10 Secrets to an Effective Performance Review

Examples and tips on writing employee reviews, performance evaluation, sample performance review and employee evaluation forms

10 Secrets
to an Effective
Performance Review:

Examples and tips on employee performance evaluation, writing employee reviews, a sample performance review and employee evaluation forms

Special Report from www.BusinessManagementDaily.com

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For managers, reviewing employee performance is a daunting yet critical function of their job. Yet you need not look upon it with dread.

Instead, approach the performance appraisal process as a golden opportunity to give your staff feedback, listen to employee comments, review the job description, and discuss and correct performance problems.

10 Secrets to an Effective Performance Review: Examples and Tips shows you how to conduct positive, valuable assessments that lead to maximizing staff performance and helping your employees achieve their professional goals and your organization's objectives.

Performance review examples and tips   #1

Use performance logs to simplify employee reviews

It happens to every manager: You sit down to prepare a staff member's review and realize you can remember only what the person has done the past few weeks. Or, you allow only a single incident (good or bad) to color your assessment.

If you're relying solely on your memory to evaluate employee performance, you're making appraisals far more difficult than necessary. That's why it's best to institute a simple recording system to document employee performance.

The most useful, easy-to-implement way is to create and maintain a log for each employee. Performance logs don't need to be complicated or sophisticated. They can simply be paper files in a folder or computer files. Choose whatever means you're comfortable with.

The key is to establish a system that you will use regularly. No matter how you take notes, make sure to keep them confidential.

Recording performance

For each employee you supervise, the file should include a copy of the person's job description, job application and résumé. Then follow these steps for recording performance:

1. Include positive and negative behaviors. Recording only negative incidents will unfairly bias your evaluation. Make a point to note instances of satisfactory or outstanding performance, too. One way to ensure a balanced reporting is to update employee performance logs on a regular basis, instead of waiting for a specific incident to occur.

2. Date each entry. Details such as time, date and day of the week help identify patterns that may indicate an underlying problem before it becomes more serious.

3. Write observations, not assumptions. In all log entries, be careful about the language you use. Performance logs can end up as evidence in a lawsuit. Your log comments should focus only on behavior that you directly observe. Don't make assumptions about the reasons for the behavior or make judgments about an employee's character. Keep out any comments that border on personal comment or that show personal prejudice.

Many employee lawsuits can be quickly dismissed if performance logs can clearly demonstrate a history of performance problems leading to a firing.

4. Keep out biased language. A good rule of thumb: Any statement that would be inappropriate in conversation is also inappropriate in an employee log. That includes references to an employee's age, sex, race, disability, marital status, religion or sexual orientation. Don't suggest reasons for employee actions or make connections between events without direct evidence.

For example, you may know that Dan's wife recently filed for divorce, but don't suggest in the log that his personal problems are the reason his work performance has slipped.

5. Be brief, but complete. Log entries should use specific examples rather than general comments. Instead of saying, "Megan's work was excellent," say, "Megan has reduced the number of data entry errors to fewer than one per 450 records."

6. Track trends. If you begin to see patterns, make notes in the log or flag prior incidents of the same behavior. Bring your observations to the employee's attention only after you've defined a specific problem.

Performance logs: What to include and leave out

Include:
- Project assignments and deadlines met or not met
- Your assessment of the quality of an employee's work
- Instances of tardiness, work absences or extended breaks
- Disciplinary discussions and actions taken
- Employee responses to problems and questions
- Positive contributions to the work effort
- Details of significant personal interactions with the employee

Don't include:
- Rumors or speculation about the employee's personal life
- Theories about why the employee behaves a certain way
- Information about the employee's family, ethnic background, beliefs or medical history
- Your opinions about the employee's career prospects
- Unsubstantiated complaints against the employee

Performance review examples and tips   #2

How to conduct positive, valuable assessments

Sitting down with an employee to conduct the appraisal review is the part of performance reviews most managers dread. But the session doesn't have to be tense or uncomfortable. It can be a productive, enlightening and morale-boosting exchange. The key is to go into the review meeting fully prepared and with the right attitude.

Approach the evaluation as a mutual learning experience for you and the employee. You can gain valuable insights from your staffers, and you have information and experience that can help bring out their best.

Don't consider the review a critique of the staff member's duties. Instead, look at it as a routine checkup. Go in ready to talk, listen and recharge your relationship.

Setting the right atmosphere

Performance-related meetings and performance reviews are emotionally charged events. You can help reduce the tensions by choosing the right time, place and surroundings:

The right place. Like any strategic planning meeting, hold your review in a private, neutral environment. A small conference room is ideal. If you can't find a neutral room, use another manager's office, preferably one with a casual seating area.

The best time. Avoid meeting during busy or stressful times for the employee. Ask the staffer if the time you've chosen is convenient, and be ready to change if he or she seems hesitant. Don't squeeze in a review between two other meetings or before lunch. Try not to hold reviews on a Friday afternoon, especially if you plan to discuss serious performance problems.

Duration. Dedicate two uninterrupted hours to the discussion. You may not need the full period, but it's better to schedule too much time than too little.

Atmosphere. Create an environment that supports discussion, cooperation and negotiation. Sit beside your staffer, not across the table. Place your paperwork near at hand, but not directly in front of you. You don't want anything to distract you. If you must use your office for the review, come out from behind your desk.

Interruptions. Eliminate as many interruptions as possible. Hold calls or forward them to voice mail. Put a "Do not disturb" sign on the door.

Focus your words on results

Help the employee feel at ease from the outset. But don't get caught up in small talk. False intimacy may increase the employee's discomfort and destroy the meeting's businesslike tone. By the same token, don't make light of the review process or give the impression that you are just "going through the motions." Emphasize that this meeting is important and you want it to be productive.

Also at the beginning, provide an overview of the points you want to discuss with the employee. Make it clear that you don't expect to do all the talking.

Start by discussing any problems you've observed with the employee's performance. Address each problem individually, cite specific examples and let the employee respond. Don't bring up a new problem until you've thoroughly discussed the current one. Use the following framework to discuss each problem:

- **Describe the performance problem.** Focus on the employee's results and behavior in specific, nonjudgmental terms.
- **Reinforce performance standards.** Your staffer already should know the standards you expect, so don't spend a lot of time discussing them. Review them quickly, then move on. If the employee challenges the validity of a standard, calmly state your reasons for requiring it, and gently steer the conversation back to the reasons the person didn't comply. If necessary, refer to the employee's job description to confirm the responsibilities associated with the position.
- **Develop a plan for improvement.** Your review preparation should have included a plan for helping the employee improve performance. During the meeting, the employee may suggest additional solutions. Agree on a method for improving performance in the short run, and establish some options in case the first method proves ineffective.
- **Offer your help.** Show your commitment by helping your staffer obtain training, resources or other assistance to reach performance goals.
- **Alternate negative and positive comments.** If you have a list of performance problems to address, be sure to insert some positive comments along the way.
- **Emphasize potential.** Remind employees that they can apply their strengths to their weaknesses. For example, an employee whose reports are riddled with statistical errors may have successfully designed a complex computer model. The employee clearly is capable of producing accurate work, so point that out.

Performance review examples and tips   #3

Turning a negative into a positive: 4 examples

During performance reviews, use clear, nonjudgmental language that focuses on results and behavior. Notice the positive and negative aspects of these statements:

- "Your work has been sloppy lately." (*Negative:* too vague)
- "Your last three reports contained an unacceptable number of statistical errors." (*Positive:* cites specifics)

- "Don't you bother to proofread anymore?" (*Negative:* accusatory tone)
- "Is there a reason these errors are still occurring?" (*Positive:* gives employee a chance to explain)

- "You're obviously not a mathematician." (*Negative:* focuses on the person, not on performance)
- "I know you're capable of producing more accurate work." (*Positive:* reaffirms confidence in employee's abilities)

- "Don't let it happen again." (*Negative:* blanket demands)
- "How can we prevent errors from creeping into reports?" (*Positive:* asks for feedback on improving performance)

Performance review examples and tips   #4

How to measure an employee's 'intangible' traits

As part of the performance review process, supervisors are typically called upon to evaluate employees on the basis of intangible factors, such as cooperativeness, dependability and judgment. The higher up the organizational chart, the more important those traits become. Yet most supervisors find intangibles the most difficult factors to evaluate, probably because they seem so personal.

Rather than assessing concrete behavior, you may feel as though you are evaluating someone's personality or human merit. While intangible factors may seem personal, they're important to maintaining effective working relationships and getting the job done.

Match traits to the job

One key to assessing an employee's intangibles is to ask yourself which traits are vital for each job. Cooperativeness may be critical for a staffer working on a team, but not for a security guard working the night shift. Initiative would be key for a product development manager, but less so for a payroll clerk.

Before performing an employee's review, critically review the intangible factors included in the person's performance standards. You should be able to comfortably answer the question: "Why is this employee rated on this measure?" Remember, every performance measure should be rooted in a concrete operational goal of the organization.

Employee evaluation form measuring intangible traits

As part of the performance-review process, supervisors can use the following questions to help quantify the intangible qualities of their employees.

PLANNING
1. Does the employee set verifiable short- and long-term goals?
2. Are the employee's goals in tune with company needs?
3. Does the employee's planning show sound assumptions reflecting the company's goals and resources?
4. Does the employee typically achieve the expected results?

ORGANIZATION
5. Is the employee aware of what is going on in his or her department, including who is doing what?
6. Does the employee know what the department can do in an emergency?
7. Does the employee do a good job of delegating work according to subordinates' abilities?

INTELLIGENCE
8. Does the employee see relationships between facts and draw appropriate conclusions quickly?
9. Does the employee learn from experience?

JUDGMENT
10. When confronted with an emergency, does the employee quickly recognize the most important priorities?
11. Does the employee appreciate the financial implications of his or her decisions?
12. Does he or she make decisions quickly, but not hastily?

INITIATIVE
13. Does the employee anticipate what has to be done?
14. Does the employee perform well in the absence of superiors?
15. Has the employee made original suggestions to improve operations?

LEADERSHIP
16. Does the employee explain rather than command?
17. Do people listen closely when he or she speaks?
18. Does the employee spell out the benefits of doing things his or her way?
19. Does he or she deal smoothly with unexpected developments?

Match traits to behavior

You can't help being subjective when evaluating intangible factors. But you can avoid bias by focusing on *concrete* examples of instances in which the employee displayed positive or negative behavior regarding a particular trait.

Keep good documentation during the year, preferably by keeping an ongoing, simple performance log for each employee. It should track specific examples of the person's positive and negative performance and behavior. Include notes on intangibles as you go.

When it's time to discuss intangibles during feedback or formal review, do your best to tie those traits to tangible examples of workplace wins and losses.

For example, you might say, "I was pleased by your efforts to solve that customer's problem last week. You defined the problem, considered possible causes, brought together a team and solved the issue quickly. Your actions demonstrated initiative and sound judgment; you didn't try to do it all yourself. You took responsibility for solving the problem, but you knew when to ask for help."

Performance review examples and tips   #5

Avoid phrases that can sabotage job-review meetings

When you talk with employees about their performance reviews, beware of using common phrases that can unintentionally communicate the wrong message, or come across as too negative or personal.

Certain phrases can kill employee morale, weaken productivity or open up the organization to a discrimination lawsuit.

Your goal is to deliver reviews that help shape employees' performance without becoming sidetracked by anger, emotion or fear of conflict. To do so, avoid the following phrases:

"You're wrong." If an employee tries to explain why his or her job rating should have been higher, don't slap back with a Trump-like, "You're wrong." That will only trigger anger and more confrontation. Instead, turn back to your documented facts of the employee's performance and say, "I know you disagree, but I believe this evaluation accurately reflects your performance."

"What was your problem?" Don't use the question as a way to ask why an employee had difficulty completing a project or task. Employees will bristle at such a statement. Instead, say, "What were the conditions from your perspective that made it difficult for you to complete the task?"

"You really did a great job but ..." Whatever comes after the "but" negates the preceding compliment. Make a point of using the word "and" instead. Don't directly connect praise with constructive criticism. Instead, say, "And, you can do even better by making these improvements." Then cite them specifically.

"I understand." This phrase can excuse unacceptable performance or behavior by conveying empathy. Avoid it when possible.

"Your position here is solid so long as you keep up the good work." You may intend such statements to encourage good performance, but they're legally dangerous because they imply an employment contract that a court could find binding. That limits the organization's ability ever to fire the person.

Performance review examples and tips   #6

4 steps to help employees reach their peak performance

It sounds so easy: Expect high performance and you won't be disappointed. Expect so-so performance and that's what you'll get. But reality is more difficult.

Define what you mean by high performance. To help your employees maximize their productivity, use these four practices to define what you mean by high performance and lay out how you expect your people to attain it:

1. Involve them in setting goals. Never assume you've got buy-in. Rather than blindly dropping project goals, individual goals or the organization's goals onto workers, approach them with the thought, "What do you think you can achieve?" Then negotiate your expectations.

2. Keep the goals realistic. Any goal—whether it's at work, at home or on the athletic field—needs to be difficult, desirable and doable. Setting goals too high will only deflate the worker; setting them too low will erase the challenge of work, which will turn off the person in its own way.

3. Hit their buttons to make work "flow." People have their own motivations; find out what they are to help them achieve positive "flow." *Examples:* the will to

win; enjoyment of teamwork or a higher mission, such as helping clients succeed. Express the overarching vision, and then let your people figure out how to make it happen.

4. Avoid micromanaging. You may want to lay out every detail of how employees should achieve those goals, but resist the temptation. If you spend most of your managing time telling employees how to do their work, rather than trusting them to reach the clear goals you've set, you're treading into micromanagement waters.

Performance review examples and tips   #7

5 warning signs of performance review problems

Job reviews shouldn't be paper-moving programs that return zero value. Here are five symptoms that warn of trouble in a supervisor's appraisal process, according to Joan Rennekamp, HR pro at the Denver law firm of Rothgerber, Johnson & Lyons:

1. Employees are unpleasantly surprised by the ratings. Performance appraisals shouldn't contain surprises. They should be a summary of comments employees have already heard throughout the evaluation period. Unpleasant surprises indicate that supervisors are not being candid or communicative with employees.

2. Ratings by one supervisor or department are uniformly excellent. Although it's inappropriate to apply a "bell curve" to employees' performance, it is also inappropriate to rate everyone at the same level.

3. Great employees don't receive great ratings. Look around at the employees who are the strongest. They should be receiving the best ratings. If not, your appraisal instruments aren't rewarding what they should.

4. Employees who are dismissed have recently received excellent appraisals. One purpose of performance reviews is to provide documentation for the organization in case a dismissal is necessary. When the performance appraisal doesn't support a later decision, it can make it more difficult for the employer to defend its actions.

5. Productivity generally goes down during appraisal time. The purpose of performance reviews is to increase productivity. Any process that's not

contributing to that goal should not be continued. If your system is not doing so, don't hesitate to rate it as "unsatisfactory" and design a new one.

Performance review examples and tips   #8

Writing employee reviews: Steer clear of two common errors

Say you manage a 55-year-old employee whose productivity drops over the year. Instead of citing specific, measurable examples of this decline in his performance review, you note, "Kevin doesn't seem to have the energy level anymore to truly succeed in this department." Still, you rate Kevin's work as "average," the same as last year.

That example highlights two of the more common—and legally dangerous—pitfalls in writing performance reviews:

1. Evaluation of attitude, not performance. Vague statements that attack an employee's demeanor could be interpreted as some kind of illegal age, race, gender or disability discrimination. Instead, supervisors should use concrete, job-based examples to illustrate any criticism.

In the example above, referring to Kevin's "energy level" could give him reason to complain about age discrimination. Instead, the review should have cited examples, such as "Kevin has completed three of the five major projects late this quarter and has not contributed one new product idea in six months."

For this reason, the word "attitude" should never appear in a review. Employment lawyers and courts often see that as a code word for discrimination.

2. Evaluation inflation. Supervisors too often rate mediocre employees as competent; competent employees as above average; and above-average employees as superior. The problem comes when an employee is fired for poor performance yet his history of reviews tells a different story. The employee then has a supposed proof that the *real* reason for the firing was something else, maybe something illegal.

Here are the main causes of evaluation inflation. Do any sound familiar to you?

- **Misinterpreting a rating scale or instructions.** *Example:* Using a review with a 0-4 rating scale, a supervisor gives an employee a "2" in attendance and fires her. She sues, arguing that a "2" is average and acceptable, and

wins. The supervisor wrongly believed that anything less than a "4" rating was unacceptable.

- **Fear of confronting employees.** *Example:* A worker has acceptable work quality but hurts morale because of poor teamwork and pushiness. To avoid an angry confrontation, the boss rates the employee as average in soft skills.
- **Giving positive areas too much weight over negative ones.** *Example:* You rate a factory worker on quality, quantity, dependability, teamwork and safety. Quality is poor, but you rate it average because of the "glow" from the other categories, all rated above average.

Final tip: To determine if you inflate reviews, ask yourself the following questions: Who are my worst performers? Knowing what I know about them, would I hire them again? Do their reviews reflect their true performance?

Case study: Liability time bombs in job reviews

Reviews should cite specific, well-documented examples of behaviors (pro and con). They shouldn't use vague terms, such as "bad attitude" or "lazy." Here are excerpts from actual federal government employee reviews that use funny, but legally explosive, language:

- "She has delusions of adequacy."
- "I wouldn't allow this employee to breed."
- "He would argue with a signpost."
- "When his IQ reaches 50, he should sell."
- "He brings a lot of joy when he leaves the room."
- "If he were any more stupid, he'd have to be watered."

Performance review examples and tips   #9

Incorporating an employee self-review

by Paul Falcone, author of **2600 Phrases for Effective Performance Reviews**.

Drafting performance reviews is always a daunting task for supervisors, for many legitimate reasons: Judging others' work often appears exceptionally perception-driven (vs. fact-driven), and providing honest feedback is potentially confrontational. Plus, if you overinflate grades, you create a record that may not withstand legal scrutiny if you later want to terminate or discipline the employee.

In reality, it doesn't need to be that way. One simple way to reinvent performance appraisals is to shift the responsibility for initial evaluations back to your employees.

If you ask workers to grade themselves, you'll find (more than likely) that they're harder on themselves than you'd ever be! And this, more than any other exercise throughout the year, may place you and your supervisors in the roles of career mentors and coaches rather than unilateral decision-makers and disciplinarians.

Logistics: It's not simply about asking employees to complete a blank appraisal form. Instead, give them a separate self-evaluation form that allows them to recap their achievements, identify their shortcomings and initiate discussions regarding their future development. A basic self-evaluation form asks three core questions:

1. "How do you feel you have performed throughout the review period?" You could likewise ask, "Why is our company a better place for your having worked here?" or "What have you specifically accomplished in terms of increasing revenue, decreasing expenses or saving time?"

2. "Which performance areas do you wish to develop?" Or, "What can I, as your supervisor, do to help you in terms of providing you with increased structure, direction and feedback, to help you build your skills and strengthen your overall performance?"

3. "What are your goals for the upcoming review period, and what are the measurable outcomes so that you'll know that you've reached those goals?"

If you're hesitant about rolling this out because you're afraid employees will rank themselves higher than supervisors would, remember that the employee self-review form merely opens up an avenue for discussion.

If you have an employee who feels he's a stellar performer while you feel he's a laggard, this exercise will allow you to discuss the differences in your perception:

Say, "Sam, I see you graded yourself as a five out of five in the area of communication. Share with me why you feel the grade you've given yourself is warranted. Then tell me how you feel I might grade you in that area and why."

With such a simple tool in hand, you save time, allow your employees to motivate themselves and erode absolutely none of your power or control as a supervisor.

And you may just find that everyone involved is empowered and invited to assume responsibility for his or her own career progression.

Paul Falcone is an HR executive and the author of several best-selling books, including: *101 Sample Write-Ups for Documenting Employee Performance Problems (2010)* and *101 Tough Conversations to Have With Employees (2009)* and *2600 Phrases for Effective Performance (2005)*. His informative presentation on hiring is available at http://www.BusinessManagementDaily.com.

Performance review examples and tips   #10

Sample performance review

Several employee performance software programs on the market today can make reviews less taxing and ensure that your written appraisals are consistent, comprehensive and appropriate.

Performance Now! by KnowledgePoint is one example of how employee performance software can help you enhance your performance review procedures. Menu-driven and flexible, *Performance Now!* makes it easier to do employee performance rating on a variety of measures, document employee behavior, substantiate your ratings and create written appraisals that are meaningful and legally sound. The following employee review sample was created using *Performance Now!*

National Publishing Company
Performance Review

Employee Name: David R. Jones
Job Title: Production Assistant
Department: Production
Date of Review: 5/1/10
Date of Hire: 3/31/09
Reviewer Name: Jane Smith
Reviewer Title: Production Manager

PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

Quantity   *Needs improvement*

Dave regularly produces a normal amount of work, and he demonstrates a commitment to increasing productivity. However, it sometimes takes him longer than satisfactory to complete work and he too often misses deadlines. Dave works more slowly than the position requires and he does not always achieve his established goals.

Quality   *Meets job requirements*

Dave displays a strong dedication and commitment to excellence. He works hard to improve quality in his own work and promotes quality awareness throughout the organization. The work he produces meets standards for accuracy and completeness. Dave applies the feedback he receives to improve his performance and he monitors his work to meet quality standards.

Job Knowledge   *Exceeds job requirements*

Dave demonstrates significant expertise at his job because of his in-depth knowledge and skills. He is an exceptionally fast learner and able to quickly put new skills to use. He reads and researches extensively, staying on top of current developments that might impact his field. Dave displays a better than usual understanding of the interrelationship between his job and the jobs of others. He effectively uses the resources and tools available to him. However, he needs slightly more supervision than he should to fulfill the responsibilities of his job.

Problem Solving   *Meets job requirements*

Dave identifies most problem situations within appropriate time frames. His information gathering and analysis meet the requirements of his position. Most of the time, he develops several alternative solutions to problems. He usually resolves or minimizes most problems before they grow into larger issues and he participates well in group problem-solving situations.

Communications   *Outstanding*

Dave displays superior verbal skills, communicating clearly, concisely and in meaningful ways. He demonstrates outstanding written communications skills. He listens carefully, asks perceptive questions and quickly comprehends new or highly complex matters. Dave is extremely thorough and proactive about keeping others well-informed.

Planning & Organization   *Needs improvement*

Dave plans ahead for additional resources. He sets measurable, realistic goals and objectives for himself. He works in an organized manner. However, Dave would be more effective if he prioritized and planned his work better. He could make more efficient use of his time through better planning and organization. Also, Dave often has difficulty integrating changes into existing plans.

Cooperation   *Exceeds job requirements*

Dave is consistently tactful and considerate in his relations with others. He displays an upbeat, positive outlook and pleasant manner under even the most trying circumstances. He is always the first to offer his assistance to his co-workers and he plays a highly proactive, participative role when working in group situations. Dave is particularly successful at establishing and maintaining good relationships. He takes an active role in resolving conflicts before they get out of hand.

Dependability   *Meets job requirements*

Dave responds promptly and reliably to requests for service and assistance. His dedication to the job often exceeds normal expectations. He is usually punctual and he makes an effort to schedule time off in advance. Dave has little difficulty following instructions and responding to management directions. In most situations, he assumes responsibility for his own actions and outcomes. He generally keeps his commitments without delay or follow-up.

SUMMARY

Dave has been in this position since (insert date here), slightly more than (1) year(s). During that time, he has assumed most of the essential duties of the position and only needs support on some of the more complicated aspects. His focus on quality at times interferes with his ability to meet deadlines. With increased attention to timeliness, I expect that Dave will further improve by the next review.

PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Be wary of taking on responsibilities that aren't yours. Learn to better estimate how long tasks will take. Ask for help if competing demands become overwhelming. Prioritize demands and take them one at a time. Improve planning and organizing skills. Resist handling too many tasks simultaneously. Track precisely how you spend your time.

Employee Acknowledgment

I have reviewed this document and discussed the contents with my manager. My signature means I have been advised of my performance status and does not necessarily imply that I agree with the evaluation.

_____   _____

Employee Signature   **Date**

_____   _____

Reviewer Signature   **Date**

Carrot or stick? Motivating managers to finish reviews

Armed with these tips and a sample performance review, it should be a snap to get all your performance reviews completed, right? We hope so, but if not, here are some final suggestions from readers to inspire supervisors to complete reviews on time. Choose the right mix of carrots and/or sticks to fit your organization's culture.

The reward method. "We offered rewards (baseball tickets and an afternoon off) to the manager who completed his or her reviews first." —*Jennifer, California*

Tie to manager's bonus. "I worked for a company where supervisors who did not submit their reviews by the announced deadline saw their bonuses decreased. Plus, it would go on *their* performance reviews." —*T.O., Texas*

Withhold manager's raise. "If annual merit raises are handed out with appraisals, hold pay increases for managers who are late with their appraisals—and don't give retroactive pay. Merit increases for the manager kicks in only after you have all the reviews." —*Sheila, Arizona*

Keep manager's boss in the loop. "When requesting performance reviews from managers, 'cc' their boss (general manager, VP, president, CEO, etc.). That usually gets their attention." —*Elly, Pennsylvania*

Document & discipline. "If reviews are not completed on time, managers should know you will document it, just as they would for one of their employees who failed to do something in a timely manner." —*Jinnie, Minnesota*

Urge employees to speak up. "We encourage employees to schedule time with their managers during review time to help managers keep on track and to keep from saving the hardest reviews for the end." —*Sherry, California*

Hold their hands. "Many times, managers just need some basic phrases to get started. You can help them get over the hump by providing some specific sample phrases for each review category—and by forwarding them this free report. HR can also provide training or role-playing for managers on how to conduct the review meeting." —*Ruth, California*

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Think you deserve a raise, but are afraid to walk into your boss's office and ask? Don't let ineffective negotiation skills hold you back. Employees at all levels can boost their career earnings by following the rules on negotiating a raise, hashing out the best pay package in a job offer negotiation and knowing their market value.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/SalaryNegotiating101

FMLA Intermittent Leave: 5 guidelines to managing intermittent leave and curbing leave abuse under the new FMLA regulations

One of the biggest employer complaints about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is the productivity problems caused by employees' use—and abuse—of FMLA intermittent leave. The problem: Employees with chronic health problems often take FMLA leave in short increments of an hour or less. The Department of Labor took steps to help minimize workplace disruptions due to unscheduled FMLA absences by saying that, in most cases, employees who take FMLA intermittent leave must follow their employers' call-in procedures for reporting an absence. Amend your organization's policies, update your employee handbook and revisit how you track FMLA intermittent leave with these 5 guidelines.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/FMLAIntermittentLeave

Overtime Labor Law: 6 compliance tips to avoid overtime lawsuits, wage-and-hour Labor audits and FLSA exemption mistakes

Employers, beware: The Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division reports that wage-and-hour labor litigation continues to increase exponentially. Federal class actions brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) outnumber all other types of private class actions in employment-related cases. Use this special report, Overtime Labor Law: 6 compliance tips to avoid overtime lawsuits, wage-and-hour Labor audits and FLSA exemption mistakes, to review your overtime pay policy and double-check your FLSA exempt employees' status. Expecting a visit from a DOL auditor? Get prepared by taking the self-audit at the end of this report.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/OvertimeLaborLaw

Office Communication Toolkit: 10 tips for managers on active listening skills, motivating employees, workplace productivity, employee retention strategies and change management techniques

A manager's job is 100 times easier and more rewarding when his or her employees are performing like a well-oiled machine. But when that machine runs slowly or breaks down entirely, a manager's job becomes exponentially harder. The best managers are the best listeners ... listen to our 10 tips and maximize office communication skills and bolster workplace productivity.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/OfficeCommunicationToolkit

[Workplace Violence Prevention Toolkit](www.businessmanagementdaily.com/WorkplaceViolencePrevention): HR advice, guidelines and policies to keep your workplace safe

Unfortunately, in the wake of a spate of workplace shootings, HR professionals and managers nationwide must consider the horrific possibility of violence erupting at their own facilities and events. To help employers prevent tragedy, this toolkit offers business advice, guidelines and policies aimed at keeping workplaces safe from employee violence. Learn prevention strategies, tips on identifying potentially violent workers, managerial advice on maintaining a safe workplace. It includes two sample anti-violence policies, adaptable for use in any company, plus checklists to use in case violence erupts.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/WorkplaceViolencePrevention

[14 Tips on Business Etiquette](www.businessmanagementdaily.com/BusinessEtiquette101): Setting a professional tone with co-workers, clients and customers

For organizations and employees alike, recognizing the critical link between business protocol and profit is key to your success. Learn how to confidently interact with colleagues in ways that make you and your whole organization shine. Discover best practices on making proper introductions; cubicle etiquette; "casual dress" rules; handshake protocol; guest etiquette; workplace behavior faux pas; business dining etiquette, office wedding invites and other co-worker special occasions; business letter and email protocol—and even how your office decorations may affect your professional image.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/BusinessEtiquette101

[12 Ways to Optimize Your Employee Benefits Program](www.businessmanagementdaily.com/EmployeeBenefitsProgram): Low-cost employee incentives, recognition programs and employee rewards

If you've had to cut pay and staff and now expect more from those who remain, it's vital to revamp your employee recognition and rewards program. Employers can double their rewards and recognition efforts in innovative, cost-efficient ways with employee-of-the-month awards, employee incentive pay, employee appreciation luncheons, more time off, shopping sprees, wellness incentive contests, plus employee rewards customized to motivate Millennials, Gen Xers, Baby Boomers and the Matures. Now is the time to get clever with your employee recognition programs. This report shows you how with great ideas offered up from our [Business Management Daily](www.businessmanagementdaily.com) readers.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/EmployeeBenefitsProgram

[The Bully Boss Strikes Again!](http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/BullyBoss) How to deal with bosses who make crazy requests

And you thought your boss was unreasonable? Bet he never asked you to perform oral surgery or fill in for the bomb squad. Talk about "other duties as assigned!" Even if your direct supervisor swamps you with petty tasks and doesn't appreciate all you do, you can always "manage up" to make sure the boss's boss knows your worth. This report includes practical advice on how to manage a toxic boss along with dozens of outrageous stories about bully bosses.

http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/BullyBoss

Microsoft Email: Outlook Tips & Training: How to improve productivity by effectively employing under-used features already at your fingertips

We all use Outlook. It's easy. You can answer email, keep your appointments and your calendar, and save your files in various folders. But are you using it to manage your entire workflow? You can. Melissa P. Esquibel combines her 25+ years of experience in information technology with a background in training, technical writing and business risk analysis to move beyond email and help you understand Outlook's amazing workflow benefits. You'll discover how to get more out of Outlook than you ever dreamed possible with this hands-on road map to Outlook that can send your productivity skyrocketing.

http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/MicrosoftEmailOutlook

17 Team Building Ideas: The team building kit for managers with team building exercises, activities and games to build winning teams today!

With employees still reeling from workplace budget cuts, now's a great time for new team building ideas. No, you don't need an expensive round of paintball to gain the benefits of team building exercises, but you do need to squeeze the most out of them. This report provides teamwork examples, exercises and tips for leading winning teams. Go from being a manager who oversees people to a leader who molds them into winning teams with these 17 team building ideas.

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/TeamBuildingIdeas

10 Time Management Tips: A how-to guide on efficiently managing your time through effective delegating, calendar management and using productivity tools

In this era of downsizing and the quest for efficiency, businesses of all sizes are asking employees to take on extra tasks to boost productivity. Has your job turned into one of those "stretch jobs"? If so, you may be looking for a better way to get more done in less time, reduce stress and stop burning the midnight oil. Read about calendar management, keyboard shortcuts, running productive meetings, setting up agenda templates and using tech tools for project management with these 10 time management tips. Learn to prioritize your tasks and stop working in a crisis mode all the time

www.businessmanagementdaily.com/TimeManagementTips
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Performance Review Documents:

Checklists and forms to help employers conduct effective

employee performance appraisals

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Preparing for Performance Reviews

- *Recording Employee Performance Checklist*

- *Anticipating the Review Checklist*

Recording Employee Performance

Relying on memory to make informed performance reviews can lead to inaccurate, incomplete assessments. Instead, establish a tracking system that captures relevant information throughout the review period. Check yourself on the following:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. A performance log is maintained on the employee.	❑	❑	❑
2. The performance log includes a copy of the employee's job description.	❑	❑	❑
3. Entries reflect behavior associated with job requirements.	❑	❑	❑

You may include observations regarding non-job-related behavior, but you should evaluate them in light of job requirements. For example, the fact that Ruth can use a computer graphics program could be noted; but if computer graphics is not part of her responsibility, her frequent use of the program may be a cause for concern.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
4. Examples of positive and negative employee behavior are regularly recorded in the employee log.	❑	❑	❑
5. Every entry is supported by factual observations.	❑	❑	❑
6. Employee logs are updated at least once a week.	❑	❑	❑

Recording only negative incidents will unfairly bias your evaluation. Make a point to note instances of satisfactory and superlative performance as well. One way to ensure balanced reporting is to update employee logs on a regular basis, rather than waiting for a specific incident to happen.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
7. Each entry in the employee log is dated.	❑	❑	❑

Details such as time, date and day can help you detect patterns that may indicate an underlying problem before it becomes entrenched.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
8. Only observations are recorded in employee logs. I don't write down judgments, opinions or guesses about the cause of behavior or include second-hand information.	❑	❑	❑
9. No references to gender, age, race, ethnicity,	❑	❑	❑

physical ability or health are included in the employee log.

10. Employee logs are kept secure in a locked drawer or password-encoded computer file. ❑ ❑ ❑

Employee logs can be subpoenaed in the event an employee challenges a personal decision. Any information that might suggest discrimination could be used against you. Likewise, employee logs should be treated as confidential and restricted from access by unauthorized personnel.

Anticipating the Review

How you approach the review session will affect your success in communicating your assessment of employee performance. The right attitude and careful planning can make the review less stressful and much more productive. To gauge your preparedness, respond to the following statements:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. I look forward to performance evaluations as an opportunity to sit down with my employees, discuss performance problems, make improvements and set new goals.	❑	❑	❑

Having a positive attitude will make the review important and productive.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
2. I prepare an agenda and bring all of the necessary materials to the review.	❑	❑	❑

Preparing for the review helps reduce stress and ensures the discussion will flow smoothly.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
3. I schedule the review well in advance, at a time convenient for both of us.	❑	❑	❑
4. I allow at least two hours to conduct each review.	❑	❑	❑
5. Interruptions are kept to a minimum.	❑	❑	❑
6. Reviews are held in a neutral location, such as a conference room.	❑	❑	❑

The timing, setting and duration of the interview affect your concentration and the employee's ability to stay focused. Reviews should be conducted in a neutral environment, without distraction or pressure to finish too quickly. Your employees will appreciate your efforts, and you'll notice that reviews are much less stressful when conducted in a business-like manner.

Conducting Performance Reviews

- *Model Performance Appraisal Form*

- *Discussing Performance Problems Checklist*

Model Performance Appraisal

Date:

Employee:

Department: Position:

Period covered by this review: From: To:

Manager:

Purpose of This Evaluation & Development Review

Evaluating The Past

Part I is the general evaluation OF PAST PERFORMANCE section; its focus is the past performance of the employee (the time period covered by this appraisal). Performance is evaluated on both specific and general job performance areas.

Assessing Employee Performance Potential

Part II is the DEVELOPMENT section; its focus is on job accomplishments and on how well the employee met performance goals from the previous appraisal period. The achievement of past goals and job accomplishments (or lack thereof) indicates the employee's current strengths and development needs.

Summarizing Overall Performance

Part III is the OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING section; its focus is on looking at each segment of the employee's performance and reaching an overall performance rating. This section allows both the employee and the manager to make comments about both individual assessments area, as well as the overall assessment rating.

Setting Future Performance Goals

Part IV is the FUTURE GOALS section; its focus is on setting goals to be achieved before the next review, including the strategies to be implemented for the future development of the employee, as well as any corrective actions needed.

PART I — GENERAL EVALUATION OF PAST PERFORMANCE

Instructions: Select and define the job performance areas (JPAs) that are critical to the successful performance of the job. There may be only a few key ones, or as many as 10. These should be both job-specific areas and general performance areas. Tailor JPAs to your organization's job standards and requirements. (**Note:** Five general JPAs are provided. You can use them as is, tailor them to your needs, or subtract and add others.)

Give each JPA a weighted percent number indicating its importance in achieving job success. **Note:** The total of all JPA percentages, both specific and general, must equal 100%. Next, use a rating scale (5 = highest; 1 = lowest) to rate each employee on each JPA. In order to explain the reasoning behind each specific job area rating, define the performance level required to reach each rating level. Then, multiply the JPA weight by the employee rating. (**Example:** Initiative weight 30% x rating 3 = points 90.) The total will give you a benchmark to evaluate and compare employees. The maximum number of points an employee can achieve with 10 JPAs is 500.

JPA	Weight	x Rating	= Points
Specific **1.** A. Outstanding = 5 and defined as: B. Above average = 4 and defined as: C. Average = 3 and defined as: D. Below average = 2 and defined as: E. Unacceptable = 1 and defined as:			
2. A. Outstanding = 5 and defined as: B. Above average = 4 and defined as: C. Average = 3 and defined as: D. Below average = 2 and defined as: E. Unacceptable = 1 and defined as:			
3. A. Outstanding = 5 and defined as: B. Above average = 4 and defined as: C. Average = 3 and defined as: D. Below average = 2 and defined as: E. Unacceptable = 1 and defined as:			
4. A. Outstanding = 5 and defined as: B. Above average = 4 and defined as:			

JPA	Weight	x Rating	= Points
C. Average = 3 and defined as: D. Below average = 2 and defined as: E. Unacceptable = 1 and defined as:			
5. A. Outstanding = 5 and defined as: B. Above average = 4 and defined as: C. Average = 3 and defined as: D. Below average = 2 and defined as: E. Unacceptable = 1 and defined as:			
Total for Specific JPAs:			
General For each of the five categories below, use the following rating scale: Outstanding = 5 Above average = 4 Average = 3 Below average = 2 Unacceptable = 1			
6. **Job knowledge** Defined as: Comments:			

JPA	Weight	x Rating	= Points
7. **Dependability** Defined as: Comments:			
8. **Initiative** Defined as: Comments:			
9. **Adaptability** Defined as: Comments:			
10. **Cooperation** Defined as: Comments:			
Total for General JPAs:			
Total for Both Specific and General JPAs:			

PART II — DEVELOPMENT

1. List important **job accomplishments** since the last performance appraisal. Each success suggests what key performance strengths?

A.

Strength(s):

B.

Strength(s):

C.

Strength(s):

D.

Strength(s):

E.

Strength(s):

*Overall **job accomplishment** rating:*

☐ Outstanding ☐ Above Average ☐ Average ☐ Marginal ☐ Unacceptable

2. List the **performance goals** agreed upon at the last review. After the goal, indicate whether the employee surpassed, met or failed to meet the goal.

A.

☐ Surpassed ☐ Met ☐ Failed to meet

B.

☐ Surpassed ☐ Met ☐ Failed to meet

C.

☐ Surpassed ☐ Met ☐ Failed to meet

D.

☐ Surpassed ☐ Met ☐ Failed to meet

E.

☐ Surpassed ☐ Met ☐ Failed to meet

*Overall achievement of **performance goal** rating:*

☐ Outstanding ☐ Above Average ☐ Average ☐ Marginal ☐ Unacceptable

Part III — Overall Performance Rating

1. Total points from **both Specific and General JPAs** in Part I:

☐ Outstanding: 500-400 points

☐ Above Average: 399-300 points

☐ Average: 299-200 points

☐ Marginal: 199-100 points

☐ Unacceptable: 99 points and below

2. Overall **job accomplishment** rating (as indicated in Part II):

☐ Outstanding ☐ Above Average ☐ Average ☐ Marginal ☐ Unacceptable

3. Overall achievement of **performance goal** rating (as indicated in Part II):

☐ Outstanding ☐ Above Average ☐ Average ☐ Marginal ☐ Unacceptable

4. **OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

After reviewing both specific and general job performance areas, job accomplishments, and the achievement of past performance goals, the employee's overall performance is rated as:

☐ Outstanding ☐ Above Average ☐ Average ☐ Marginal ☐ Unacceptable

Manager comments:

Employee comments:

Part IV — Future Goals

1. For any previously agreed upon goals the employee failed to meet by this appraisal period, outline the necessary corrective actions. (If the employee is already on a performance improvement plan, insert the mandatory actions from the plan itself into the chart below.)

Failed Goal	Corrective Action	Progress Will Be Reviewed On	Improvement Must Be Seen By	Employee Role	Manager Role

2. During the next appraisal period, the employee will aim to meet these goals.

Goal	Implementation Method	Employee Role	Manager Role

Manager signature: Date:

Employee signature:

Discussing Performance Problems

How you approach a discussion of performance problems will influence the employee's reactions. Employees are far more likely to accept your assessment and commit to an improvement plan if you present the problems fairly, cite specific examples and suggest a means of bringing performance back in line. Answer the following:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. Performance problems are acknowledged openly, without window dressing or acrimony.	❑	❑	❑
2. Problems are illustrated with specific examples of employee behavior.	❑	❑	❑
3. The discussion focuses on the results desired from the employee's efforts.	❑	❑	❑
4. The employee is not blamed for poor performance.	❑	❑	❑
5. The employee is given the opportunity to respond to charges of unsatisfactory performance.	❑	❑	❑
6. For every problem identified, an improvement plan is presented and discussed.	❑	❑	❑
7. Specific, realistic goals for improvement are set according to a reasonable timetable.	❑	❑	❑
8. The employee is provided with the resources necessary to improve performance.	❑	❑	❑
9. Through words and actions, you communicate your faith in the employee's ability to improve.	❑	❑	❑
10. You commit to assisting the employee in every way necessary to improve performance.	❑	❑	❑

Following up After Performance Reviews

- *Problem Analysis and Corrective Action Plan*

- *Performance Appraisal Follow-Up Form*

Problem Analysis and Corrective Action Plan

1) Is it a training problem?

What training was received?

Was employee asked if training was adequate?

Was same training given as in previous situations?

COURSE OF ACTION:

2) Is it a selection/recruitment problem?

What were requirements for selection?

Methods of recruitment?

Is present selection process adequate for current needs?

If not, what changes are necessary to improve the process?

COURSE OF ACTION:

3) Is it a clarity problem, e.g., job description, job expectations?

Does job description accurately cover day-to-day job responsibilities?

Is employee kept informed about what expectations are?

If employee is not meeting expectations, is there a clear route to help him/her get on track?

COURSE OF ACTION:

4) Does the employee understand the policy?

Is policy clearly communicated to all employees?

Is there a way to check to make sure policy is being followed in all workplace situations?

Does the policy adequately cover all areas of the business?

COURSE OF ACTION:

5) Is it a personal problem?

Could there be an off-the-job reason for the problem?

Have there been any reports of such problems?

Does employee show any signs of stress?

COURSE OF ACTION:

6) Am I the problem?

Have I treated the employee differently from others?

Do I expect too much from the employee?

COURSE OF ACTION:

Performance Appraisal Follow-Up

Employee: Manager:

Today's date: Date last appraised:

Part I – Progress Since Last Appraisal

Area(s) employee agreed to improve on:

Progress made:

Reason(s) for any difficulties:

Part II – Plan For Further Progress

Area(s) employee should continue to work on:

Specific steps employee can take:

Specific steps manager can take to assist employee progress:

Bonus: *Performance Appraisal Checklist*

Performance Appraisal Checklist

Before The Appraisal Interview

☐ Prepare for the interview by filling out the appraisal form and setting objectives for the interview, including areas you think the employee should improve.

☐ Check the appraisal form for accuracy and completeness. Don't leave comment sections blank. Write something meaningful and specific to the employee's performance. Be wary, though, of making the comments too vague or too specific or writing something from which the employee could draw an erroneous conclusion.

☐ If you've skipped certain criteria on the appraisal form, check that you have a solid business reason for doing so. For example, not evaluating an employee who works by himself on teamwork skills.

☐ Find a private place to conduct the interview where interruptions and phone calls are unlikely.

☐ Select a seating arrangement that will encourage discussion by presenting you as a helpful counselor, rather than an authority figure.

☐ Choose a time that will facilitate a proper interview. Generally, mid-morning is the ideal time.

During The Appraisal Interview

☐ Keep the interview focused on comparing the employee's performance with the standards and goals previously established.

☐ Review performance standards early in the meeting.

☐ Discuss disagreements, and take legitimate mitigating circumstances into account when making your final evaluation.

☐ Make your final decision and explain how you reached it. Tell the employee how to appeal your judgment if he/she disagrees.

☐ Review expected corrections to performance problems in detail, making sure the employee knows exactly what to expect.

☐ Make a note of corrections on the appraisal form and have the employee sign it.

☐ Listen to employees who have an inclination to talk and attempt to draw out conversation in employees who are not as forthcoming.

☐ Use the silent treatment to inspire employees to speak, and keep the conversation directed to the appraisal process.

☐ Ask open-ended questions that require thoughtful responses.

☐ Offer reticent employees a choice when asking questions in an attempt to elicit extended responses.

☐ Restate what the employee has told you to get the employee to expand on a complaint, to show that you care and have been listening to what the employee has to say, and to make sure you have heard the problem correctly.

☐ Link employee performance goals directly to company goals.

After The Appraisal Interview

☐ Provide a steady stream of feedback outside the annual performance appraisal interview.

☐ Empower employees to set their own performance goals through the year.

☐ Give employees the direction and guidance they need to correct performance weaknesses, but don't dwell on them.

☐ Keep track of feedback concerning the employee's performance that comes from co-workers, subordinates, and customers.

☐ Connect results to rewards to show the tie between improved performance and personal satisfaction.

☐ Provide employees with the tools and skills needed to succeed, e.g., training, equipment.

☐ Solicit specific feedback by asking employees how they will complete new projects and incorporate them into their other responsibilities.

☐ Communicate on regular basis what the employee has done wrong, as well as mention what the employee has done right.

☐ Give examples of both positive and negative performance results.

☐ Conduct formal performance interviews on a regular basis.