

## *Performance Appraisals – From Dreaded Routine to Helpful Change Agent*

Performance appraisals, as you may know, can be very stressful for both the employee and the manager. I'd like to share some of my tips in making the appraisals less nerve-wracking and more productive.

### **Tips for Employees**

For the employees, performance appraisals are inherently difficult because evaluations are naturally anxiety-provoking. For most people, it is intimidating to feel that you are being critically evaluated. Because many employers are not the best about giving regular feedback, employees are often unsure what to expect and the fear of the unknown is difficult. There is often a good deal riding on these evaluations (your job, a promotion, a raise, etc.) so that adds pressure to it.



When you have a review, go in with a strong working knowledge of your own performance appraisal. Know where you have been excelling and where you have been weaker. Proactively saying, "I have struggles a bit on this account and want to improve my sales skills," will come across very well to your manager and make her want to help you. Also prepare specific questions and ideas about what you need to do your job better. Be careful not to complain but to request specific resources or assistance to help you perform your best.

Recognize whether your boss is giving you helpful criticism or whether he is being overly critical or malicious. If it is the latter, do your best to remove yourself emotionally from the situation and let the criticism roll off you. If your boss is reasonable and has some helpful pointers and ideas, remind yourself how the criticism will help you and that your boss's purpose is to help you perform your best.

### **Tips for Managers**

For the manager, these evaluations are difficult, especially when constructive criticism needs to be given. While it is important that managers give honest and direct feedback, they often fear compromising the quality of the relationship with their employees, hurting the individual's feelings, decreasing morale and teamwork. Managers worry about how employees will take feedback and whether it will be taken out of context. Managers sometimes doubt their own leadership abilities and wonder, "who am I to give this type of feedback?"

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It is also common for managers to dislike the performance appraisal where almost everything is positive because they worry that their employees will then slack off or think that they are pushovers for going so easy on them.

### **How to Set up Your Session**

Frame the session within the employee's goals for her career and your goals for her and the company. Create direct links to using the session to make changes with specific incentives. The worst thing to do is not to follow-up because that sends the message that the session was not important. Make sure that the employee has the necessary resources to make the changes you are asking him to make.

### **How to Deliver Difficult Feedback**

The best performance appraisals do not present any shocking information. Managers should give ongoing feedback to employees so employees know what to expect in their appraisals. This reduces the anxiety on both sides and improves the usefulness of the appraisals. Follow-up on the appraisals is equally important.

The employee will better hear feedback (positive or negative) when it helps them to accomplish their goals. If the manager can frame negative feedback as help or advice that can enable the employee to reach his career goals, it will be taken much better and even appreciated. It is also important to balance negative with positive feedback so the employee does not dismiss the important negative feedback as the manager being overly critical.

“People will support a world that they help create. Get input from your team and they will support your decisions.”

– Doug Stanart, keynote speaker and author for The Leader's Institute.

If your employee reacts negatively, here are a few tips. First, recognize that the employee is likely to have that reaction because they care about their position and want to do a good job. Second, try to empathize with their position or put yourself in their shoes. For a crying employee, you can say, "I see it is very important to you to do well in this position and I really appreciate that. Would you be willing to work together to make that happen?"

Third, address the behavior specifically. If the behavior is inappropriate, the employee needs to know. A good way to diffuse a defensive response is to give specific, concrete, behavioral examples. Fourth, if the employee is having a strong emotional reaction and not hearing your feedback, schedule a follow-up session to discuss it when he is feeling calmer.

Remember that ongoing communication and follow-up make the sessions as productive and change-inducing as possible.

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## *Schedule of Public Courses*

The following courses are being offered to the public by Harmony Coaching & Consulting. Click on the associated link for more information on the program or to register.

Course Title	Date(s)	Time	For More Information/Registration
<b>SHRM Learning System®</b> is the preparation course for the HR Certification Exam <i>(Every other Saturday)</i>	<b>Fall 2015</b>	8:30AM – 4:30PM	<a href="http://www.cbu.edu/shrm">http://www.cbu.edu/shrm</a>
<b>The Coaching Clinic®</b> is a two-day workshop for executives, managers and leaders to experience and learn coaching skills and competencies.	<b>TBD – April 2015</b>	8:30AM – 5:00PM	<a href="http://www.harmonycc.net/coaching-clinic.php">www.harmonycc.net/coaching-clinic.php</a>
<b>The Accountability Experience™</b> is a one-day workshop that helps participants discover the powerful personal and organizational benefits of individual accountability.	<b>TBD</b>	8:30AM – 5:00PM	<a href="#">Click here to Register</a>

