I recently heard someone say, upon hearing of another person’s recent work experience, “You had a performance evaluation? I would love to have a performance evaluation.”

Oddly enough, this was said not with sarcasm but with the despair of someone who is in a position or work environment where she receives no feedback and does not participate in goal setting or planning. There are many organizations in which supervisors do not evaluate their employees’ performance or provide formalized feedback, and while workers may say they don’t like undergoing annual reviews, the process can be made more productive and rewarding for both parties.

The purpose of a performance evaluation is not to find fault or point out problems, but to engage an employee in identifying areas of development and interest and help with goal setting. It is also an important way to formally recognize the contributions that an employee makes in the workplace. Without such an evaluation, employees may feel that their contributions are not valued, which may lead to a demoralized workplace and/or high turnover.

If an employee does have performance gaps, a performance evaluation may form part of the annual process of recognizing efforts the employee and supervisor have made during the year to correct the problems. In many cases, a supervisor will need to provide coaching on a regular basis, particularly when a staff member is having difficulty with a new procedure or set of tasks or needs to develop skills in a new area. With each review, the goals that are set for achieving outcomes need to be paired with any requirements for support, such as training or development.

The Review Process

The annual review process should essentially be the same for all levels of employees, whether it involves the library assistant or the library director. In many organizations, information for a review is gathered from a number of sources, particularly in cases where the supervisor doesn’t have a lot of day-to-day interaction with the employee.

There are advantages and disadvantages to seeking others’ input. Regardless of whose opinions you solicit, you may find dramatic differences in perceptions of work performance that may actually be based on personality conflicts or differences in work styles. It’s important to try to gather information from others when you do not spend a lot of time with an employee, but if that’s the case, perhaps you need be a bit more diligent about checking in regularly throughout the year.

The review process should always involve the employee in developing the review. There are many ways to do this: you can each write a draft that you exchange with each other, you can conduct the review and then share it with the employee for input or edits, or you can write it together at the first meeting. I use the second procedure—I draft a report and forward it to the employee to make changes or corrections prior to us coming together for a meeting to discuss. Usually my draft is fairly broad, and I look for the conversation with the employee to flesh out the details.

When reviewing someone who is unfamiliar with the process, it may be beneficial to draft the document together to alleviate any stress the employee may have about the review. There should be no surprises in the review itself. If you’ve been consulting with the employee regularly, you should both be able to agree about any concerns that were raised during the course of the year and any efforts that have been made to reduce the gap in performance expectations. If you haven’t talked to your employees about any problems with their performance, you absolutely need to do so prior to conducting the annual review.

Following the development of the initial draft, the employee and I meet to discuss the review. We talk about each section and make changes and additions, ensuring that the employee can clarify information and provide additional details (such as specific examples). We then discuss goals and any skills development for the coming year. These may go hand in hand, such as a goal to improve written communication and a plan for the employee to attend workshops on developing communication skills.

Both parties need to agree on the
goals and the development required and ensure that the goals are measurable and specific. Wherever possible, the goals should be linked to the strategic or annual plan for the information center so the employee can see how he or she is contributing to the larger development of the department.

If you haven’t conducted any performance evaluations for a long time, it’s a good idea to begin communicating to your employees that you are about to embark on this process and the reasons for doing so. Make sure everyone understands it is intended to be a positive process and that it will provide you with information that will help your employees and the entire organization. By using the annual review to mark progress and note room for further improvements also shows that you care about your employees and want them and your department to succeed.

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such devices may slow the adoption rate and dim the luster of such products.

A survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that 20 percent of U.S. adults already own a fitness band, smart watch, or other wearable device, but one-third of them use their devices infrequently or not at all. Although 53 percent of millennials and 54 percent of early adopters say they are excited about the future of wearable tech, slightly more than four in five respondents say they are worried that wearable technology will invade their privacy, and even more (86 percent) are concerned that wearables will make them more vulnerable to security breaches.

Among the potential benefits of wearable devices, survey respondents listed these most frequently:

• **Improved safety:** Roughly 90 percent of respondents said enabling parents to keep children safe using wearable technology is important.

• **Healthier living:** More than 80 percent of consumers listed eating healthier, exercising smarter, and accessing more convenient medical care as important benefits of wearable technology.

• **Simplicity and ease of use:** Eighty-three of respondents cited simplification and improved ease of technology as a key benefit of wearable technology.

The survey report urged organizations to develop strategies to use wearable technologies to their advantage. These strategies should take the following concepts into account:

**Envision how wearables can create new business opportunities.** The rise of wearable devices will create new means for marketing, including smarter, more robust customer data collection and stronger insights into user interaction.

**Keep human-centered design at the forefront of strategy.** To effectively embrace wearable technology, businesses must put the user at the center of the activity, reshaping an entire enterprise and its capabilities system around the customer or user experience.

**Instill trust.** As trust is a key concern with consumers in the wearables space, enterprises will need to be consistently transparent with what they do with data and how they use it. Trust is the foundation that needs to be established early on.

**Recognize that the wearable category will continue to evolve.** As with any digital strategy, adopting wearable technology requires taking the long view.


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