

Bulletin Board: Don't fear performance reviews

by Maggie_Reed

Let's face it, nobody really looks forward to performance reviews ... not the employer and not the employee.

But, it needn't and shouldn't be that way.

There are things to be learned, gleaned, by both parties.

FOR THE EMPLOYEE

Use the review as an opportunity to build a better relationship with your boss and work together to find solutions to problems.

John A. Challenger, chief executive officer of global outplacement consultancy Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc., offers these tips for employees facing a performance review:

- Prepare the same as for a resume. "Include all the work you have done during the last year. Don't assume your boss knows what you've done," Challenger said. Also, let the boss know how you contribute on a day-to-day basis to keep things running smoothly. Don't be shy.

- Stress fit. "It is very important to stress how you fit into the organization ... how you connect and get along with those around you. Getting along with others and contributing is very important," Challenger said.

- Know the priorities of your boss. Know their projects and issues. Let them know how you are helping them to accomplish these.

- Ask for a bigger raise. "Generally, you want to understand how the company policy on raises works," Challenger said. Say they offer you 4 percent, ask if they can double that. "In good faith, if you feel you have really made a difference building the organization, say you feel you have made an impact and would like them to consider giving you a bigger raise. It can't hurt to ask, but you have to be able to back it up."

- Build on a mixed review. "Work to understand where the problems are and develop a plan. Don't be confrontational. A long rebuttal moves you into conflict," Challenger said. "Bosses traditionally have a hard time giving straight and honest reviews. They try to only give the positive. But, they need to be frank. Understand, you have to take the good with the bad to have a chance to change."

FOR THE EMPLOYER

For most conducting these interviews, it can be a daunting experience. OfficeTeam, a staffing service specializing in placing administrative professionals, offers these tips:

- Don't make it a surprise. If an employee needs improvement in certain areas, don't wait until the annual review to spring it on them.

- Deliver negative feedback effectively. Give examples of how improvement can be made. This keeps employees optimistic about future success.

- Reinforce company values. Employees who are clear about expectations and how their daily contributions fit into the company's goals are the most successful.

- Suggest a self-evaluation. You might want to ask employees to assess their own strengths and weaknesses before the formal evaluation. Have them put it in writing. It helps them examine their performance and also gives you an insight into their perceptions and goals.

- Document appraisals in writing. All comments should be in writing whether the company provides a form or you have to make your own.

- Keep the tone conversational. Budget enough time to engage in a two-way dialogue on all topics that need to be covered. Don't rush.

- Set objectives for next year. Make sure goals are in line with your staff member's career path. If an employee is looking to move into management, gear objectives toward helping him or her acquire the skills needed to advance.

For more information, visit www.challengergray.com and www.officeteam.com.

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