



## Using Performance Appraisals to Enhance Employee Performance

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[www.businessbuildersintensive.com](http://www.businessbuildersintensive.com)

[mail@businessbuildersintensive.com](mailto:mail@businessbuildersintensive.com)

The annual performance appraisal is an opportunity to enhance employee performance and create greater success for the company and the individual. My intent is to explore how coaching skills can be used in creating a good performance appraisal experience for both the employee and the supervisor and how to keep good performance going throughout the year. As a manager for 18 years my experience was that performance appraisals were a tense time for the employee and the supervisor. In either position, for me it often felt uncomfortable, so how do we reframe it so that it is a good experience for both?

### **Start with vision:**

It's important to start with vision: the company's and the employee's. What is the company vision? The company vision should be compelling and known by staff. When staff don't know the owner's vision for the company it is hard for them to help move it forward. Having a clear and compelling vision that employees can buy into provides a foundation for success.

But what drives the individual isn't the boss's vision, the company's vision, but their own compelling vision.

- Employees can embrace the company vision but...
- True success comes from within and from personal vision
- Personal vision should be compelling and tie into the company vision
- Do you know your employees' dreams and visions for their lives and career

### **Take time to create a vision:**

If the employee hasn't thought about their vision, take the time to create a vision with them. Does their vision, their passion tie into the company vision? Can you as the supervisor help the employee to achieve their vision? What if their vision is your job? Well, that's great. As supervisors, managers and leaders part of our role is mentoring and developing our employees. It's great to have employees that are motivated to learn and grow. It's also great to have employees that know your job and can do it competently.

Compelling visions are personal, written in the present tense, as if...they are happening now, and point to an exciting future. Encourage your staff to write their own compelling vision and share it with you.

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## **Our current appraisal framework:**

Often the manager talks about issues that the employee didn't know was coming. Today we are talking about how to reframe the experience for both the employee and the manager. With the manager as a coach and partner committed to the employee's success the environment can shift. The goal is to reframe the experience, creating a positive, goal oriented environment that thrives on success and enhancing performance. In working with many groups of people solving problems, when they focused on what was going well and built upon it they were more successful than when they worked on what the problems were that they were having and what they needed to improve. In focusing on solutions, they ultimately identified the things that needed improvement as well.

It's important to recognize your feelings about performance appraisals and to imagine the employee's perspective.

- History of being an uncomfortable experience
- Reframe the experience & create a positive, goal oriented environment that thrives on success, enhancing performance
- An opportunity to tune into the person and find out what is going on with them
- Create a plan for the upcoming year.
- Most individuals (most employees) want to be successful

## **Use Coaching Skills to develop success and excellence:**

Where are we at now? After you have created a compelling vision, find out where we are at right now, using five key coaching questions you can quickly get to where the employee is at. In these questions you have the opportunity to create powerful positive energy, find out what the gaps are and what the resources needed are. In talking about what would be ideal you are also focusing a bit back on the vision, but you are also pointing in the direction that you need to go— so how do we get there?

- When meeting with a staff member:
  - Be present
  - Tune into them and tune out everything else
  - See their greatness
- Use Five Coaching Questions:
  - What's going right?
  - What makes it right?
  - What is it that would be ideal
  - What's not quite right yet?
  - What resources do you need?

As the supervisor, I see my role as one of supporting my staff so that they can do their job, I'm their coach, their success partner and the person that is helping to get them the resources they need to do their job. As the director of an outdoor center, my job was to get the clients there, but it was also to make sure that our

resources were there for the client, we had the infrastructure we needed to provide the service– the ropes course, trained staff, food for meals.....

### **Create a plan for excellent performance:**

You, the supervisor become the partner or the coach – coaching for success. In creating a plan focused on success for the employee, the manager begins to shift the paradigm to one of employee and coach/partner. As supervisors, our role is build successful teams and we have to have successful team members in order to do that. If we focus on creating success we are more likely to create it. Focus on the positive, the solutions. What's going right, how do we create more of it? In working with teams I have found that when I focus on what they are doing well and how we do more of it – we build on our success.

When we create goals that are SMART, we can measure them, and track their progress. If goals are soft, not measurable it becomes difficult to progress the plan or give any feedback. So, how do we make them measurable? Measurable is countable, how many, when, who?

### **Goal Planning**

- Goals tie into the company vision and the employees vision.
- Goals Point to an exciting future.
- They are positive, specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bounded

### **Tips for setting goals**

- ✓ Start with the **RESULT** in mind.
- ✓ Set **SMART** goals.
- ✓ Make it easy to see the next steps.

### **SMART Goals**

SMART Goals have certain attributes that make them measurable. When you can measure the goal you then know if you are attaining it. Goals should be results or outcome oriented and not process oriented.

- **Specific:**
  - Has clear deliverables or results
- **Measurable:**
  - Can be counted: how many? How much? Who?
- **Attainable:**
  - Can be attained at least 80%
- **Relevant:**
  - Important to the people you serve, your future viability and relevant to your vision and values.
- **Time-Bounded:**
  - Think big, but it's a 12 month plan, an annual plan.

For example: My partner works for a yacht club, maintaining their fleet of boats, so he might have a goal of refurbishing 3 boats this winter, including hull, topsides, interior and undersides.

Another example could be:

A sales staff might have a sales goal such as increasing personal sales by 20% during the year.

Or The CEO might have a goal of hire 4 new staff.

Annual goals are typically big. It's important to break them down into smaller steps. Refurbishing three sailboats is big, 1 boat per month over the course of the winter becomes more manageable.

But the sales goal – can also be the foundation for creating a plan to accomplish the goal. How are you going to accomplish it?

- Certain number of cold calls
- A systematic follow-up plan for each lead
- Direct mail, advertising – what are the specifics that are going to create the success?

### **Build in Accountability:**

Building in accountability in your annual success plans is the key to success. How many performance appraisals have you had or have you done, that didn't get looked at until the next year?

You need to meet with people regularly and reviewing the goals. It's unfair to come at a staff person at the end of the year and say you didn't accomplish what we outlined in your plan. Yes, you can accomplish some things just by writing down the goal, but the level of accomplishment is usually lower than what we want in our companies.

- The key to success is building in accountability through regular meetings, weekly or monthly
- We often fall short on keeping a plan alive
- Regular meetings that keep focus on the plan and keep it moving forward.
- Celebrate success, write down accomplishments, build on success

### **Monthly accountability:**

Meet with staff at least monthly and review the plan. Bringing out the plan and talking about it, keeps it alive. If it is never mentioned it gives staff the impression that it wasn't that important and they don't need to work on the goals outlined. Remember the goals outlined are focused on creating better results for the company. You want that. Focus on the plan. At the monthly meeting spend time to:

- Review the vision
- Review the accomplishments (What's going right?)

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- Review the goals
- Score each goal – give it a percentage 60%; 85%
- When a goal is falling short use coaching skills to help figure out what the problem is and how to change it.
- Does the leadership need to shift to provide more supervision, training, direction....?

You are looking for success of at least 80%. If the person is in their own way, do they need to make a shift in their feelings, beliefs, paradigm, to move forward and get themselves out of the way. Are they choosing not to make the necessary shift. It's an opportunity to talk about choices that we make. We each operate from a place of personal responsibility. We are responsible for ourselves, our actions.

- Measurable goals can be scored
- Score the goals each month
- If the goal is below 80% talk about what's in the way? Is the individual in their own way?
- Go back to the five coaching questions:

### **Create a partnership:**

The monthly review of the PLAN gives you the opportunity to really check-in with staff and support them in developing success. It also prevents the annual performance review dread. They know you are invested in their success as well as that of the company. This is powerful. It develops you as a leader and partner of the staff member and lets you know where the focus needs to be. It also creates a regular stream of communication-both ways that can only improve results. Use the five coaching questions:

- What's going right?
- What makes it right?
- What's the ideal, the vision?
- What's not quite right now?
- What are the resources needed?

*Coach them to succeed.*

### **Handling poor performance:**

I believe that coaching skills can help you as a supervisor create better success. When there is poor performance the coaching questions give you an opportunity to build success. But you have also built a framework for having real conversations. We are all adults, and we each have personal responsibility and make choices about our behavior. If you do you discipline or progressive discipline in your organization you need to have a clear policy on it and employees need to be informed of the policy. They also need to know the expectations and job responsibilities. And with that foundation believe you can have real conversations about their behavior and choices and the position it puts you in. Your behavior as a supervisor is a consequence of their behavior.

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I've had this conversation with staff in a union shop, in a supervisory session that involved poor performance. It went something like: Fred, you have great skills and talents that we see here, and you also know why we're here – you didn't show up for work and you didn't call, it's considered a no show/no call. It puts me in a position where I have to take action, and if it continues then I have to continue taking actions. You are responsible for you and you are making choices for how you handle your position.

And in having these conversations – it's important to remember that our goal is success and the employee's goal is to be successful also. Employee retention is important to everyone.

- Go back to the coaching questions – it gets them talking about what is going right, what their vision for success is and what is in their way.
- Help staff to identify limiting behaviors, how they are in their own way, and shift their paradigms to get out of the way.

### **To create the success you want; Keep focused on your goals**

Staying focused on your goals and those of your employees keeps the momentum going. As the supervisor you can create a positive and encouraging environment and create a performance culture.

Donna Price, President of Compass Rose Consulting, LLC, provides **business coaching** to small business owners, business leaders, and work teams; using her experience as a senior level manager for 18+ years and extensive background working with people to achieve their goals. **The Business Builders Intensive**, a comprehensive tele-seminar series focused on building your business and your success is her newest program. Donna is a certified program leader of the innovative and successful Best Year Yet program. Coaching services to meet your needs are available. Contact Donna at [www.businessbuildersintensive.com](http://www.businessbuildersintensive.com); [www.compassroseconsulting.com](http://www.compassroseconsulting.com), [mail@businessbuildersintensive.com](mailto:mail@businessbuildersintensive.com)  
973-948-7673