



the performance appraisal

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SWEATY PALMS, BUTTERFLIES and a heart that pounds furiously with a sudden sense of dread. The cause? Your performance appraisal.

Whether you are an employer or employee, staff performance appraisals can sometimes end up being awkward meetings which are, at best, endured with suffering and gritted teeth. However, the fact is that staff performance appraisals can be an extremely valuable contributor to the ongoing success of an organisation. Having an organised performance appraisal process in place provides a strong foundation for the growth and development of your staff which, in turn, can benefit both the employer and its employees. So what is a staff performance appraisal? It is best to think of it as a means of promoting a two-way business relationship between an employer and its staff. More specifically, it is a formal structure that periodically measures and evaluates employee work performance and provides opportunities to discuss weaknesses, strengths and future opportunities. It generally involves a formal meeting and usually occurs every six months or annually. With the correct preparation and attitude, staff performance appraisals can be a very productive process. For employers, appraisals can revive motivation in their staff, reward productive employees, address any poor performance, identify any work responsibilities that could be better fulfilled within the team and set achievable goals for the future.

1. Advise your staff in advance that their performance appraisal will be taking place and, at the same time, explain the importance of measuring their work performance and also alleviate any fears they may have by emphasising the benefits that each party will gain from the meeting. Set aside a mutual time to sit down with your staff and allow approximately one hour for each appraisal.

2. At least two weeks prior to their appraisal, direct employees to document their perceived performance in relation to previously agreed objectives along with their expectations for the next 6-12 months in terms of their role and responsibilities and career development goals. The employer should examine the document well in advance of the appraisal meeting and note any specific support they believe is required to facilitate employees reaching their stated career and performance objectives (e.g. training or extra resources needed).

3. Now for the performance appraisal meeting itself. Ensure that you attend the meeting as planned and use a meeting room where there is minimal distraction. Don't take any calls

during the appraisal as it is important to show your staff that you have a genuine interest in their career.

4. In summary, the appraisal should begin with a discussion and analysis of the employee's performance to date against previously agreed objectives. The remainder should focus on discussing the employee's individual and team goals planned for the future. Allow the employee time to discuss not only what they believe is needed to achieve the organisation's corporate goals but also what they, as an individual, seek to achieve and their desired career path over the next 6-12 months. Agree a career action plan and then discuss how, together, you will achieve these agreed career goals, in what timeframe, how performance will be measured and, specifically, how you, the employer, will assist.

5. Here is a checklist of what can be addressed in the appraisal:

- Review the objectives set at the previous performance appraisal.
- Discuss previous objectives that were met. Discuss what wasn't met and why.
- Question the employee's work relationship with other team members.
- Assess what aspects of the employee's job they like/dislike.
- Ask the employee to assess their strengths and weaknesses.
- Find out any realistic career development objectives the employee seeks in the next 6 - 12 months and what is needed to achieve this?
- Discuss their new performance objectives and assess how they will be met.
- Discuss how performance will be measured.
- Consider any training or support that is needed.
- Allow time for any other issues the employee may wish to raise.

6. Promote open communication and encourage two-way discussion. When discussing an employee's strengths and weaknesses it is important to remain objective and use language which is not overly emotive. When commenting on good performance, discuss how this can be expanded in the future.

7. After the interview, ensure that you organise any agreed training or support for the employee as soon as possible and provide a structure where regular feedback about their performance is communicated.