

Performance reviews: a two-way street

Performance reviews are an excellent time to exchange important information with employees. But to be effective, there must be a genuine *exchange*. If your reviews are just occasions for you to summarize what an employee's doing right or wrong, you're missing out on their potential impact on performance.

Employees and managers come into reviews with different agendas and goals, and these translate in different questions that need to be answered.

Employees want to know:

- How am I doing?
- What can I do to improve?
- Do I have a chance for advancement? What is my reward? Where do I go from here?
- What will be expected of me before the next review?
- How will my work be evaluated during that time?
- What kind of help or attention can I expect from my manager?
- What changes are likely on our team or in our enterprise in the months ahead? How will they affect me?

Meanwhile, managers need to find out:

- How do employees see their own performance?
- What can be done to help them work more closely to their potential?
- Should I give them more (or less) attention, support or responsibility?
- Are they content in their present position, or do they want to work toward something else?
- Can I match their ambitions with our training and advancement options?
- What are their suggestions for improving the way we operate?
- What's on their minds that I need to know?

There's no way for either the employee or the manager to answer these questions on his or her own.

That's why a review has to be interactive; each side needs to be both prepared to have a say and to listen to the other. Before review time rolls around, talk with each employee about your expectations—and the employee's—for the process, so you both can be prepared to make it effective.

Bottom-Line Idea

It's hard for team leaders and supervisors to be taken seriously as potential top managers if they don't manage their own time and team effectively by delegating important work. Leaders who'd "rather do it themselves" send the message that they'd rather be doing the work than managing it, which makes them poor candidates for promotion.