

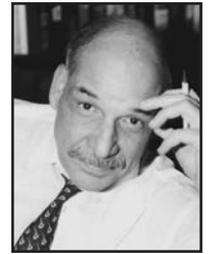
Member's Quarterly

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President's Message

Farewell to Traditional Performance Evaluations

Shift focus from assessment to development



[Brian W. Pascal]
President

There are few things that most managers hate more than giving employee evaluations. Many dislike being on the receiving end of performance evaluations. That's because most performance evaluation processes are either mind-numbingly boring or totally ineffective in capturing the good, the bad or the ugly of an employee's value to the organization.

So why not try something new? What about a world where employee evaluations are taboo, kaput, finished? Imagine a new workplace where 'we really don't do them anymore'. Well, you can and some organizations actually are. This doesn't mean employees are not judged and rewarded for their actual performance. It certainly doesn't mean the end of giving employees the feedback they need and must have. It's actually about shifting the focus from assessment to development.

In this new world without formal performance evaluations, I would suggest following a few basic steps. First, there needs to be a clearly defined target of performance that an employee is expected to achieve. This can be done through a jointly developed work plan or a written statement that both employee and manager agree to and sign. The main focus should be on ensuring that the employee knows exactly what they are supposed to be working on — clear objectives and targets.

Secondly, when you shift to development from assessment, this actually means more work for you as a manager since the focus will now be on how you can help the employee succeed. That can include coaching, mentoring, helping the employee to move from one level of competence to a higher one, or even learning and mastering the new skills they will need to meet their performance targets.

The third step in moving to a development model from performance management is a complete shift in communications between you and the employee. Instead of a once a year or mid-year discussion on performance, the 'how are you doing?' conversation, it needs to become monthly if not weekly in regularity. The content also needs to be completely reoriented to allow for an employee to self-evaluate with your support and to be able to ask for additional resources if they are falling short of their targets or goals.

Finally, there still has to be a system of rewards and incentives, both positive and not so positive, built into your new system of assessing and supporting employees. One of the benefits of moving to this type of process is that you won't have to wait until the end of the year to identify problem spots or employees. You can work to correct these deficiencies earlier or cut your losses and move on. Just because you're a good employer or manager doesn't mean you have to tolerate poor performance or performers.

As you can see, this new way of interacting with employees may actually take a lot more time and energy than your old employee assessment process. However, you just may find that it's worth both. Try it out and let us know how it works for you. Maybe you have another great idea to make employee evaluations work. We'd love to hear from you.