Performance Review Quiz



QUESTION

Are performance reviews mandatory in the workplace?

ANSWER

Generally, there are no laws that explicitly state that employers are required to give employees performance reviews. However, if you never received one during your employment, and you were terminated for cause specifically for performance-related issues or during your probationary period there may be grounds to fight your termination.

PREAMBLE

As performance reviews are an assessment of an employee's job performance, it is understandable to want to know where you stand with your employer. Communication is key in all relationships, and when your employer is not communicating with you, it may be especially frustrating if you find yourself wrongfully terminated without the opportunity to address any concerns regarding your performance.

First of all, there is no law in Ontario that explicitly states an employer is required to give their employees performance reviews. Even if it states in your employment contract or within company policies that you will receive a performance review after a set period of time, there is no law to enforce it.

If you find yourself terminated and you were provided with termination pay or a separation package, likely performance issues were not the reason for your termination. In Ontario, an employer can terminate you for any reason as long as the reason was not discriminatory, and as long as they provide you with pay-in-lieu of notice. There is additionally no law in Ontario that states an employer has to provide you with reasons for your termination as well, so although it may seem unfair that your employer has terminated your employment so abruptly, you should have your termination package reviewed by a lawyer to ensure you have received all of your entitlements.

Performance reviews. Some people love them. Most people! dread them. No matter what camp you fall in, taking some time to prepare for your performance review is essential to get the most out of it. Though it might feel like going back to your grade school days of getting a report card at the end of each semester, performance reviews can be a valuable tool for requesting feedback and bringing up workplace

issues that are important to you.

WHY IS IT RIGHT

Though there's some mixed evidence about whether or not performance reviews are the most effective method of evaluating employees, they continue to be popular. Some experts argue that keeping an open dialogue with managers is more effective than an annual sit-down meeting. Self-evaluations, in particular are often met with skepticism. However there are others who believe having a dedicated time to discuss employee performance on an annual or quarterly basis is worth the effort.

If your company still holds regular performance reviews, here are ways to make the most of the experience.

1. Start with self-reflection

Look back at the past year and outline your biggest successes, as well as some areas for improvement. Be honest with yourself. If you sweep all your less than successful projects under the rug and want to forget about them, you're missing out on critical insights about what you can do differently in the coming year. It's much more valuable to bring constructive ideas to the table, than it is to pretend failures didn't happen. Everyone and every job has ups and downs. Good managers are aware of this. Look at successful projects critically as well. Analysis isn't just for less-than-stellar results. If you had some major wins, what did you do to contribute to that success? Are they things you can repeat or scale up in the coming year?

2. Assess your goals from last year (and make new ones)

Most annual performance reviews will have you list a few personal goals for the coming year. Refer to your goals from the previous year. If all has gone according to plan, you've achieved those goals. Be prepared to discuss what you've done to meet your goals. If you're still working on some of them – perhaps they were really long-term goals – be prepared to give a status update.

Next, consider what goals will be for the coming year. Thinking about this ahead of time allows you to be more thoughtful about your goals, rather than coming up with something on the spot during the meeting. Be realistic about what you can achieve within a year, or note that the goal is ongoing. Also, don't forget to mix short and long-term goals. Think about quick things you can do to move the needle, as well as more long-term projects that you'll need to work on throughout the year.

3. Bring your notes and list of discussion points to the review

Preparation will make you look like the consummate professional you know you are. Don't walk into your performance review blind or attempt to wing it. Even if you're old hat at the performance review routine and confident your manager will give you an 'A' grade, preparing ahead is the professional thing to do. Know ahead of time what you want to discuss (the good and the bad points of the past year, as well as your plan heading forward). Don't hesitate to bring your notes to ensure you hit all the key points you wanted to. Winging it is a surefire way to forget something important.

4. Evaluate your skills and salary

Use your performance review as an opportunity to benchmark your position and compare where you stand in the market. Have you learned new skills in the past year that have increased your value to your employer? Maybe you've taken on new responsibilities and it's time to reconsider your current job title. Or has the average salary for people in your profession climbed recently? It's important to regularly evaluate where you

stand to ensure you're happy with your current position. Do some research into what people in your field and location are earning to compare. If everything is aligned, perfect. If not, bring your research to your performance review and discuss the path forward with your manager. It's difficult to argue with detailed salary data from multiple trustworthy sources.

5. Determine what you need to be successful in your role

As technology evolves at a rapid clip, the tools and skills required in most careers evolve as well. Each year there seems to be an array of cutting-edge tools and methodologies that claim to hold the secrets to streamline your productivity and amp up your work. Consider if there are any new tools or skills that will help you be more effective in your role in the coming year. Many employers have employee development budgets and may be open to your suggestions. As we head into an era of automation and digital transformation, employers have a vested interest in helping their employees upskill and stay relevant. If you're interested in attending a conference to gain industry insights, upgrade your reporting tools, or take a course to learn a new skill that will help you at work, your performance review is an excellent time to bring it up.

6. Keep an open mind to feedback

Go into your performance review with an open mind. It's easy to get caught up in the feelings of dread that come with having to put yourself and your work up for evaluation. Try to enter your performance review with an open-mind and it will be easier to accept feedback constructively and not take it personally. Often performance reviews are structured to divide your career into black and white successes and failures. (This is one of the reasons some HR experts dislike this format for evaluating employees.) Your manager might be required to fill out a section on your strengths and areas for improvement, even if they think you're doing a great job overall. So try to remember that any feedback you receive is a tool to help you grow and improve.

7. Speak up about something that's important to you

Your performance review is a two way street. Though it might feel like your career is in peril when you and your manager are analyzing the nitty-gritty details of your performance, your performance review is actually an excellent opportunity to bring up topics that are important to you. Even more so if your performance gets a glowing review. When you're riding on the high of a job well done is an ideal time to let your manager know how they can reward your success. Maybe you want to take on more responsibility to gear up for a promotion. Perhaps you'd like to start working from home more often. Or maybe there's an upcoming project that you're interested in and would love to be a part of. If your performance review is good, you have some added leverage and your manager has an incentive to keep you onboard, so they may be more open to making changes.

WHY IS EVERYTHING ELSE WRONG

Here are some important considerations to bring up at your next appraisal

1. Talk About Your Achievements

Discussing your achievements is a good way to impress your boss and highlight what you have been up to for the past year. Remember: your manager won't know exactly what you do on a daily basis and they may overlook all the great things you've done.

However, it's no good simply bragging about all your good work – you'll need to

provide solid proof, too. So, prepare a list of targets you've met and projects you've worked on, and maybe even print out a couple of emails praising your excellent customer service skills.

This will essentially help you jolt your boss's memory and also develop new goals for the future. Let's say you overachieved your targets by 5%; next year, you might need to aim for 10% to receive a reward.

2. Talk About a Raise

If you want to bring up the topic of a pay review or raise, now is the perfect time to ask. However, I strongly advise against simply saying something as simple and tactless as 'Can I have a raise?'. Instead, you should list all your achievements over the year and provide reasons why you feel you deserve a pay increase.

You can also tell your boss about your expenses and how you will appreciate an increase. If you're a key player, and the budget allows it, there will be no reason why your boss would refuse your request. At the end of the day, they want to see that you're happy and that you feel satisfied and motivated at work.

3. Ask About the Development of the Business

This question is great for a number of reasons.

The first is that you show interest in the overall development of the business and are eager to understand where you fit into the picture. You can see how your not-so-important-tasks are actually really important to the success of the organization.

It also suggests that you're thinking beyond your daily work and are keen to see how you can contribute more towards the company as a whole.

4. Set Clear Goals

A yearly evaluation is the perfect time to set clear goals for your professional development. For example, if you want to progress to a higher level, you will need to take on extra tasks and prove that you have what it takes.

Through the two-way discussion with your manager, you'll be able to identify and set clear goals for the following year. It will also give you something to base your progress on, which will help when it comes to the following year's review.

5. Give Feedback to Your Manager

As mentioned above, a performance review is a two-way street. It's intended to help yourself, your manager and the overall organization. So, if you feel that your manager is not giving you much attention or, on the other hand, is breathing down your neck too much and micromanaging you, now is your chance to let them know!

You can help them progress within their position, and they will most likely appreciate your honest feedback as other employees may feel too scared to mention anything.

6. Ask How You Can Help

Even if you think you have enough on your plate already, there's probably a number of things you can do differently or a series of other tasks that you can take on. To help understand your goals, you could ask your manager how you can be more helpful.

This shouldn't suggest that there's lots of room for improvement. Instead, it should

show that you're keen to get involved in other projects and would like to contribute more to the company's success.

7. Suggest Tools That You Need to Do Your Job

In every business, there are new tools that will be beneficial to the company and, most often than not, these go undetected by the manager because they are so busy. This is where you come in! You can suggest a number of tools that will be useful to the team.

Just be sure to do your research and provide statistics and testimonials from other customers. This not only shows that you've used your initiative, but it will also show key leadership skills.

8. Discuss Your Future

If you've been in the same position for a while, your career may begin to stagnate, which is bad both for yourself and for the company. In order to stay motivated and efficient, you need to be satisfied with your duties and your job role, which is why it's important to discuss your future with your boss.

Don't be scared to ask them what your role is within the company or to tell them where you see yourself in the next five years and ask if they can help you achieve those goals. As a manager, it's their duty to help you progress and succeed, so they will be more than happy to do so.

9. Suggest New Practices

A dedicated employee that uses their initiative will strive for success and will find ways to work more efficiently. If there are areas of concern, don't be shy to bring them up and discuss new practices to follow. Just make sure you have a solution to a problem, rather than just listing a problem – because that won't help anyone!

At the same time, you can also list what is working really well. You know the drill: say something positive before something negative so it doesn't sound like a complaint.

10. Discuss Your Happiness

It's important that you let your employer know if you're happy or unhappy in your job. There's no need to torment yourself for months if there's something they can do to fix it. And they would much rather help you achieve your goals than train a new candidate from scratch if you decide to give up and leave.

If you have ways to make you feel content at work, do bring them up, whether it's a new project or a better work-life balance. It's important to discuss your feelings, especially if you want an open line of communication with your boss.