

Five Simple Fixes for More Effective Performance Reviews



Love them, hate them, need them; performance reviews bring mixed emotions and often mixed results but done well they can benefit the organization and the employee.

Ideally a performance review process aligns the performance and future activities of an employee with the needs and future direction of a team and organization. Employees gain benefit by seeing how their job performance contributes to the organization's success and understanding where to focus their efforts. Unfortunately many performance reviews are not as successful as they could be and the process can be stressful for both manager and employee.

Setting goals, identifying objectives and measuring success is a lot of work. It is a shame to conduct a performance review process that is ineffective. Consider these 5 simple fixes to improve your performance review process.

5 Performance Review Mistakes and Their Fixes

1. **Too Infrequent:** Most organizations wait and perform performance reviews annually or bi-annually. These annual reviews are often the only time employees have an opportunity to gauge their own performance and receive solid, tangible feedback. Holding regular performance reviews and providing a small amount of feedback more frequently, monthly or quarterly, provides employees with an ability to adjust and improve on an ongoing basis. A habit of discussions and feedback can make the 'annual' performance reviews less stressful and more accurately an annual review. Regular performance reviews can also make the conversation more comfortable and lend to more honest discussions.
2. **Poor Preparations:** Too often supervisors are passive and rely on the employee responses in review of the previous year to generate discussion. Sometimes supervisors have not even read the employee's performance objectives before the employee arrives at the meeting. A supervisor should spend 2-3 hours considering the performance needs of his/her team each quarter and before the annual review and then at least 2 hours of preparations for each employee on the team. Reviewers should then take the time to prepare a list of questions to ask prior to the review meeting. Prior to the meeting the supervisor should also have had a conversation with the employee about the employee's own personal career goals.
3. **Personal Perspective:** One of the most difficult things for many people to do is set aside personal bias. It can sometimes be a challenge for a supervisor to objectively evaluate the performance of an employee. This bias may arise as a

result of liking some individuals more than others, having a bad experience with an employee and individual differences in employee personalities. Employees who required additional accommodation as a result of disability, cultural differences, family status may have required additional work on the part of the manager and this can effect how generous or not a supervisor may feel. It is important that a reviewer take time to consciously consider what unconscious bias may play a role in the performance review process.

4. **Two One-Way Conversations:** Many times the review process involves the employee speaking or more commonly reading responses from a written review and the manager reading his/her comments back. Infrequently is there a full and complete conversation where both people have an opportunity to discuss the positives and negatives. A performance review should not involve reading content. Prior to the performance review content should be read and questions created by each participant. The process of the review should be a conversation with questions and responses, notes and confirmations of the position of both parties.
5. **Focused on The Past:** Yes the performance review is a review from of the past, but a performance review should actually focus on the future and not the past. Although the conversation jumps off from a review of what has come the conversation should be about what happens next. Unfinished goals and objectives may fuel a conversation about what can be done differently in the future to help the employee better meet his/her objectives. Employees are interested and engaged by conversations about what they need, their personal growth and career development. An employee the review should focus on making things better and setting objective for the future.

Do not throw away the opportunity a performance review can create to have a conversation with an employee that explores where your employee has been and where you both would like him or her to go next.