

# When an appraisal is long overdue

If you haven't found the time in a long while to review your people's performance, should you just forget about it? Not at all, but as you embark on long-overdue appraisals, keep these points in mind:

**Stay honest.** As a snapshot of an employee's current performance, an appraisal can be equally valid whether it's right on time or years overdue. If a worker is currently struggling in an important area, say so.

However, if an employee has never had a review, or if new responsibilities have been added since the last appraisal, note that as context for your rankings. Those facts don't excuse poor performance, but they do affect the reliability of your assessment—poor compared to what?

**Stay with the script.** Frame your appraisal in terms of the last appraisal, if there was one. For employees new to their current jobs, start with the key duties and responsibilities as laid out in the job description under which they were hired. If those starting points are out of date now, then secure agreement with the employee on what should be part of the current appraisal.

Unless you're ranking everybody against one another on a set of common criteria, any appraisal based on a brand-new set of standards has to be provisional. Only with the next review, using those same criteria, can you draw hard-and-fast conclusions about performance.