

Accurate evaluations crucial to employees, employers alike

While no one likes to be told they are failing to meet expectations, an accurate evaluation is crucial to the success of any employee. When started early in the employment relationship and continued regularly (at least once a year), evaluations provide invaluable insight on where one stands in the employer's eyes. Truly effective evaluations serve many purposes, including:

- Detailing an employee's weaknesses
- Defining how the employee can perform better
- Providing a detailed understanding of what the employer expects
- Presenting the opportunity to raise concerns or correct misunderstandings.

Moreover, evaluations should be honest and accurate. When employees know that their bosses evaluate them honestly, they value positive reviews even more. That's a powerful motivator to do better.

Employers benefit from an honest review process, too. Supervisors have as much, if not more, to gain from providing accurate evaluations than the workers they evaluate. A legitimate, honest evaluation process:

- Creates a "paper trail" that allows the company to make good employment decisions
- Enables informed comparisons between managers' expectations of their employees and the employees' actual performance
- Allows ready comparisons of one employee to another
- Becomes a tool the employer can use to analyze its own practices, ensuring it sets realistic expectations for its employees.

8 steps to an effective evaluation process

Increase the value of your employee evaluation process by taking the following eight steps.

The process:

- 1.** Review the job descriptions for those about to be evaluated. Make sure they are being judged on relevant criteria.
- 2.** Conduct the review *in person* with each employee. Give the employee an opportunity to respond. Listen closely for any claims of discrimination or harassment. Get the employee to sign off on receipt of the evaluation.
- 3.** Document the discussion with the employee separately, and follow up immediately with HR on any serious employment issues.

The content:

- 4.** Focus on job-related criteria.

5. Compare with *companywide* expectations of performance.
6. Be detailed and specific with both praise and criticism.
7. BE HONEST.
8. Remember, the goal of an evaluation is to improve performance, not justify termination.

There are a few things your evaluation process should *not* include:

- **Sarcasm and humor.** They have no place in an evaluation. Avoid them at all costs
- **The term “probation.”** It implies an element of punitive or disciplinary action that is inappropriate in an evaluation. If an employee is underperforming, stick to specific job-related difficulties.
- **Comparisons.** Never compare an employee directly with his or her co-workers, especially not by name.