

Preparing for the Performance Appraisal

No person goes to a meeting unprepared and in order to get the employee involved in the discussion relating to their performance with the supervisor or manager; it is important that they are equipped. Below are a few suggestions of how to get the employee prepared and involved:

- The performance appraisal is to be set up at a mutually appropriate time and place
- Allow the employee enough time to prepare
- Ensure that there is privacy. For example: do not book a room off the passage that has glass windows right around it, for all walking past to see
- Give the employee the agenda, so that he or she is aware of what topics will be covered
- Provide the employee with the same rating form that you will be rating them on so they he or she can also rate their performance. That way when you get to the meeting, the performance has been rated by both parties and the discussion can get underway.
- Another thing to provide the employee with is the list of questions that you will be asking him or her relating to goals, training, challenges and other topics relating to their work and performance.

The Do's and Don'ts of Performance Appraisals

The performance appraisal is a feared meeting and this is mainly due to the fact that there may be some negative feedback. In essence, supervisors or managers don't like having to inform subordinates that their performance is not up to standard and no employee wants to hear that their performance is not up to standard. However, employee job performance is a very important aspect; which is why a discussion regarding this performance must be held. In order to help managers and supervisors with this process below are a few do's and don'ts:

The Do's are as follows:

- Do create an environment conducive for two-way communication. Inform the employee of the review process agenda upfront and let him or her know that you require their input. It is after all a meeting to be held in joint consultation.
- Let the employee start the appraisal. This will put them at ease and that their opinion is genuinely valued and appreciated. This also helps the supervisors or managers detect what the employee deems his or her strengths or weaknesses. In some instances, the employee themselves may admit which areas they feel they may require training and development in.
- Focus on the employee; listen to what he or she has to say and ask questions to ensure understanding
- Make an effort to find what you like about and appreciate about how the employee performs; this makes the employee feel appreciated for the contribution that they have made to the company.
- When delivering the negative feedback, do not try and sugar-coat it to save the employee's ego but try not to enjoy it too much; as after this joint discussion the employee must know what he or she can do about this under-performance in order to improve it. Make sure that the action plan is understood clearly.
- Discuss the employee's targets, the department's targets and the targets of a company as a whole; this is so that the employee understands how their role fits into the overall operations and performance of the company.

The Don'ts are as follows:

- Don't do all the talking! This is a two-way discussion and the review must be interactive. The form or documentation must purely serve as a guideline and checklist; this is a platform for joint discussion. Make sure that no one person does all the talking.
- Don't make it personal; stick to behaviour specifics of the employee because that is what an appraisal is about.
- Don't generalise, the employee must understand what you are referring to. For example: Don't say 'you need to improve your communication'. What does that mean? This must be clarified for the employee when he or she is informed of an area that is to be improved. What should be said is: 'you need to pay more attention to communication when giving subordinates instructions'.
- Don't be afraid to provide negative feedback, no one is perfect and we all have room for improvement. Below standard performance and methods of improvement must be identified.
- Don't assume that the employee understand everything all of the time; stop to check their understanding.