10 Steps to Flawless Appraisal Interviews

Performance appraisals are one of the most unpopular managerial tasks. Psychologist Peter Quarry gives ten practical tips on how to conduct an appraisal interview to achieve positive and useful outcomes that will benefit the employee and whole organisation.

1. Avoid surprises

- An employee may respond negatively if this is the first time that he/she is hearing negative feedback.
- Provide feedback throughout the year, and at the time when it is relevant.

2. Base appraisal on the job

- Avoid meaningless criteria.
- Consider job description and base feedback on actual tasks.

3. Encourage employee preparation

- Employees find appraisals more productive if they can prepare.

4. Use of forms

- Forms can be helpful.
- Do not make the completion of the form more important than the actual discussion.

5. Ratings

- Ratings can add a level of tension if they result in a pay rise.
- Try to separate ratings from the discussion.

6. Getting started

- Arrange a comfortable setting, free from interruptions.
- Allocate enough time.
- Open with an introduction about the goals of the interview.

7. Ask for feedback

- Two way feedback.
- Feedback for the managers is also a valuable part of the process.

8. Meeting structure

- Start with an overall view of performance through the year.
- Ask employee how he/she is feeling.
- Work through the job description.
- Move from the general to the specific.
- Take notes regarding discussion.
- Identify plans for employee development.

9. Tips for giving negative feedback

- Be specific and give examples.
- Ask the employee to share their thoughts on feedback and gain agreement on feedback.
- Managers can model how to receive negative feedback.

10. Agree on action plan

- Successful appraisals result in action being implemented.
- Set review date to assess action plan.

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6 Ways to Prevent Sloppy Work

In this program, Psychologists Eve Ash and Peter Quarry, discuss why some staff deliver substandard work and offer practical solutions for managers to overcome the issue.

Examples of sloppy work can include: slow or late completion of tasks, mistakes, taking shortcuts that can lead to safety, quality and compliancy issues, incomplete work, unchecked first drafts, neglecting to return calls. Of course the reasons for these work habits can vary, but the consequences can be far reaching. A sloppy worker can present a poor role model for new employees. Team members can become resentful as they take on extra work. Delays and poor quality can lead to service complaints, which can impact on business success. This program offers six practical guidelines to support managers to understand employee work habits and to improve work performance.

1. Set standards

- Companies need standards and policies that are clearly laid out for all staff.
- If the company leaders have not outlined such standards, then Team Leaders can also implement standards as appropriate for their team. These standards can also move upwards or downwards.
- These standards or principles need to be understood by all.

2. Translate company objectives and standards to teams

- Managers need to clarify their expectations.
- Avoid being vague.
- Give full details.
- Ask staff to take notes and have them email their notes to ensure understanding.
- Give dates for completion of tasks.
- Agree on processes.
- Managers must take responsibility for providing clear instructions and ensuring they are understood.
- Managers and staff must review priorities.

3. Develop skills through training

- Consider individual training needs to ensure staff are appropriately skilled to complete tasks to standard.
- Coaching or training can be provided in many modes, depending on needs.
- People who are 'sloppy' by nature can be coached.

4. Monitor work and provide feedback

- Be specific in feedback.
- Always explain 'why' when giving feedback.
- Don't delay giving feedback.
- Get agreement to feedback and changes.

5. Manage mistakes

- Mistakes are a great way to learn and enable 'just in time' learning.
- Ensure a no blame culture.
- Implement a mistake feedback session in meetings where all workers are regularly asked to share a recent mistake they've made as a learning activity. This will enable open, honest communication within teams.

6. Reinforce and reward good work

- Positive feedback and encouragement boosts morale and contributes to creating a culture of excellence.
- Build rewards and recognitions systems into work practices and communication.
- Recognition needs to be at the formal and informal level.

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9 Essentials for Exit Interviews

Exit interviews provide an excellent opportunity to uncover staff satisfaction problems and implement positive changes for remaining and future employees. It is critical to understand why an employee leaves and to document feedback regarding leadership styles and other workplace issues. Psychologist Eve Ash presents strategies and techniques to ensure your next exit interview is of the highest quality and useful for the organisation as a whole.

1. Implement an online survey

- Less confronting than face to face meeting.
- No interviewer bias.
- Use in conjunction with face to face meeting.

2. Pool data to identify trends

- Valuable to identify problems.

3. Timing of exit interview

- Best conducted immediately after resignation.
- Feedback will be more vivid.

4. Use an independent person

- From Human Resources or an outside consultant.
- Avoids bias.
- More difficult to obtain honest feedback if CEO or similar conducts interview.

5. Ensure honest and open communication

- Set up a comfortable discussion.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Always gain agreement to use information if necessary.

6. Use good questions

- Simple questions.
- Sentence completion.
- Were employee's expectations met?
- Follow up questions.
- Explore the timing of resignation – why now?
- Allow for silence.
- Ask about changes needed.
- Ask for referral suggestions.

7. Accept constructive comments

- Remain impartial.
- Use empathy statements, if faced with anger.

8. Pass on feedback to managers

- Be factual.
- Remember feedback can also be positive.

9. Develop improvement strategies

- Gather information about areas that need improvement.
- Pass to quality team or higher managers as appropriate.

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Conducting Successful Discipline Interviews

Many managers are confused by the difference between a discipline interview and a counselling or coaching session. Psychologist Peter Quarry explains the purpose of a discipline interview, when to conduct one and the involved practicalities. This program covers progressive disciplining, the role of documentation and how to deal with strong emotions.

What is 'progressive disciplining'?

- Three levels to progressive disciplining.
- Casual comment.
- Counselling (problem solving).
- Discipline meeting (warning process).

Do we treat each discipline situation in the same way?

- Adapt approach to fit situation.
- Consider the individual.
- Only go immediately to discipline if very serious and a last resort.

The role of documentation

- Documentation is required to substantiate the facts and events.
- Take notes when counselling and have employee sign notes.

Preparation for discipline interview

- Arrange the time and location, considering the need for privacy.
- Consider the need for a third person, union representative or manager to be present?
- Know the organisations policies.
- Ensure the proposed consequences are supported by management/organisation.

Structure of a discipline interview

- Focus on a positive outcome.
- Maintain control of the interview.
- Review what has happened in the past.
- Clearly state the problem.
- Clearly state the consequences.
- Agree on a review date.
- Ask if there are questions.

Dealing with strong emotional reactions

- Show empathy.
- Use 'broken-record' technique.
- Stay calm.
- Be patient, particularly if there are tears.
- Be the manager, rather than the friend.

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How to Mentor

In this program, Psychologists Eve Ash and Peter Quarry, discuss strategies for successful mentoring. The role of a mentor is different from that of a supervisor or coach and without this specific understanding a mentor may end up micromanaging, rather than advising. This program presents two role plays, modelling how to establish the process in the first meeting and how to identify and confront challenging trends of the mentee. The skills for successful mentoring are outlined.

1. The first meeting

In the first meeting, the mentor may find that he or she takes the lead role, as there are basic details regarding process and expectations that need to be established.

- Show enthusiasm, remember that first impressions are important.
- Ask the mentee how he or she is feeling to uncover any underlying fears that may block the process.
- Establish when, how often and the duration of the sessions.
- Clarify the best methods of communication.
- Establish the goals for the mentoring sessions.
- Clarify the mentee's career goals.
- Understand what are the current work concerns and issues for the mentee.

2. A middle meeting

As the process progresses, the mentor will have a greater understanding of the issues preventing the mentee from achieving his or her goals. Through providing appropriate and supportive feedback it is possible to assist the mentee to develop skills and implement change.

- Look for trends in mentee behaviour.
- Provide examples of behaviour.
- Confront and challenge the mentee.
- Ask good open ended questions.
- Listen positively and show empathy.
- Gain agreement to feedback.
- Refer to mentee's goals.
- Encourage the mentee to take responsibility for change.
- Provide advice.

3. Skills for a mentor

- Active listening.
- Ask open questions.
- Challenge and confront.
- Good facilitation skills.
- Develop trust.
- Agree to confidentiality.
- Show caring.
- Provide networking opportunities.

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SEVEN DIMENSIONS

How to Survive Email Overload

Psychologist Eve Ash knows people are stressed, overloaded and drowning by the number of emails they receive. Eve says the time accessing emails should be controlled to overcome the addiction of receiving email on-tap, anywhere, anytime. To really get on top of email overload there should be two objectives: to have an empty inbox, using a simple, effective system. This program introduces CADDY, a system of email management that enables staff to control their emails, rather than the other way round.

CADDY

C- Calendarise

- Manage commitments, events, schedules.
- Deal immediately with any scheduling emails.
- Copy relevant information, such as time, location into calendar or diary.

A - Ask

- Set up new folder called ASK.
- File emails in ASK that are waiting for feedback.
- Able to monitor delegated tasks and the progress of requested information.
- Keep it simple, do not set up subfolders in ASK.

D – Delete

- Avoid keeping unnecessary emails.
- If the email has been dealt with it, then delete it.

D – Do

- Set up a new folder called DO.
- Respond to emails immediately, saves double handling.
- Emails that can not be acted on immediately, put in the DO folder.
- The DO folder should be cleared.

Y – Year it

- A system of archiving.
- Archive emails in folders according to year.

Duration: 14 minutes
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Overcoming Personal Barriers to Diversity

Just about every organisation is interested in diversity and has introduced policies and programs that support diversity. However, implementing real change and an inclusive culture often boils down to the individual, their values and their perceptions of stereotypes. In this program, Psychologists Eve Ash and Peter Quarry investigate the individual's barriers to welcoming difference and more importantly how they can be overcome.

Duration: 19 minutes
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Benefits of diversity in the workplace

- Presents opportunities. Diversity leads to innovation and variety.
- Acceptance of diversity is a necessity within our global world.
- Business success will depend on the way we are able to accept diversity.

Diversity/Inclusion

- Diversity is a variation from what is normal.
- Inclusion is the degree to which people from a diverse background are allowed to function/exist within an organisation.

Why don't individuals value difference?

- Upbringing.
- Limited experience.
- Personal values.
- Feel uncomfortable.
- Role of the media.

10 Suggestions

- Try to avoid right/wrong thinking.
- Meet people from different backgrounds.
- Challenge your stereotypes.
- What stereotypes affect you?
- Challenge others who judge people.
- Consider the times when you have been excluded.
- How can diversity help?
- Help others welcome diversity.
- Critically look at the media.
- Don't exclude yourself.

SEVEN DIMENSIONS

The Art of Behavioural Interviewing

Research shows behavioural interviewing is five times more successful in choosing the right candidate for a job, over more traditional interviewing techniques. Psychologist Peter Quarry explains behavioural interviewing and gives many examples of how to do it in a real situation.

The difference between 'traditional' and 'behavioural' interviewing

- Questions in a traditional interview often do not allow for detailed responses.
- Interviewer often relies on 'gut feeling' or intuition.
- Interviewer can be influenced by stereotypes and bias.
- Past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour.

Base the interview structure on the job analysis

- Start with an analysis of the job to understand the required behaviours.
- Develop questions for each behaviour.

How to ask behavioural questions

1. Situation   – describe the situation.
2. Behaviour   – describe the behaviour.
3. Result   – what was the outcome or result from that behaviour.

- Questions are open ended and responses can be rated.
- Allow applicant time to think about responses.

Follow up questions

- Ask for specifics to avoid generalisations.
- Also ask about unsuccessful experiences.

Assessing credibility

- Be alert when responses are thin on details.
- Are there inconsistencies in the answers?
- Consider body language.