Basics of Conducting Performance Appraisals/Reviews/Evaluations



1. **Design a legally valid performance review process, consider these legal requirements of the performance review process:** The law requires that performance appraisals be: jobrelated and valid; based on a thorough analysis of the job; standardized for all employees; not biased against any race, color, sex, religion, or nationality; and performed by people who have adequate knowledge of the person or job. Be sure to build in the process, a route for recourse if an employee feels he or she has been dealt with unfairly in an appraisal process, e.g., that the employee can go to his or her supervisor's supervisor. The process should be clearly described in a personnel policy.
2. **Design a standard form for performance appraisals**, and include the name of the employee, date the performance form was completed, dates specifying the time interval over which the employee is being evaluated, performance dimensions (include responsibilities from the job description, any assigned goals from the strategic plan, along with needed skills, such as communications, administration, etc.), a rating system (e.g., poor, average, good, excellent), space for commentary for each dimension, a final section for overall commentary, a final section for action plans to address improvements, and lines for signatures of the supervisor and employee. Signatures may either specify that the employee accepts the appraisal or has seen it, depending on wording on the form
3. **Schedule the first performance review for six months after the employee starts employment.** Schedule another six months later, and then every year on the employee's anniversary date.
4. **Initiate the performance review.** Tell the employee that you're initiating a scheduled performance review. Remind them of what's involved in the process. Schedule a meeting about two weeks out.
5. **Have the employee suggest any updates to the job description and provide written input to the appraisal.** Have them record their input concurrent to your recording theirs. Have them record their input on their own sheets (their feedback will be combined on the official form later on in the process). You and the employee can exchange each of your written feedback in the upcoming review meeting. (Note that by now, employees should have received the job descriptions and goals well in advance of the review, i.e., a year before. The employee should also be familiar with the performance appraisal procedure and form.=

6. **Record your input to the appraisal – always reference the job description and associated formal goals for basis of review.** Be sure you are familiar with the job requirements and have sufficient contact with the employee to be making valid judgments. Don't comment on the employee's race, sex, religion, nationality, or disability or any other protected characteristic. Record major accomplishments, exhibited strengths and weaknesses according to the dimensions on the appraisal form, and suggest actions and training or development to improve performance. Use examples of behaviors wherever you can in the appraisal to help avoid counting on hearsay. Always address behaviors, not characteristics of personalities. The best way to follow this guideline is to consider what you saw with your eyes. Be sure to address only the behaviors of that employee, rather than behaviors of other employees.
7. **Hold the performance appraisal meeting.** State the meeting's goals of exchanging feedback and coming to action plans, where necessary. In the meeting, let the employee speak first and give their input. Respond with your own input. Then discuss areas where you disagree. Attempt to avoid defensiveness; admitting how you feel at the present time, helps a great deal. Discuss behaviors, not personalities. Avoid final terms such as "always," "never," etc. Encourage participation and be supportive. Come to terms on actions, where possible. Try to end the meeting on a positive note.
8. **Update and finalize the performance appraisal form.** Add agreed-to commentary on to the form. Note that if the employee wants to attach written input to the final form, he or she should be able to do so. The supervisor signs the form and asks the employee to sign it. The form and its action plans are reviewed every few months, usually during one-on-one meetings with the employee.
9. **Note that if the supervisor has been doing a good job supervising, then nothing should be surprising to the employee during the appraisal.** Any performance issues should have been conveyed when they occurred, so nothing should be a surprise in the review meeting.