

# 7 tips to make performance reviews more meaningful to you and your employees

When you make finding the right talent and coaching that talent your number one priority, the rest will fall in place much more easily – such as achieving strategic goals, process improvement, completing projects, achieving revenue targets, etc. Putting your best effort into performance appraisals will result in benefits exponential to the time spent during the process. The following is an excerpt from an article in Forbes by Lisa Quast, a contributing writer on career topics and helping people maximize their potential.

**#1 Preparation is key.** Significant thought should go into it, not just about top-line results...but what are the key messages you want to convey, what's the overall feeling you'd like the employee to leave the meeting with?

**#2 Consider the logistics for the discussion.** Hold performance appraisals in a location that allows for confidentiality of discussions. If available, opt for a smaller conference room with a round table. Small room with a small table not available? Instead of sitting all the way across from the employee at a large, rectangular conference table, sit adjacent to them because this will improve the flow of conversation. Putting an employee at ease goes a long way in helping the performance review be as effective as possible.

**#3 Open with the agenda.** Part of putting employees at ease is letting them know what to expect during their performance review. Here's an example: "During our performance appraisal discussion today we'll look at four key areas: 1) Your performance since our last review, 2) achievements from past year, 3) Goals and objectives for upcoming year, and 4) Your personal development plan. We'll discuss what you accomplished, as well as talk about things that didn't go as well as you'd hoped. I'd also like to have an open dialog about the future by looking at your goals and objectives and the key areas on which you'd like to focus for personal development..."

**#4 Encourage candid discussion.** A performance appraisal should never be a one-way discussion. This is the time to talk about your point of view, but it's also the time to find out what the employee thinks. What do they believe went well? What didn't happen the way they'd hoped? If they could do anything over what would they do differently? Given their goals and objectives, what support do they believe they will need from you?

**#5 Give praise and credit where it is due.** Performance reviews are also a time to recognize outstanding employee performance. Don't miss this opportunity to praise exceptional employees – or you may lose them.

**#6 ...But don't shy away from dealing with issues.** Reviews are a good time to recognize employees for outstanding work, but it's also an important occasion to reinforce plans for getting an employee back on track when there have been issues. Modifications to conduct or performance issues should be dealt with immediately after the inappropriate behavior (or lack of performance) occurs and not kept for weeks or months until performance review time. However, performance reviews can be a good time to emphasize expected behavior changes and reiterate consequences, should changes not occur.

**#7 Don't close the review until you're both on the same page.** My goal during a performance review is to make sure I have a complete understanding about the employees' performance, their achievements and failures/pitfalls, their next year's goals and objectives, and their development plan. By focusing on gaining agreement during each aspect of the review, it helps me ensure that they hear my point of view, that I hear their point of view, and that we reach a mutual understanding on our shared view of their working world and future.