

Performance reviews: 20 questions for evaluating intangibles



As part of the performance-review process, supervisors are typically called upon to evaluate employees on the basis of intangible factors, such as cooperativeness, dependability and judgment. It's not always easy.

Supervisors often find intangible qualities difficult to evaluate because they are hard to quantify.

It is possible, however, to make abstract qualities more concrete by answering “yes” or “no” to the following questions. Supervisors can add more detail by describing why they chose that answer.

Planning

1. Does the employee set verifiable short- and long-term goals?
2. Are the employee's goals in tune with company needs?
3. Does the employee's planning show sound assumptions reflecting the company's goals and resources?
4. Does the employee typically achieve expected results?
5. Do unanticipated events or factors frequently delay projects or compromise quality?

Organization

6. Is the employee aware of what is going on in his or her department, including who is doing what?
7. Does the employee know what the department can do in an emergency?
8. Does the employee do a good job of delegating work according to subordinates' abilities?

Intelligence

9. Does the employee see relationships between facts and draw appropriate conclusions quickly?
10. Does the employee learn from experience?

Judgment

- 11.** When confronted with an emergency, does the employee quickly recognize the most important priorities?
- 12.** Does the employee appreciate the financial implications of his or her decisions?
- 13.** Does he or she make decisions quickly, but not hastily?

Initiative

- 14.** Does the employee anticipate what has to be done?
- 15.** Does the employee perform well in the absence of superiors?
- 16.** Has the employee made original suggestions to improve operations?

Leadership

- 17.** Does the employee explain rather than command?
- 18.** Do people listen closely when the employee speaks?
- 19.** Does the employee spell out the benefits of his or her plans?
- 20.** Does he or she deal smoothly with unexpected developments?

Metrics

Match traits to the job

One key to assessing an employee's intangibles is to ask which traits are vital for each job. Cooperativeness may be critical for a staffer working on a team, but not for a security guard working the night shift. Initiative would be key for a product development manager, but less so for a payroll clerk.

Before performing an employee's review, supervisors should critically review the intangible factors included in the person's performance standards. They should be able to comfortably answer the question: "Why is this employee rated on this measure?"

Remember, every performance measure should be rooted in a concrete operational goal.