

“EMPLOYEES CAN ENHANCE THEIR APPRAISAL PROCESS”



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As an employee, you want feedback. You want positive acknowledgment of your contributions and accomplishments. You also want constructive feedback about how you might improve your productivity or effectiveness.

Performance appraisals offer an important opportunity for employees and their managers to communicate regarding expectations, performance, and goal setting. In this process, the manager typically fills out an evaluation, and the employee fills out a self-evaluation. Then they plan a sit down meeting to compare and discuss each other's perspectives. Traditionally this process is done on an annual basis, but it is becoming common for these discussions to be more frequent and less formal.

To meet quarterly or more frequently allows for modifications of goals, plans, or resources that may need to be adjusted to accommodate changing circumstances or business requirements. When expectations are clear and communication is frequent, there should be no "surprises" for the employee at evaluation time.

While it is technically part of the manager's role to assess and give feedback to employees, you must also take initiative in your evaluation process in order to have it be as accurate and complete as possible. With a well-planned effort, you can offer concrete documentation that supports your accomplishments and performance over the past year. Do not rely on your memory -or your boss's - to recall specifics, however. Too much happens too fast to retain it all. Creating an accomplishments file is vital to getting a complete, fair and accurate appraisal. Who else has as much knowledge of your contributions as you do?

Managers have their own job to do, and probably many other direct reports to be accountable for. To think that your boss is fully aware of all aspects of your performance is unrealistic. In addition, some managers and supervisors can be guilty of having "selective memory." Your notes and documents can provide "insurance" against intentional or unintentional oversights.

Let's say you had a project that was supposed to have been completed in four months. Due to a series of unexpected customer issues, your focus and efforts were detoured from the project in order to take care of the customer, as would be appropriate. When it is time for the performance appraisal, your manager evaluates you on that project as not meeting requirements because it was completed later than originally targeted. Without documented information, you have no way to negotiate a more accurate assessment.

Even though you are a very busy person, you will need to find a way to document your performance, exceptions, and noteworthy events. It need not be complicated. One way is to integrate an accomplishment diary into your daily or weekly time management system. Another is to create a manual file folder that you keep handy. Note your accomplishments on 3X5 index cards and drop them in on a regular basis. You can also drop in reports, memos, or customer letters.

The performance appraisal process may not be an event you look forward to, but you and your manager will have a much more productive - and accurate - session when you take the responsibility to document your job efforts and accomplishments. Besides making your boss's job easier, your taking a pro-active stance in this process will payoff by having fodder to support a future promotion, and to keep your resume updated.