

by Stephanie Ramsey

Employee reviews. Did your heart just turn to stone reading those two words? You are not alone. Unfortunately, most employee reviews fail to achieve any measurable value for business owners. In fact, many companies no longer conduct them. They prefer to focus on streamlining their operations to only incorporate activities that bring quantifiable returns on investment.

Ineffective employee reviews that don't communicate anything of value to either party or have limited metrics to analyze possible financial benefit have led to the belief that reviews are no longer a valuable tool for employers to implement.

This is not strictly true. The value of the employee review is found in the opportunity to retain and develop your employees as high-quality assets of the company. There is a process (a technology) to developing worthwhile employee reviews. This process is a cycle that should be followed every year. This cycle consists of:

1. Annual employee development plan incorporating company objectives and employee goals
2. Performance metrics
3. Analysis of performance metrics
4. Translating analysis into an employee review
5. Presenting the employee review

An employee development plan is a written career path for each employee that subtly balances company objectives with employee job satisfaction. The employee becomes an



active participant in developing this plan by enumerating their personal and professional goals. Rather than overwhelming the employee with an endless number of goals, you should incorporate a reasonable number of goals into the development plan. Remember, the intent is to help your employee be successful, not set them up for failure.

Performance metrics measure the employee's attainment of goals and objectives established in the development plan. These measurements are unique to each goal or objective. The key to creating strong performance metrics is focusing on what needs to be measured and the most effective way to accomplish this measure. Is it a subjective evaluation of performance or a mathematical calculation? An example of a metric is presented below:

Performance Rating Category								
Rate the actual results and/or accomplishments of the employee's key accountabilities. Use the following ratings to assess each accountability and dimension:								
EE	Exceeds Expectations	Performance exceeds all job requirements.						
ME+	Meets Expectations Plus	Performance always meets, and often exceeds, job requirements.						
ME	Meets Expectations	Performance consistently meets job requirements.						
ME-	Meets Expectations Minus	Performance meets job requirements some of the time. Performance plan is recommended.						
NI	Needs Improvement	Performance does not meet job requirements. Performance plan is required.						
Key Accountabilities and Results								
Key accountabilities are objective statements that explain an employee's ongoing responsibilities, projects and performance requirements. Whenever possible, they should be stated in quantifiable and measurable terms (e.g., utilization rate, on time completion of a project, tasks enunciated in the job description, etc.). List the employee's key accountabilities in order of importance. For employees whose work is not easily quantifiable (e.g., an administrative assistant), write key accountabilities that capture their major job elements (e.g., coordinate executive's schedule, book travel) and/or the goals the employee is expected to achieve.								
Once the key accountability is written, change the weighting to fit the job requirements. The total weight column must add up to 100%. In the results/accomplishments section, explain the degree to which the employee met, exceeded or did not meet the criteria of the key accountability. Provide as much detail as possible. Place an X in the rating column that most accurately matches the employee's performance. The score will calculate automatically.								
Place the cursor in the lower cell to make additions.		Weight	EE	ME+	ME	ME-	NI	Score
Key Accountabilities 1. xxxxxxxx:		30%						#N/A

EMPLOYEE REVIEWS

Take the time to evaluate what the analysis of the performance measures reveals. Does the analysis process make sense to the employee? Did the employee fully or partially achieve the goal? Does the analysis illustrate the level of effort the employee gave to the business and to reaching their goals?

Define the results of the analysis into a format that is easy to explain to the employee. Your employee development plan and the performance metrics provide a solid basis for making decisions regarding rewards for achieving goals. It is important to remember that performance rewards can be a gift card, a promotion with more responsibility, additional time off, simple recognition of the employee's achievement or even public recognition on your corporate website, Facebook page, Twitter or local paper.

The actual employee review doesn't need to be complex. In fact, it only needs to be one or two pages long. It should illustrate the employee's goals and the performance metrics used to measure their achievement. Addi-

tionally, the review should highlight positive job performance as well as constructive critiques on how the employee can improve their performance. Make sure you include an area for the employee to provide feedback regarding the review.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect for employers is the delivery of the employee review. During the presentation of the review, focus on having an open dialogue — this should not be a one-way communication. Ask questions and encourage participation. Be aware that most employees will be tense and initially uncomfortable in this process, but the more the employer can listen rather than talk, the more fruitful the review. If at all possible, end on a positive note to provide encouragement to the employee to reach their goals for the coming year.

A few weeks later, sit down with the employee again to discuss their goals. By using the technology of employee development plans, performance metrics, appropriate analytics and well-crafted reviews, the business own-

er has a powerful tool to grow individuals from a simple employee to a true human company asset. *MJM*

Stephanie Ramsey is the HR Specialist for The Foresight Companies, LLC. She has managed

small staffs and those with over 200 employees with more than 25 supervisors directly reporting to her. She has run an 800 call regional combination

business. She has a unique perspective on the challenges funeral and cemetery business owners and managers face when dealing with employee issues. Stephanie combines her hands-on employee management experience with her knowledge of various industries to develop workable human resource structures within any size business. She has written many employee handbooks and other job-specific documents for clients nationwide.



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