

Performance

Introduction

1. How is staff performance measured where you work? How do you receive feedback on your performance?
2. What criteria could you use to measure the performance of an employee or a project? Which are the most important criteria?



The end of the annual performance review?

If your company conducts annual appraisals, the following procedure might sound familiar: You receive an email from your boss inviting you to an appraisal with a form attached. You fill a series of tick boxes, rate objectives on a scale, and express your views on certain issues. Then you have your meeting, agree your objectives for the coming year, and plan to meet again in another 12 months' time.

That's the standard annual performance review for many companies and it gets a mixed response from employees. In one survey of 2,900 workers, 29% thought annual appraisals were a waste of time and 21% even described them as 'unfair'. Many more were positive about the experience, but felt that receiving constructive feedback on a more regular basis would be more beneficial.

It's this kind of viewpoint which has led to some businesses moving away from the once-a-year format towards a 'give feedback anytime' approach. General

Electric, for example, which employs around 300,000 people worldwide, has an app which allows employees to read regularly updated feedback on their phone. It allows managers to address any immediate concerns and it gives employees the opportunity to raise any issues or respond to criticism.

But if you already dread the approach of your annual performance review, then isn't the prospect of your performance being monitored twenty-four seven even worse? Supporters of a more fluid approach to appraisals don't think so. The software company Adobe offers employees frequent face-to-face 'check-ins' with their managers where they can discuss their current role and plan their future careers. Since implementing this system, there has been a 30% drop in employees leaving the company. So perhaps rather than waiting a whole year to find out if something can be improved, more regular updates mean employees can learn from any mistakes immediately.

3. Read the text above and answer these questions.

- 1. What is the typical procedure for appraisals?**
- 2. The first sentence in paragraph 2 refers to a "mixed response" from employees. What were the responses?**
- 3. Look at these verbs and match them with a phrase from the box. They appear in the previous text.**

your objectives

any immediate concerns

constructive feedback

issues

criticism

performance

Conduct ➡ annual appraisals.

Rate ➡ objectives on scale

Express ➡ your view on certain issues

Agree ➡

Receive ➡

Address ➡

Raise ➡

Respond to ➡

Monitor ➡

4. Complete the definitions with the phrases in 3.

- 1 carry out an assessment of how well someone is doing at work _____
- 2 talk about your opinion of something _____
- 3 decide what to do about a problem/situation _____
- 4 be told in a useful way how you are doing at work _____
- 5 give points to measure how well someone has achieved their aims/targets _____
- 6 check regularly how someone is doing at work _____
- 7 decide with someone else what you hope to achieve at work _____
- 8 reply to negative comments about your performance _____
- 9 mention and talk about any current points for concern _____

5. Listen to a human resources manager describing a system of 360-degree feedback. Then answer the questions.

- a. What is the central idea of 360-degree appraisals? How do they work?
- b. What do raters comment on?
- c. What 2 things do you need to consider if you use 360 feedback?

Interviewer: Is it right that you've moved on from top-down staff appraisals to what you call 360-degree appraisals?

Manager: NO, we still have the more traditional **top-down appraisals**, but we're introducing 360-degree appraisals as well because they have different functions...

Interviewer: In what way?

Manager: You have to think of 360 degree as a development tool basically, a trigger for change **rather than** a way of deciding if anyone deserves a raise.

Interviewer: So how does it work?

Manager: Well, in 360 degree, instead of just your boss appraising you, you have several different people giving feedback. So, we **hand out a feedback form** to everyone you come into contact with — your manager, your colleagues, people on your team, your customers, contractors, suppliers — obviously it depends on the type of job and the organization, but we try to involve as many different people as possible and with this kind of **peer rating**, you end up with a more complete picture of how someone is doing in their job.

Interviewer: And what do you ask them?

Manager: We use a feedback form, with a scoring or value judgement system, asking them to comment on various different assessment criteria — job skills, abilities, attitudes, behaviour. Then you assess yourself using the same form to see how the two compare. There are two important considerations with 360-degree appraisal. First, it has to be completely confidential, that way you get much more honest answers from people. And secondly, you need to make sure **suitable counselling** is available when you **go through** the feedback results.

Interviewer: So, at the moment, you don't actually use it for appraising performance?

Manager: No, it works better as a development tool. We use it as part of our overall performance management, a way of bringing about change, rather than assessing performance.

Interviewer: Right. And does it really help change?

Manager: Yes. I had a new member on one of my teams recently. ...I thought he was very communicative, very open, always said what he thought, and I liked that. But when we did a 360-degree appraisal, the staff feedback was all negative, and he came over as domineering and forceful. As a result of this, he did change his behaviour ... and became more accepted by the team. And that's what I mean about it being different from top-down appraisals — in that example, a top-down appraisal from me would have told him to **carry on speaking his mind** but it was the 360-degree feedback that made us aware of the need for change.