

Performance Evaluations: 7 Strategies that Get Results

Many of you conduct year end performance evaluations with your employees. In this article we will presume that these have been positive experiences for both you and your employee and that you mutually agreed upon opportunities for growth, development, and improvement. As you look back over the past year did you see progress toward the achievement of those opportunities or did the employee start off enthusiastic but soon returned to the old way of doing things or behaving? Are you wondering why? Well first let's agree that nearly every employee truly wants to do a good job and gain the approval of their employer. Those rare birds that don't are another discussion entirely. That means that when employees aren't giving us what we ask of them we need to evaluate our systems and pinpoint the systemic problem. So what could possibly be wrong with our performance evaluation process?

Given that only 3% of the entire population knows how to truly set and get goals, goal getting may be a big part of the problem. If you and your employee(s) haven't truly established a plan, you have a low probability for success. So let's review how to help your employees get their goals. One of the most important elements is making sure that the employee writes their own goals. They need to own their goals. That will never happen if you or someone else sets their goals for them. Here are some guidelines to help your employees move closer to goal getting:

1. **Written** – Have the employees make sure their goals are written, specific, measurable, achievable, challenging, and that you have a mutually agreed upon target date. Now is the time to get them to come up with goals that will enable them to contribute to the overall organizational/departmental plan.
2. **Balance** – Encourage them to establish goals for their personal life as well. This will help them to achieve balance in their lives so that they don't burn out and get frustrated from feelings that their entire life revolves around their job. As I work with my coaching clients we often discover that when the wheels seem to be coming off their cart that a lack of balance is the source of their difficulties.
3. **Avoid Procrastination** – People procrastinate because of fear of change, fear of success, or fear of failure. When you see the employee has fallen off the path, don't wait immediately set time aside to talk with the

employee and determine whether fears or other obstacles are standing in their way. Then work with them to remove either the fear or the obstacle.

4. **Break it up** – Often times in our excitement to make dramatic improvements we confuse goal categories with individual goals. For example, if the goal category is improved sales an individual goal might be to hold six appointments each week with qualified prospects. Starting and succeeding with the critical small steps builds the skills and confidence needed to achieve the bigger things.
5. **Positive affirmations** – Positive affirmations keep you focused on positive attitudes and results. In one mid-sized insurance group I know the agents shout out their positive affirmations each morning in their offices to both keep themselves self-motivated and to inspire others in the group.
6. **Obstacles** – Help the employee to foresee and forestall the obstacles that could stand in their way. Write down each and every obstacle and come up with a plan for how to either avoid or overcome that obstacle. If an obstacle is related to lack of skill or knowledge on the part of the employee, plan how the employee will attain the needed skills/knowledge.
7. **Check-up** – Performance evaluations shouldn't be a once a year event. From the onset plan when the two of you will get together next to discuss progress or difficulties. Let the employee know that you are always available to talk about their difficulties and the unforeseen circumstances that are causing them difficulties. Brief quarterly discussions are a good idea. Remember to encourage their efforts and to act as their support partner to help them overcome their challenges.

These brief guidelines will put your employees on the path for goal getting and enhance their self-esteem and the work relationship between the two of you. We all appreciate a partner in our corner striving to help us to be our best. This approach puts you on the same side working toward the development of empowered and self-motivated employees that excel in their job. Effective performance evaluations will put both of you well on your way toward the achievement of performance excellence.

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