

Put Performance Reviews Where They Belong—In Your Routine

By Deb Keary

Hate to do performance reviews? Here's how to smooth the process: Make it part of your everyday job. By having weekly or monthly chats with your employees about their performance, you not only give and get timely feedback, you'll build a record to make those annual reviews a whole lot easier.

Here's how it works. Make it a habit to have brief, informal exchanges with your employees on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on how many you supervise. You'll want to review critical incidents and discuss what went badly and what went well—and the role the employee played in both productive and nonproductive incidents.

This discussion of critical incidents and why they occurred could indicate the need for training or career development for the employee and give that person an opportunity to improve poor performance. It also can give you an opportunity to take note of excellent performance that may lead to bonuses, awards or merit increases; or to document poor performance that may lead ultimately to disciplinary action.

You'll also want to encourage staff members to give you feedback during these talks. Employees have good ideas about processes, products and how things could be improved at work if they are given an opportunity to contribute. An atmosphere of open, two-way communications makes employees feel comfortable with making suggestions or bringing problems to your attention.

Keep your discussion targeted on objective performance facts; you'll want to be open and positive and refrain from attacking employees on a personal level. They'll

respond more positively when they are presented with facts and asked for suggestions on how the situation can improve, rather than if you tell them they are “problem employees.”

Now, here’s the “do diligence” part that will make annual performance reviews a breeze. Take the time to keep a simple log of conversations held with employees each week or month. Over the year, you’ll develop a record with examples of each employee’s progress or lack thereof. When that dreaded annual performance review day arrives, you’ll have the documentation of what you’ve already discussed with employees. The record will show improvement or the lack of improvement, training opportunities pursued and whether goals were met or missed. There won’t be any surprises for either party, and the performance discussion can be smooth and productive.

Deb Keary, SPHR, is director of the Society for Human Resource Management Information Center.

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