PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS: A Skill-Building Refresher For Managers and Supervisors

presented for Heffernan Insurance Brokers
c/o Aspen Risk Management Group

by Dr. Steve Albrecht
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"If the employee is surprised by a below-standard Performance Evaluation, we have not been effective managers or supervisors. We have not used coaching meetings to support and guide the employee." - Dr. Steve

In a March 2023 1,000-employee survey done by Workhuman, (only) 49% give annual or semiannual PEs.

OUR AGENDA

Fine-tune the steps in the PE process, from the preparation of the documentation to the conversation.

Have the necessary coaching conversations that help you craft a solid PE.

Avoid using label-based language instead of behavior-based language to get better results after the meeting.

Handle the range of employee reactions or emotions during a PE meeting.

OUR GOALS

Protect yourself from claims about bias, being unfair, discriminatory, retaliatory, or overly judgmental.

Avoid common PE traps like the Recency Error, the Halo Effect, the Middle Grade, Grade Inflation, Sameness Error, Fuzzy Language, Punishment Phrases, and Unwitnessed Work.

Change the thinking about PEs from being an annual or semiannual process to a useful supervisory and coaching tool.

Think about your legacy as a leader and how PEs serve your agency after you have promoted, left, or retired. (Succession Planning.)

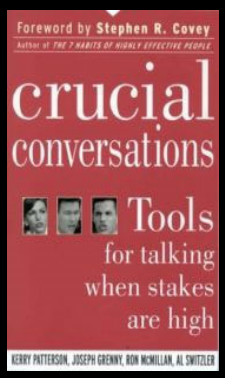
SUCCESSION PLANNINNG

A systematic approach to:

- Building a leadership pipeline/talent pool to ensure leadership continuity.
- Identifying the best candidates positions.
- Developing potential successors in ways that best fit their strengths and improve their weaknesses.
- Putting candidates into leadership roles, early.
- Concentrating resources on talent development to yield a greater return on coaching investment.

Crucial Conversations

by Patterson, Grenny et al. **(2002, McGraw-Hill)**

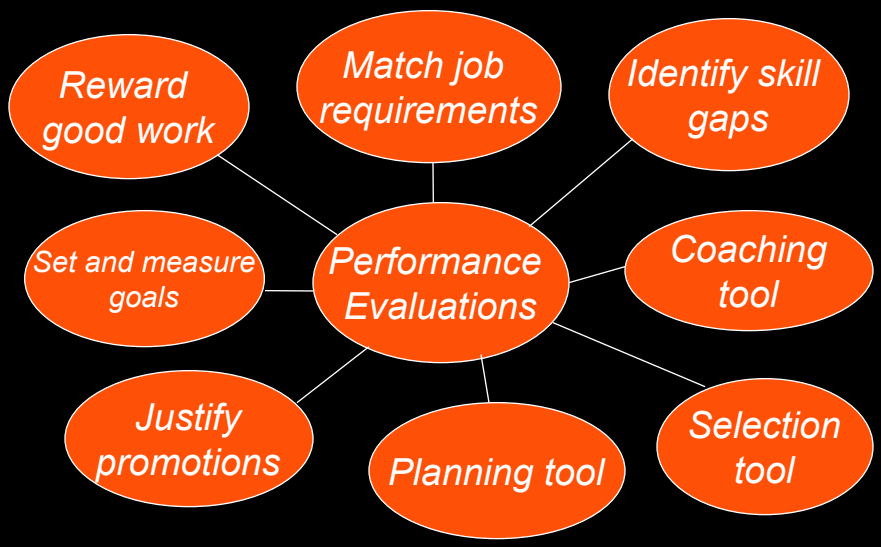


Opinions vary.

Stakes are high.

Emotions run strong.

THE WHY? OF PEs



ALIGNMENT BETWEEN STRATEGIC PLAN & EVALUATION

GROUP DISCUSSION #1

What do we like about Performance Evaluations - the process, the documents, the discussions?

What don't we like about PEs?

ANSWERING THE "WII-FM?" QUESTION FOR EMPLOYEES AND PEs

It lets employees know where they stand with you.

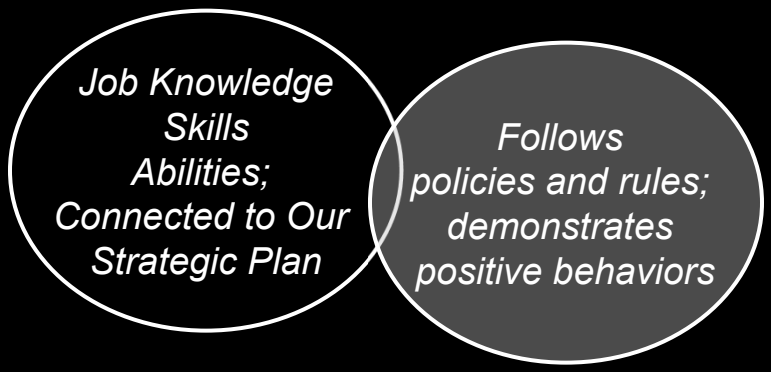
It tells them what, specifically, they need to improve.

It helps them set their own personal, professional, and educational goals.

It shows them what they need to do to promote or move into other positions.

It rewards them for their efforts, attitude, and accomplishments.

MEASUREMENTS



Actual performance / behavior
versus
desired / expected performance / behavior

THE USUAL SEVEN +1

Attendance
Follows Policies & Procedures
Attitude
Conflict
Teamwork: goals, deadlines, quality, fairness
Internal and External Service Skills
Work Performance: deadlines, quality, initiative
Workplace Behavior (the need for a BIP)

EVAL TROUBLE

Too many categories, anchors, point scales.

Label-based language, instead of behaviors.

Entitled employees, who expect higher scores.

Bosses with no courage to see, write, and speak the truth. (Afraid of being challenged by employee.)

Grade inflation, unequal treatment, out of date range.

Not done regularly; no meeting; no enforcement; no follow-up; not seen as a trailing, historical work plan.

YOUR EMPLOYEES NEED TO KEEP A "ME FILE"

Client, customer, co-worker, or supervisor letters, emails, kudos, awards.

Training they have attended.

Classes toward degrees, certifications.

Projects completed successfully.

Professional development activities.

Community activities.

CREATING A COACHING FILE*

The purpose of a coaching file for each employee is to help you remember the coaching conversations, projects assigned, goals met or not, continuing issues, compliance with the Seven during the rating period.

* It's *not* a secondary personnel file.

PE STRENGTHS

Valid and related to the job description and job duties.

Regular and standardized across the organization.

Not biased, subjective, vague, or random; performance and behavior-based language.

Written by supervisors who have actually seen the performance or behaviors.

A written, factual, timely, discussed, confidential, and historical document. Created with care.

TRAPS AND BIASES

The Halo Effect

Overly Lenient / Overly Harsh

Vanilla Scores / Middle Grades

The Recency Error

The Buddy System

Label-based Language

Punishment Phrases (“ . . . or else!”)

Biases for other reasons.

PE MEETING STEPS

1. Plan for the meeting.
2. Open the meeting.
3. Define the measurements.
4. Start with an overview, move to specifics.
5. Discuss the business impact of any problem areas.
6. Describe employee’s strengths.
7. Discuss the development plan, training needs, deadlines, goals, connection to the Strategic Plan.
8. Close the meeting with thanks and a recap.

EMPLOYEE REACTIONS

Excuses?

Tears?

Imitation of a statue?

Anger and constant disagreement?

Arguing each point?

Overly-agreeable?

Insubordinate?

Appreciative and cooperative?

THE ROAD TO LITIGATION

Miscommunications.

Misinterpretations.

Mismanagement; inconsistent supervision.

No clear record of issues (dates, times, examples).

Employee is not clear on the performance or behavior issues to be changed.

Management has not provided training and/or time to improve.

Clear evidence of bias, harassment, discrimination, retaliation.

“A collection of sins, punished during one meeting on one day.”

CORRECTIVE ACTION STEPS

N otice of the problem.

E xplanation of how to improve.

A ssistance to improve.

T ime to Improve.

David Monks, Esq., Fuller Law Group, San Diego, CA

FINE POINTS

Let them read it first or meet first?

The “car accident this year” dilemma?

Do they know how to grieve it?

Should you use the PE from a previous supervisor?

Do your Rising Stars / Shining Stars need improvement?

How do we prove success? Observable changes?

PE SUCCESS TOOLS

Coaching files.

Observed behaviors.

Time and training to correct.

Areas for continuous performance improvement.

A performance and behavioral contract: Keep/Stop/Start

SMART Goals.

A two-way engagement, using feedback, praise, coaching.

GROUP DISCUSSION #2

What is one thing that you could do to make the PE process better for you?

What is one thing that senior management could do to make the PE process better for you?

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