Manager Makeover: Making the most out of performance reviews

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Performance reviews can be extremely time-consuming, and employees frequently view the process as busy work without much real value. Instead of keeping to your normal performance review process, try providing the following tips and suggestions to your employees to help them make the most of their performance reviews:

- **Keep an ongoing list of your accomplishments throughout the year.** By keeping and updating a file of your accomplishments throughout the year, at review time your list will be complete and up to date. It also helps to meet with your manager midway through your performance year to receive an assessment of your midyear progress in meeting your objectives. This allows you time to make adjustments and improvements.

- **Think of your review as an opportunity to pause for a moment and see how you are doing.** In today's changing workplace, tasks, goals and expectations are constantly changing. You may have inherited new projects or assignments that weren't a part of your job description a year ago. Staff changes may impact your responsibilities. Your performance review is an opportunity for you to pause, assess and receive input from your supervisor. This not only lets you know how you're doing, but how you can best perform your job.

- **Have a prereview meeting.** If your manager is amenable, schedule a meeting before your review is written. This is the best time to influence the outcome as many managers are reluctant to change a review once they've completed it. Try to schedule a brief prereview meeting a month in advance of the review to ensure that your manager is aware of your accomplishments or make that information part of a regular meeting you have with your manager. Make a list of the things that you've accomplished since your last review. At the meeting, give your manager a copy of your list if you think it will be helpful. Describe your accomplishments in measurable terms if possible. How many sales did your group close? What was the exact dollar impact of changes you introduced? How do percentages compare to last year? Being well prepared will help you make the most of your conversation with your manager and help you find out how you can become more valuable to the organization.
• **Be prepared for the conversation.** At your review meeting, be able to articulate your job and career goals. How do you see the next year in terms of your career path and career advancement? Be prepared to describe your aims and goals succinctly and well. Describing these clearly will also help you determine if you and your manager are on the same page about your career path. Make sure that your new goals are clear, measurable, achievable, realistic and have a deadline so that you can judge how to meet or exceed expectations.

• **Be prepared to talk constructively about the hard stuff that your manager may bring up.** That includes things that didn't go so well during the year, including disappointments in performance, shortfalls, service breakdowns, errors, and other challenges. Be prepared with explanations and lessons learned. Avoid blaming others for things that went wrong. Bring ideas with you to the meeting about how you and your team will do better moving forward.

• **Be open to receiving honest and focused feedback.** Many companies have strict rating systems that force managers to evaluate employees one against the other. Bottom line: If you are disappointed with how you are rated at your review, ask for more information and an explanation. If your manager is a good communicator and coach, take advantage of the opportunity to learn from your review. This is your opportunity to find out how you can do better.

• **Make ongoing communication with your manager a priority.** If you ask for feedback and coaching from your manager regularly and throughout the year, there will be no unwelcome surprises when it comes time for your performance review.

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