

# 10 Steps to have Meaningful Performance Appraisal Conversations

Have you ever cringed when your manager said to you: “We need to talk”?

Being the receiver of performance appraisals can be daunting - giving them on the other hand can be even harder. Where should you even start? How can you tell your employees that they are not performing well, without de-motivating them? For employees who are performing, how do you continue to inspire them to better performance? At the bottom line, we want our feedback on the performance review to be accurate and meaningful at the same time.

The key areas you need to address are:

## REVIEW OF THE PAST

### 1. Achievements

What has your employee achieved in the past? Talk about his/her biggest wins and contributions of the last 12 months and try to express this with facts and numbers to make it as tangible as possible. Cheer your employee on and congratulate him/her on achievements. This will energize him/her to realize even more of their potential in the future.

### 2. Missed Opportunities / Failure

What went wrong and which opportunities were missed over the last 12 months? Talk about this in an honest, upfront and factual way, but do not blame your employee for these mistakes. Focus on extracting lessons learned to be able to avoid the same mistakes in the future. This allows for more effective planning for the future, instead of focusing on past mistakes.

### 3. Performance Trends

How has your employee's performance developed over the past years? Analyze the performance trend: Has it been constant, improving or even backpedaling? When observing the performance trend, you should focus on exploring factors that may be affecting the performance of your employee. Remember that the objective is to find out what's getting in the way of your employee performing at his/her best - in order to remove these obstacles for them to be able to move forward. To get a better picture of what's influencing the performance of your employee, talk to them about their strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and strengths.

### 4. Strengths

Your employees' strengths are what moves them forward. Talk about their talents and the things they do well and ask them what they need to make even greater use of these. Ultimately, it's one's strengths that propel and inspire performance.

### 5. Weaknesses

Find out what slows your employees down, what de-energizes them and stops them from performing to their personal best. Being aware of this as a manager and for the employee himself/herself will bring clarity on how these weaknesses can be managed, which strategies can be created and how self-management techniques can be used to help the employee moving forward.

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## 6. Opportunities

Look at opportunities and trends, anything external that can provide your employee with a boost of performance or the opportunity to showcase their strengths. Do you see opportunities that could support your employee, by leveraging on their past experiences with the goal of creating greater value for the organization?

## 7. Threats

Examine whether anything is standing in the way of your employees' ability to learn and perform. What does your employee need to be mindful of? Is he/she aware of his impact on others, or of the dynamics of situations? Does he/she engage with external stakeholders appropriately? These threats could pose a trap for your employees' career development and effect their performance at the same time.

## PLAN THE FUTURE

You are appraising your employee for his/her past experiences in the last year, in both behaviors and results. Keep in mind though, that you don't have the power to change the past. So, this shouldn't be a feedback session about the past year!

In collaboration with your employee, you can focus on establishing and creating clear goals and plans to come. The steps you can take are:

## 8. A Meaningful Development Plan

How do the objectives for the upcoming year of your organization translate into the objectives of the division, department or team? Break down these goals into the objectives for your employee so you can communicate clearly what you are expecting from him/her. Spell out the goals and put them into a concrete and impactful development plan.

## 9. Aspirations

What drives your employee forward, and where does his/her passion lie? Find out what excites your employee and which interests and career aspirations he/she has. If you're talking to high potentials, talking about career aspirations and growth plans are focused on the future and helps them to see possibilities of realizing their plans together. On the other hand, if you're talking to an average performer, take time to talk about his/her career interest but. focus on inspiring him/her to grow and raise their performance level by contributing in a meaningful way.

## 10. Appreciation of Past Contributions

Lastly, praise your employees for their contributions, time and efforts. Remember that your employees are the ones who drive organizational performance. What efforts have they put in, and how committed have they been in closing gaps and working on improving matters? Even if there are no results to show, look closer to see where your employee has contributed. Give your appreciation and recognition, ending the talk on a positive note.

I strongly believe in the value of a great appraisal conversation as it really engages and energizes employees.