



Conducting A Great Performance Review

As a leader, one of the most important functions you have is the annual review you conduct with your direct reports. This process is usually looked at as a one time a year event where you get to tell your colleague how they are doing. It is usually a scheduled event, with lots of surprise and intrigue attached to it. Nothing could or should be further from the truth.

A performance review (performance evaluation, performance appraisal) is a formal assessment of an individual employee's results or performance in an established period. It is the opportunity to provide feedback about results to goals, overall performance, and help identify strengths and weaknesses. This should be a collaborative event, but the colleague should walk away with a full understanding of how well they performed along with a solid plan to improve.

Great leaders should be giving continuous feedback to colleagues as the year goes on. There are several opportunities to give feedback (and receive it) during a calendar year.

Opportunities

Your team has reached a milestone, hitting an established goal, providing great service to a customer, achieving a promotion. This should be a very positive event and an opportunity to recognize them for a job well done. You honestly cannot focus enough on providing congratulations to your team when they do something well. It is your chance to reinforce good behavior, recognizing them in front of their peers, and create a desire to do more of it. There are many chances to create good will amongst your team and provide a sense of accomplishment. You drive the culture within your business unit. How you present yourself to your team will leave a lasting impression and have a direct impact of colleague engagement. There are also opportunities to address underperformance and establish a plan to correct. This should be done in a collaborative manner behind closed doors and in person if possible. The point is, feedback about job performance should be on-going, consistent, and without bias. The annual/formal review should not be a surprise if you are connecting with honesty, providing timely feedback, and always trying to help improve their performance.

Performance reviews should cover the following:

- Communication
- Results against established goals
- Teamwork
- Quality of work
- Attendance
- Ability to solve problems



The following points will help you conduct a quality review:

1. Give feedback regularly. Don't wait for the annual review. Your colleague should know going into the meeting how they did.
2. Be upfront and honest. Ask your colleague how they did and ask them to provide tangible information about their results. Agree on the weaknesses
3. In person is always best. Present a positive demeanor, watch body language, provide support. If they can't see you, they can draw conclusions. It also allows you to see how they are reacting
4. Be ready with examples. It is hard to understand the meaning if you can't provide relevant examples that they can relate to
5. Always have something positive to end with. Have a great plan for them to execute on. Everyone wants to know that they are supported and valued. No one shows up to work wanting to fail.

Pay close attention to how you phrase your evaluations. Here are five words and expressions that will help you effectively highlight an employee's contributions, based on James E. Neal's [*Effective Phrases for Performance Appraisals*](#) (Neal Publications, 2009).

- **Achievement:** Incorporate this into a phrase, such as "achieves optimal levels of performance with/for ... "
- **Communication skills:** Phrases like "effectively communicates expectations" or "excels in facilitating group discussions" go a long way with an employee.
- **Creativity:** Appreciating employees' creative side can make for happier, more motivated staff. In a performance evaluation, try phrases like "seeks creative alternatives," followed by specific examples and results.
- **Improvement:** Employees like hearing that they are improving and that it's being noticed. "Continues to grow and improve" and "is continuously planning for improvement" are two constructive phrases to use in a performance review.
- **Management ability:** Leadership skills and the ability to manage others are key to employee success. Phrases such as "provides support during periods of organizational change" carry weight with your employee.



Richard Grote, author of [*How to Be Good at Performance Appraisals*](#) (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), said that instead of using terms like "good" or "excellent" in a review, employers should opt for more measurement-oriented language. In an interview with [Hcareers](#), Grote noted that action words like "excels," "exhibits," "demonstrates," "grasps," "generates," "manages," "possesses," "communicates," "monitors," "directs" and "achieves" are more meaningful. **[Read related article: [Giving a Performance Review? Avoid These Phrases](#)]**

6 Tips for Writing an Effective Performance Reviews Business News Daily Contributing Writer Sean Peek Updated May 12, 2020 excerpts were used from this article.