Performance Evaluation: The Process

Description:

This tool provides guidelines and a step-by-step process for conducting effective employee performance evaluations.

How it can be used:

The late Mason Haire is credited with saying "that which gets measured, gets done".

Many managers dread performance evaluations; yet in reality, they can be some of the most positive and valuable activities of a manager. It has been said that the best managers help their people do two main things: set goals and achieve them.

Conducting an effective, thoughtful and skilled performance evaluation should be part of every management toolkit and not an HR paper exercise or an isolated 'once a year' meeting. Use the guidelines and steps to ensure performance evaluations are a platform for development and motivation for your employees.

Purpose

Performance evaluations provide a formal, recorded, and regular review of an individual's performance, and a plan for future development. More specifically, if conducted effectively they:

- help develop individuals
- improve organizational performance
- are integrated into organizational planning
- are essential for career and succession planning
- help keep staff motivated
- improve communications
- align individual and organizational objectives
- foster positive relationships between management and staff

Guidelines

How often should we meet?

Performance evaluations should be governed by your organizational needs. If you jointly set goals and objectives at the beginning of the year, then each quarter is an excellent time to formally review progress made against those goals. Preferably, managers should look for opportunities to coach their employees on a regular basis. As a minimum, you should conduct performance evaluations annually with all employees.

How do I conduct the assessment?

The employee's assessment of his or her own performance is the first area of discussion. In effective evaluations, a manager will reflect and summarize the employee's views before moving to their own evaluation. Feedback that is given as soon as possible has proven to be most effective in addressing an error or replicating a success.
Although the evaluation is usually based on organizational performance measures, non-performance behaviours need to be considered and discussed in assessing the overall contribution of the employee. These include measures such as tardiness and absenteeism.

Source: First Nations Health Managers Association. *Knowledge Circle*. www.fnhma.ca.

Why am I worried about conducting a performance evaluation?

Two of the most common fears that managers have about performance evaluations are confrontations and surprises.
Employees want to be treated with respect and to know how they are performing. To support this and ensure that there are no surprises, ongoing assessment and feedback is vital and will lessen the likelihood of a confrontation.
Deliver the evaluation in clear language. State the facts and be honest. If someone's performance has been below standards, managers owe it to the employees, the organization, and themselves to inform the employee and jointly seek measures to mitigate the situation.

How do I end the meeting on a positive note?

Motivate the employee to continue their positive behaviours and offer suggestions in areas where there is room for growth. Even if the employee's evaluation has not been as high as he/she expected, reinforce positive results and provide support in professional development. Look for small "wins".

Process

1. Prepare:
   a. Prepare all materials (previous performance evaluations, current job description, tasks and records of performance, achievements, incidents, reports etc.).
   b. Use a template. If your organization does not have a standard evaluation form then create one from a variety of templates available online.
   c. If your evaluation form includes a self-assessment section and/or feedback section, ensure the employee receives this in advance and include instructions and timelines.
   d. Consider the employee's development needs outside of the job skill set. Evaluations should focus on helping the 'whole person' to grow.

2. Inform:
   a. Ensure the employee is informed of the meeting time and place.
   b. Clarify the purpose and type of performance evaluation.
   c. Encourage the employee to assemble data and relevant performance and achievement records.

3. Venue and layout:
   a. Ensure a suitable venue is available that is private and free from interruptions.
   b. The atmosphere and mood must be relaxed and informal. Do not sit across the desk; create a relaxed situation, preferably at a meeting table or in easy chairs. Sit at an angle to each other (ideally at 90 degrees). Try to avoid sitting face-to-face.

4. Introduction:
   a. Create a calm and non-threatening atmosphere. Smile, be warm and friendly.
   b. Relax the employee by starting with a positive statement.
   c. Set the scene and explain the process.
   d. Encourage a discussion and as much input as possible from the employee.
   e. If appropriate, begin with some general discussion about how things have been going, but avoid getting into specifics.

5. Review and measure:
   a. Review the activities, tasks, objectives and achievements individually, keeping the discussion focused and specific.
   b. Follow the order of your template. Note any items off topic and return to them later.
   c. Concentrate on proven facts and solid evidence - avoid conjecture, anecdotal or non-specific opinions, especially about the employee. It is very important to be objective.

Source: First Nations Health Managers Association. *Knowledge Circle*. www.fnhma.ca.

      d.   For each item, agree on a measure of competence or achievement, as relevant.

6. Agree on an action plan:
   a. Jointly with the employee, agree on an overall plan that is realistic.
   b. Consider the job responsibilities, the employee's career aspirations, the organization's priorities, and the reviewed strengths and weaknesses.
   c. Include short, medium and long term elements if appropriate.

7. Agree on objectives:
   a. Use SMARTER objectives - specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound, enjoyable, recorded.

8. Agree on necessary support:
   a. What does the employee need to achieve the objectives?
   b. Include training and other relevant learning opportunities. Examples are external courses and seminars, internal courses, coaching, mentoring, secondment, shadowing, distance-learning, reading, watching videos, attending meetings and workshops, workbooks, manuals and guides.
   c. Consider training and development that are outside the job skills. In many contexts, this increases motivation and loyalty.
   d. Avoid committing to training expenditures without appropriate approvals.

9. Invite questions:
   a. Address any other concerns.
   b. Ensure the employee feels comfortable raising points.

10. Summarize the meeting:
    a. Ensure you have a common understanding about the action plan and any next steps.
    b. Describe any interim evaluation or follow-up.

11. Close positively:
    a. Thank the employee for her/his contribution to the meeting and effort through the year.
    b. Commit to helping in any way you can.

12. Record main points, the agreed-upon actions and follow-up:
    a. Ensure the meeting points and plans are documented
    b. Ensure all necessary copies are filed and copied to relevant units.