

Title:

Appraisals: Learn How To Love Them

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Summary:

If you're one of those managers who dreads the annual appraisal, this article is written specially for you. Just learn these 7 simple steps and you'll become the biggest convert to appraisals.

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appraisals, appraisal schemes, review, feedback, performance reviews, appraisal plans

Article Body:

Appraisals have a pretty bad reputation in many organizations. Managers dread having to give them and employees hate having to take them. But by simply focusing on 7 high-value components of appraisals, you can turn them into one of the most important activities you perform... and start to love them. Here are those 7 features.

1. **Re-state The Key Areas.** Appraisals give managers and employees the chance to re-state the key result areas of the job. These are, quite simply, what people are paid for. For a manager, they might be: Production; Quality; Costs; Safety; Staff. For an engineer, they might be Repair; Maintenance; Installation; Improvements. An appraisal is like the follow-up to a recruitment interview. Just as the recruitment interview at the start of employment looks at the key areas of a job and the person's skills in these areas, so the appraisal at regular intervals throughout employment looks at how key areas have changed and whether the employee's skills need to change with them.

2. **Check How They're Doing.** Taking time out to review past performance is a necessary step in making plans for the future. Instead of continuing as before, review enables us to stop, think and re-assess. It should be part of any management process. Professor Hal Leavitt, of Chicago University, says that performance improves in relation to the amount and accuracy of feedback received, whether good or bad. When you don't know how well you're doing, you often assume the worst, your confidence drops and down goes your performance. "The golfer who doesn't count his shots is only there for the walk."

3. **Exchange News.** Appraisals that are timed carefully to fit in with the

organisation's business cycle can use the appraisal interview to exchange information with individuals. This could be about...

- the big picture: how the organisation has been performing in the period of the review and how it hopes to do in the future
- significant changes that may affect the organisation and individuals
- opportunities for the organisation in the market place
- detailed plans that affect the employee.

Exchanging information about the organisation and the part employees play in it has both practical and motivational value.

4. **Recognise Good Work.** Managers often spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with problems and problem staff. Appraisals allow them to re-dress the balance and recognize the quiet heroes in their team. To find the quiet heroes on your team, ask yourself...

Who is rarely absent?

Who never says "No"?

Who enjoys pressure?

Who delivers on time?

Who takes up the slack?

Who doesn't pester for help?

Who is so unassuming you forget they're there?

Who quietly lends others a hand?

Who smoothes conflicts and builds morale?

Who carries on even when the boss is not around?

Who shuns the limelight?

Who never takes the credit?

5. **Build People's Confidence.** The appraisal process is an opportunity to give people insight into the things they do well. This in turn focuses on their strengths and builds their confidence. To get people thinking about their strengths, ask the following questions:

"What's gone really well this year?"

"What have you enjoyed doing most of all?"

"What have been the best moments?"

"What have you found most satisfying?"

"What things have you picked up quickest?"

"What would you like to spend more time on?"

"Where do you think your strengths lie?"

We can do no greater service as appraisers than awaken people to their true potential.

6. **Develop The Boss-Subordinate Relationship.** Surveys show that we have a very low level of regular contact with our bosses: 7% to 11% on average which is

about half a day a week. Yet, the boss-subordinate relationship is the pivotal relationship that determines how well we perform. When the relationship is bad, performance is likely to be bad and when it is good, performance is likely to be good. The appraisal is therefore an important chance to do some maintenance work on this relationship.

7. **Plan The Future.** If review follows action in the management cycle, then new plans should follow review. The plans made at the end of a performance appraisal can include...

- plans for immediate action by either the manager or employee
- problem-solving plans to deal with blocks to progress
- project plans based on areas the employee wants to develop
- development plans based on identified potential
- career plans based on matching employee development and organisational opportunities
- lifetime plans.

Appraisal can be the spark that ignites enthusiasm for what is possible. It is what the appraising manager leaves in his or her wake.

For employees, appraisals are big events in their lives. It is the one time in the year when they are center-stage. Practise these 7 steps and you will make their day a red-letter one.