

# Taking the "Dread" Out of Performance Reviews



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While all managers want their employees to be great, productive employees, they all don't always relish the idea of conducting performance appraisals. Whether it's a difficult message or even when your team has met their goals and the messages are mostly positive, most managers often still dread conducting performance reviews. Why is that? There are some things you can do to help make this easier.

Good managers know that regular feedback given to employees is part of being a leader. And monitoring and checking up on performance throughout the year makes that yearly appraisal all the easier! That valuable feedback to employees is ultimately how you are able to achieve results. You can make the process and the approach and the ultimate result of performance management easier on yourself by following some tried-and-true best practices that good managers have been doing for years.

## 1. No Surprises!

Anything employees hear in their annual performance appraisals should be a confirmation of what they already know because you have been providing ongoing feedback throughout the year. If you spend the performance review meeting discussing and "debating" the past, that's a good sign that you haven't done enough of it prior to the meeting.

## 2. Feedback!

Provide feedback to your employees as much as possible and constantly throughout the year. This is not the time to be "stingy" with encouragement and complements. Positive feedback does wonders in letting people know where they stand so that they know what to continue to do. Sometimes, people actually may not know that they are doing well. You may think it is apparent, but they may not even be aware that they are doing a great job. Positive feedback will encourage them to keep on going in the right direction.

## 3. Documentation!

In real estate, it's location-location-location. In managing employee performance, it's documentation-documentation-documentation. Include incidents that are crucial to the completion of the employee's goals—both positive and negative. Whether it's a handwritten note or an electronic file, the most important thing is to have something you can refer back to. Make sure that your continual evaluation of employee performance is balanced and that you are sharing feedback with your employees throughout the year.

## 4. Ratings!

Ratings should reflect the entire year. Be careful not to look only at the recent past, because that is what is the freshest in your mind. Again, good documentation throughout the year will give you that balanced approach. Also, guard against letting a few good aspects of an employee's performance override all aspects; or conversely, letting one problem area override the good aspects of his or her performance.

## 5. Goals and Objectives!

Set realistic goals and objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and have timelines. It's a lot easier to evaluate performance when you know what you are looking for, and it's a lot easier for an employee to perform well if he or she knows what is expected. The annual performance appraisal is a great time to look ahead and plan for goals that are connected to the overall strategies of your department and, ultimately, the organization.

## 6. Planning!

Block out a sufficient amount of time to have the discussion. An hour might be considered standard, but it may take more or less time depending on each employee. Schedule the appointment well ahead with all employees and ask each to come prepared, perhaps with a self-assessment and suggestions for developmental goals to achieve during the upcoming year. Be sure you are prepared to give the employee and the discussion your full attention—no multi-tasking with email and smartphones or other interruptions.

There you have it—six tools and tricks to make this important aspect of your job a little less dreaded and a valuable part of your relationship with your employees.

Companies often state that their most valuable resource is their people. What can be more important than taking the time to invest in that most valuable resource? It's hard to say that this process is not part of your job, right? In fact, it may very well be the most important job you have all year!

