Conducting Performance Appraisals/Reviews/Evaluations



For most managers, conducting performance appraisals can be a daunting process. You want to provide your employees the feedback they need to advance their careers, yet you don't want to damage morale or diminish their enthusiasm. Consider these tips for your next evaluation:

Don't Make it a Surprise: Provide input to employees throughout the year so there won't be any surprises when it's time for a formal review. If an employee needs to improve in a certain area, for example, don't wait eight months until the formal review to let him or her know. Your immediate feedback will help fix the problem behavior before it becomes a habit.

Deliver Negative Feedback Effectively: Discussing an individual's weaknesses in a constructive way can be quite a challenge. To smooth the conversation, give examples of how to improve in specific areas. This keeps employees optimistic about future success. Be sure to comment on your team member's positive attributes as well. Encouragement is the best incentive for improvement.

Reinforce Company Values: Employees who are clear about expectations and how their daily contributions tie to the company's goals are the most successful in their jobs. Discuss key business objectives during the appraisal process to help clarify staff members' roles and how their work fits into your firm's big picture.

Consider a Self-Evaluation: You may want to ask your staff to assess their own strengths and weaknesses prior to their review. This not only gives them an opportunity to examine their performance and career path, but also provides you insight into their perceptions and goals. Of course some employees may feel awkward completing a self-evaluation because they are worried about rating themselves too highly or too harshly. To help staff members feel more at ease, let them know that any discrepancies can be discussed during the review.

Document Appraisals in Writing: Whether your firm issues standard evaluation forms or you create your own, all comments should be in writing. Cite specific examples to support your assessments.

Keep the Tone Conversational: Schedule a personal meeting with each employee, and be sure to budget enough time to engage in a two-way dialogue on all topics

that need to be covered.

Set Objectives for the Next Year: Make sure goals are in line with your staff member's career path and tie into your organization's initiatives. If your employee has future plans of advancing into a management role, for example, then objectives should be geared toward acquiring the skills needed for that type of position. Discuss options for seminars, classes or other professional development. Your employees should leave the review with several clear-cut goals for the coming year.

Employee evaluations are a great opportunity for opening the lines of communication and learning what motivates your team members. With the right approach, they can be meetings both you and your staff look forward to attending.