Performance Appraisal Methods

The performance appraisal is a vital part of the performance management toolkit and when conducted effectively, enables the individual and their manager to hold a highly constructive, two-way dialogue that brings about positive results in an engaging way.

These tips are designed to help you prepare and structure the performance appraisals you are responsible to conducting. Above all though, the most effective appraisals are those that are conducted in a supportive manner and style to bring out the best of an employee and their manager. It may be an annual or bi-annually held meeting but it should be part of an ongoing review and support structure.

1. Prepare the individual you will be appraising: Give adequate notice of the scheduled performance appraisal meeting, explain it will be a two way discussion and encourage the individual to assess their own performance and development by considering some key questions:
   • What they have achieved during the last 12 months – any evidence or examples to refer to?
   • What do they think has gone well and why?
   • What do they think has not gone so well and why?
   • Is there any aspect of the job that they feel could be developed further?
   • Do they feel they have any training or development needs in the future? Do they have aspirations?
   • Are they satisfied with the manager-employee relationship and what support and guidance may they need going forward?

2. Prepare yourself fully for the performance appraisal: Assess the individual’s past performance by considering:
   • How well the individual has performed since the last meeting? Have you got any evidence or examples to refer to?
   • What achievements you can recall have been made over the last year? Ideally you will have records of interim reviews to refer to
   • What additional responsibilities/projects has the individual taken on?
   • What personal observations can I recall of the individual’s behaviour/competencies – the HOW whilst achieving their key responsibilities
   • To what extent have training and development plans been achieved?
   • Have there been any factors outside the individual’s control that have affected performance?
   • What feedback have I received from customers/managers/colleagues that help?
   • How much has the job changed in the past year and does the job description need updating?
   • Consider relevant business objectives for the individual over the next year
   • Reflect on the support you have provided as their manager
3. **Arrange a suitable venue for the performance appraisal meeting:** Schedule the date and time of the meeting considering how much time is needed and the best time of day for the individual with sufficient notice. Arrange the most conducive venue for the performance appraisal meeting ensuring privacy, no interruptions and a relaxed environment.

4. **Schedule time for documentation:** Ensure you schedule adequate time for documenting the performance appraisal meeting whilst the discussion is fresh in your mind and you can make sense of the notes you have taken.

5. **Introduce the performance appraisal meeting and get the appraisee involved early on:** Spend a few minutes establishing some rapport with the individual, setting the 'scene' by communicating the structure, timing, style and purpose of the discussion if not already conveyed and explaining the follow up to the meeting with documentation and the need for you to make notes. Ask the individual team member what they wish to get out of the meeting and encourage them to make their own notes so that they become engaged with the meeting.

6. **Review past performance over the last year:** Compare the actual performance with the planned performance, i.e. the individual’s objectives set at the last performance appraisal and explore what has happened and why. Explore both the internal and external factors affecting the individual's performance and agree future performance improvements and likely performance and development objectives for next year.

7. **Focus on outcomes:** Specific areas of improvement where the appraisee either needs to meet a satisfactory level of performance, perform more effectively across their full range of responsibilities, extend the scope of the role to prepare them for further career development or where they can be considered a “role model” for other employees and potentially take on a coaching role.

8. **Summarise achievements and future plans:** Summarise the year’s achievements against performance and development objectives, core skills/competencies and recognise other key achievements. Then summarise future plans such as the outline of performance and development objectives for the year ahead and the key actions and improvements agreed by the individual, any support required from manager and any career aspirations recognised.
Check everything has been covered and thank the appraisee for contribution. You may wish to ask for feedback from individual by asking:

- How do you think the performance review discussion has gone?
- What worked well?
- What could be done differently next time?

9. **Document achievements and future plans:** Record the outputs from the performance appraisal using your organisation's performance appraisal documentation and ask the appraisee to review the completed document to ensure they believe the document reflects the content of the performance appraisal discussion. Any disputes or differences of opinion or understanding should be attempted to be rectified initially with you. Failing that, your line manager or your Human Resources department.

10. **Provide ongoing support and reviews:** Deliver what you have promised to during the performance appraisal meeting – do not promise things you cannot deliver on! Provide coaching or training required to improve the internal factors affecting performance, eliminate or minimise the external blocks to performance and conduct regular scheduled reviews throughout the course of the year relative to your team member’s experience, performance and confidence levels.

Performance Appraisals are a powerful leadership and management tool to help you determine any changes in your own performance management of the team by reviewing the overall feedback from team members. However you can always gain a great deal of insight into what works best for each appraise and therefore how to get the best out of each individual.

We hope this guide has been helpful to you in how to conduct effective performance appraisals. If you have any suggestions for future guides and articles, please let us know using our contact form.

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