

Simple guide to writing performance reviews



Your employee performance review process is key to ensuring both you and your employees are on the same page regarding job performance. That's why it's important to develop a clear and consistent process that includes how to write a performance review correctly. Otherwise, it can be an unnecessarily long process that you dread completing and doesn't provide the best quality feedback.

Below you'll find more details on performance reviews, best practices for writing them, and sample phrases you can plug in to complete the process quickly without sacrificing the level of feedback needed to be beneficial.

The goal of a performance review

When writing a performance review you want to always keep in mind the ultimate goal of the process.

Whether you call it a performance review, performance appraisal, or performance evaluation, the purpose is to provide a formal assessment of employee job performance over a set period. You can choose to hold your reviews annually, quarterly, or even monthly, but many companies are moving to a frequency beyond annual reviews.

You evaluate their competencies and areas of improvement, then assist in setting realistic performance-related goals that will be evaluated during the following performance review.

REMEMBER:

**EACH PERFORMANCE EVALUATION
SHOULD INCORPORATE ACTIONABLE
AND REALISTIC GOALS FOR THE
EMPLOYEE TO STRIVE TOWARD.**



During the performance review, you want to assess a range of skills including:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Teamwork
- Problem-solving
- Accuracy of work
- Quality of work
- Reliability
- Punctuality
- Attendance
- The ability to meet deadlines

- The ability to accomplish selected goals

How to write review an effective performance review

Writing a quality employee evaluation requires a process to achieve the best results. Here are some strategies to keep in mind.

Give specific examples

Your performance review should provide specific examples when referencing employee performance. When you state that an employee performs in a certain manner — negative or positive — include specific examples that showcase exactly what you're referring to. This helps to ensure there's no confusion regarding what your feedback means.

These examples can include data, anecdotal notes, or anything else that clearly and specifically demonstrates why you're providing that performance rating.

Provide constructive feedback

You don't want to focus strictly on the positive, even if the review is for a star employee. Your goal is to also identify areas of improvement through constructive feedback that can help take their performance even further.

If an employee is demonstrating problematic behaviors, ensure you're framing it in a way that isn't attacking their character or job performance as a whole. You want to be careful to ensure your feedback is constructive, not just a list of criticisms that likely won't be accepted well.

Set realistic goals

Each performance evaluation should incorporate actionable and realistic goals for the employee to strive toward. It's important that these are strategically set being that they often impact the ability to earn a raise or receive a promotion. Also, these goals give them something to work toward that can improve their performance and impact the company as a whole.

You want to set a goal that will positively influence the trajectory of their career while also supporting the team and the organization.

When you set goals ensure you set a SMART goal that is specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-based to ensure it's one that is clear and achievable.

End with positive feedback

It's helpful to take a sandwich approach when writing a performance review. Start positive, sprinkle in constructive feedback, and end positive. Setting it up in this way sets the stage for a better conversation.

Performance review best practices

Here are additional best practices to keep in mind as you prepare for performance reviews.

Follow-up with regular feedback

Beyond your formal performance review, also incorporate providing informal feedback into your routine. This is especially important if you only offer an annual performance review formally.

Hold your meeting face to face

This might not always be possible as more people are working from home, but you want to hold your performance review meetings either face to face or via Zoom as a second option. Try to avoid doing it over the phone or just sending the review via email and holding all communication that way.

Review their job description in advance

In the day-to-day of managing your team, the job description of your employees can run together. Many employees take on tasks outside of their job description and are completing duties they're not technically being paid to do at their current position.

So, you want to review their job description in advance to ensure you're only evaluating them on their current position's responsibilities. In reviewing the description, consider how the employee is meeting requirements for the position and make notes of areas of achievement and areas of improvement.

However, this can also be an opportunity to update an employee's job description. If they've taken on more work, especially at their manager's request, that isn't reflected in their job description, then it should be updated to reflect their expectations.



Performance review example phrases

You can use these performance review example phrases as templates when writing employee performance reviews. Feel free to update them to reflect comments that are specific to your employees.

Performance review phrases for areas of achievement

- Improved production on sales goal identified at the beginning of the performance review period.
- Exceeded production expectations on communication goal identified at the beginning of the review period.
- Takes initiative to gather tools and resources needed to complete projects ahead of time with quality that's beyond expectations.

- Sets measurable goals and continually strives to reach or surpass them.
- Consistently struggles to achieve similar results as co-workers in relation to sales performance.
- Sets realistic and actionable goals and continuously strives to achieve them.
- Improved sales performance by 52%.
- Made an effective system to streamline the outbound sales work processes by identifying holes in the current system.

Performance review phrases for attendance

- Consistently arrives on time for meetings and conferences.
- Regularly attends non-mandatory training and meetings.
- Has not met goals identified for the new performance review period for arriving on time to work and to meetings.
- Completes deadlines in a timely manner.
- Respects the time of others by arriving at team meetings on time.
- Exceeds expectations in arriving on time for work, including meetings and conferences.
- Has good attendance and doesn't violate the standard attendance policy.
- Begins each day fully refreshed and prepared for any challenges.

Performance review phrases for productivity

- Has greatly improved on hitting production goals on (x) since last review.
- Has not displayed consistent productivity improvement since last appraisal.
- Exceeds output expectations set out for his/her department.

- Makes a large contribution to the overall success of his/her department through excellent productivity.
- Consistently falls below others on the team regarding work output.
- Positively contributes to the overall performance of the company through consistent and high-quality work.
- Continuously strives to improve profits, productivity, and performance targets.
- Shows strong time-management and organizational skills.

Performance review phrases for communication skills

- Displays improved listening skills in meetings with colleagues and managers.
- Excels at communicating project expectations to those he/she manages.
- Needs to work on fully understanding a situation before making defensive explanations.
- Effectively communicates with team members on projects and delegates when necessary.
- Builds company morale and cooperation through effective group facilitation.
- Effectively communicates with colleagues, supervisors, partners, and customers.
- Clearly communicates ideas and thoughts in team meetings and conferences.
- Is a constructive communicator and is capable of discussing difficult issues effectively and to the point.

Performance review phrases for drive

- Shows curiosity for new ways to thinking and communicating to improve projects and customer satisfaction.
- Continually pushes for more responsibility and shows willingness to put in extra hours.
- Is continuously striving to improve skills and production.

- Lacks the initiative to willingly take on more complicated tasks or projects.
- Tends to wait for projects to be handed to him/her rather than requesting more responsibility.

Performance review phrases for leadership

- Needs to work on talking to employees on their level without being condescending.
- His/her team often comments on how he/she makes them feel comfortable in voicing opinions and ideas.
- Clearly understands strengths of team members and delegates accordingly.
- Displays a strong work ethic that effectively motivates team members to excel.
- Promotes a culture of learning and understand that team members respond well to.

Performance review phrases for creativity

- Appears to be hesitant when it comes to taking creative risks that are outside the box.
- Has a vision for the future of the company and applies creative ideas to help implement it.
- Always contributes fresh ideas at team meetings and on projects.
- Fails to reward those under his/her management for innovative ideas or suggestions.
- Strives to always take new information into account and adjust plans accordingly.
- Applies creative thinking to implement a vision for the company.
- Continuously suggests new ideas in meetings and on projects.
- Shows initiative with developing new ways of thinking to improve projects or company performance.

Performance review phrases for cooperation

- Effectively collaborates with other team members to get projects finished efficiently.

- Shows improvement delegating tasks to others when overwhelmed.
- Excels at sharing knowledge and tips with new team members to help them become part of the team.
- Could work on helping team members complete tasks for overall success of project.
- Has a tendency to make others feel hesitant asking him/her for help as they do not know the reaction they will get.
- Displays a cooperative spirit by performing xx task to contribute to xx project.
- Promotes cooperation well to ensure colleagues work as a team to meet deadlines.

Performance review phrases for interpersonal skills

- Works effectively within a team environment to achieve specific tasks or projects.
- Develops constructive working relationships with internal and external stakeholders.
- Is an effective team player as demonstrated by their willingness to help out and contribute as required.

Performance review phrases for areas of improvement

- Struggles to effectively overcome new challenges and find solutions to new issues.
- Should work on developing and maintaining professional relationships.
- Tends to focus more on what can't be done instead of what can be done.

Performance review phrases for accountability

- Takes ownership in the company's success and accepts responsibility for oneself and contribution as a team member.
- Admits mistakes and errors and informs others when unable to keep a commitment.

Performance review phrases for flexibility

- Shows ability to come up with new solutions for problems when old ways of thinking are ineffective.

- Tends to shut down instead of finding new ways of working when expectations are not met.
- Displays improvement in taking on new tasks or changing workflow when situation requires.
- Rigidly sticks to traditional methods of project management even when results do not warrant it.
- Consistently uses constructive criticism to improve his/her skills and work processes.

Performance review phrases for problem-solving

- Has displayed capability to solve complex problems independently, but tends to defer to others on the team.
- Shows creativity and initiative when tackling complicated problems.
- Tends to make excuses and blame others on team when problems arise instead of working to solve them.
- Recognizes problems when they are at early stages and implements solutions proactively.
- Empowers those he/she manages to solve problems on their own.
- Displays the capability to independently solve complex problems.
- Breaks a problem down before analyzing it in a more detailed manner.
- Knows how to collaborate with others effectively to find solutions to problems.