Communication Skills.....Spends Lots of Time on Phone  
Loyal.....Can't Get a Job Anywhere Else

**Real employee performance review comments**

# Performance appraisal humor

The British Military writes OFR's (officer fitness reports). The form used for Royal Navy and Marines fitness reports is the S206.

The following are actual excerpts taken from people's "S206's".....

- His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of curiosity.
- I would not breed from this Officer.
- This Officer is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definitely won't-be.
- When she opens her mouth, it seems that this is only to change whichever foot was previously in there.
- He has carried out each and every one of his duties to his entire satisfaction.
- He would be out of his depth in a car park puddle.
- Technically sound, but socially impossible.
- This Officer reminds me very much of a gyroscope always spinning around at a frantic pace, but not really going anywhere.
- This young lady has delusions of adequacy.
- When he joined my ship, this Officer was something of a granny; since then he has aged considerably.
- This Medical Officer has used my ship to carry his genitals from port to port, and my officers to carry him from bar to bar.
- Since my last report he has reached rock bottom, and has started to dig.
- She sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.

- He has the wisdom of youth, and the energy of old age.
- This Officer should go far and the sooner he starts, the better.
- In my opinion this pilot should not be authorized to fly below 250 feet.
- The only ship I would recommend this man for is citizenship.
- Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap.
- This man is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.

## **Why don't managers do performance reviews?**

**What is the number 1 reason; managers don't like doing performance reviews?**

- No money to give raises or bonuses
- Can't see the point
- Don't know how
- Scared the person will get angry or cry
- My boss doesn't do one for me so why should I do it with my staff?