

These Simple Changes to Your Performance Reviews Will Make More Effective Employees

Make these performance management improvements to boost your employee's strengths and your bottom line as well.

November 27, 2020 5 min read

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Performance reviews are an essential tool for monitoring and improving employee progress and giving them support and guidance. But, the traditional performance review has become clunky and outdated. These reviews are often a source of stress and anxiety for employees and they usually don't provide the real-time feedback that many team members need to be highly successful.

Because these reviews are often performed annually, employees might work inefficiently for months at a time, only to be told months later during the next performance review. The lag time between the work performed and an annual or even biannual review can make it difficult for both employees and supervisors to correctly recall information. There's a better way to make these reviews more effective for your business and your employees.

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Effective performance reviews are

only a few changes away

Here's what to do to improve performance management so that you play to your employee's strengths and boost your company's bottom line as well.

Hold reviews more often

Rather than conducting employee performance reviews once or twice a year, tweak them so that they happen weekly or monthly, and so that they're a more informal event. Some entrepreneurs block out a 15- or 30-minute spot in their calendars weekly, using that time to talk to employees. During these shorter sessions, employees can talk about anything they'd like. This approach offers several benefits:

- With a more informal approach, employees feel encouraged to ask you questions so that they don't get stuck in their workflow.
- Employees can talk about what's happening at work and keep you updated about challenges you may not be aware of.
- Performance appraisal becomes more of a two-way street. Employees can ask for advice, constructive feedback, and anything else they need to do their jobs well (the "evaluation" feeling of a formal review may discourage them from doing this).
- You'll build a stronger relationship with your employees through these one-on-one chats, and employees may feel more comfortable talking to you both now and in the future. Maybe they'll give a bit of employee feedback themselves.

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Make your check-in's regular

When workers talk to their manager each week face to face, the boss becomes less intimidating. Company culture starts to change and employee engagement increases. Team members become more comfortable asking leaders for what they need to do their job well, whether it's advice, support or something else. You'll ultimately be more comfortable having meaningful conversations that tackle individual performance, organizational goals, project metrics and more. All of this is harder when talking is less frequent. A more regular, casual review process can make performance discussions less scary.

Periodically make one of these shorter performance evaluations a 30- to 60-minute meeting and construct the conversation so that it's entirely oriented around how the employee is doing. You'll already have some context from your shorter weekly meetings, but creating this space each month or two provides a valuable check-in opportunity. Your employee will have had enough time to get focused and do some quality work, but you won't have let things go for so long that your employee could have taken projects in the wrong direction for long.

During these sessions, ask effective questions like:

- How do you set goals? What are they?
- What areas of improvement would you like to work on?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- What obstacles are in the way of your current work?
- What can I do to help you do your job better?

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Adjust your approach

In addition to changing your annual performance review schedule, adjust how you approach employee evaluation. Try to see yourself as more of a coach and less of an evaluator; your goal is to help poor performers do better work, rather than pointing out shortcomings or only delivering negative feedback. You want them to take on self-evaluation more regularly.

It can also be helpful to incorporate peer feedback on each employee in the reviews, especially if your employee works as a member of a team and isn't always directly interacting with you as their supervisor. This peer feedback can bring your attention to an employee's responsibilities and strengths that you might not have been aware of. While incorporating peer feedback into weekly reviews probably isn't practical, it could make a valuable addition to the appraisal process once or twice each year.

Provide real-time feedback

While reviews are helpful, don't forget the importance of providing real-time feedback for positive work. Recognizing an employee's current accomplishments can boost their confidence and encourage them to work harder. This works even if the feedback doesn't come during a scheduled review meeting. Plus, this positive recognition can inspire other employees to adopt a better work ethic, too. Just make sure to make a note of these achievements so you can recognize their performance improvement again at their actual review time.

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Taking big steps over time

By making these changes to your employee performance review process, the reviews will become more casual and less stressful, and they'll deliver feedback faster for increased effectiveness. Employees will also receive the ongoing support that they need to make solid contributions to your business, truly perform at their best, and make strides in their professional development over time.

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