THE RESOURCEFULMANAGER'S

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

—Checklist—

Contents

So Why Even Do Reviews?

Why do so many managers hate doing performance reviews? Perhaps because *there are so many ways to mess up* that, in the end, everyone feels worse for the wear.

Even for experienced managers, the review process can often be so formulaic and robotic that it feels empty. You can only grade someone on a scale of 1 to 5 so many times before it stops having any useful value.

Then there's the face-to-face sit-down. There's no telling how that discussion is going to go.

The long-standing advice is never wing it. Make sure you know what direction you want the talk to go in, or you could end up doing more harm than good to your relationship with an employee.

Why Reviews Are So Important

The fact of the matter is the annual evaluation is one of the most effective tools a manager has to boost staff performance. Done well, a review creates a clear path to success for employees in a way that supports continued growth for the employee and for the organization.

The performance review is the ultimate feedback forum. But the review cannot be successful unless the manager has already had good interaction and given good direction on a regular basis throughout the course of the year – making assessments and adjustments along the way, and building rapport and confidence with the employee.

Why Reviews Fail

By contrast, a review *won't be helpful if a manager has been saving up negative things* for a year to spring on an employee all at once. That'll definitely do far more harm than good.

And if the only reason a manager does a review is to create required documentation for the personnel file, then the *review will have little value in terms of employee growth.*

Human nature being what it is, *people don't like to sit and listen as managers outline their shortcomings*, document them, then stick it all in a filing cabinet someplace to be retrieved later, if needed. So a well-designed review is a must.

The main reason performance reviews fail *is the manager didn't properly prepare*, or the manager failed to engage the employee regularly in the months leading up to the review.

They also fail because the *manager never came up with real-life, meaningful goals.*

So the manager had to fumble through the review, creating confusion and sending the message that the review isn't that important to the manager, either.

But there are other reasons performance reviews can backfire:

1. **The manager and employee are friends** and cannot separate friendship outside of work with the manager/ employee relationship.

2. **Reviews are scheduled only when employees are struggling** and facing possible firing. The employee already sees the review as the "enemy ."

3. **The review is sugar-coated** for whatever reasons and doesn't truly reflect the employee's work/ position/abilities.

4. **Only some employees get reviews** and others never do.

5. **Managers try to measure performance in abstract terms,** such as attitude, motivation or dependability, and don't take advantage of concrete measures.

With so much at stake, and with so much good that can come from a well-executed review, *it's essential for managers to take the initiative and the time* to make the review the best it can be.

With that in mind, here is a *five-step plan that covers the vital phases of the pre-review.*

It is *followed by a one-page performance review checklist* outlining important steps from beginning to end.

The Pre-Review Plan: 5 Steps

1. Regular informal feedback

Talking with employees daily is always a good idea. Along with that, try to *have regular, informal "how you doing" chats.* Five minutes is all it takes sometimes, once a week or once a month. And it can begin with a "Claire, is there anything else I can do to help make your job better?"

These kinds of talks *assure a no-surprises environment* when both parties sit down for the formal review. Everybody knows what has been discussed and what's coming.

2. Keep things standardized

Evaluate people using the same standards, especially those who do the same jobs.

Use productivity metrics, quality levels, or revenue generation, just something that is tangible.

Standardizing *makes the boss's life easier, it gives the employee a clear understanding* of what's expected and it reduces the chance of lawsuits over favoritism or bias.

3. Look at prior reviews

Were goals set and promises made in the last review? What came of them?

Managers need to *be familiar with the components of the previous review* so they know where the employee has been, and where this employee wants to go.

4. Get a self-evaluation

A boss can't remember everything, so it helps to have the employee write up a self-evaluation.

Among other things, the self-evaluation will highlight areas where the manager and the employee *have totally different views of how things have transpired.*

5. Talk to others

Be sure to talk to customers, co-workers, vendors and other managers who have contact with the employee.

Did she go the extra mile? Did she do what was needed without being asked?

Good managers want to know these things about their people, and *multiple sources will give a more accurate and balanced view.*

Print the Performance Review Checklist on the next page

PERFORMANCE REVIEW CHECKLISIT

Prior to the meeting

☐ Identify a time and date that is mutually convenient.

☐ Avoid re-scheduling!

☐ Reserve a private place free from phone calls and interruptions!

☐ Get employee input on his/her accomplishments, concerns, goals.

☐ (Optional) Get employee-provided list of references: co-workers, customers, etc.

☐ Seek input from those who interact and work directly with employee.

☐ Review and compare performance: expectations versus actual.

☐ Review skills, work experience, training/future training needs.

☐ List major positive and negative incidents (be specific, do not generalize).

☐ Determine strengths and weaknesses.

☐ Prepare and prioritize a tentative development plan.

☐ Establish meeting objectives/agenda.

Conducting the meeting

☐ Establish an open and positive climate.

☐ Review the purpose of the evaluation - goal setting and problem solving.

☐ Discuss performance goals and achievements.

☐ Discuss strengths and competencies, areas of potential growth.

☐ Discuss areas of development, opportunity, formal, training (if any).

☐ Encourage employee response.

☐ Seek agreement on appropriate goals, development and timetables.

☐ Summarize the meeting. If it is positive, end on a positive note. If it is not positive, reinforce what must occur and set clear deadlines for improvement/ consequences.

Follow-up after the meeting

☐ Prepare a formal, written review document.

☐ Get employee signature, agreement.

☐ File copies in personnel file, HR file.

☐ Provide copy to employee.

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