

# LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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## How to Create a Meaningful Performance Evaluation

This time of the year often becomes overloaded with tasks, from creating and balancing budgets to opening positions and onboarding new staff members.



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As a result, performance evaluations tend to drop to the bottom of to-do lists, leaving many supervisors in a hurry to get them done.

But making the time to create a meaningful performance evaluation can improve relationships with employees, productivity and the bottom line. With a few simple modifications, your performance evaluations can become much more valuable.

### REQUEST FEEDBACK FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES

Instead of leaving the entire review in the hands of an employee's supervisor, solicit feedback from team members who interact with this person on a daily basis. For example, "360 degree" performance reviews are increasing in popularity because they include feedback from managers, peers and direct reports. These often provide more detailed insight into the contributions that employees have made throughout the year.

Another important aspect of a 360 degree review is self-evaluation. This allows employees to reflect their achievements, focus on areas that need improvement and plan how to tackle difficult obstacles.

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### BE SPECIFIC

For many employees, one of the most frustrating aspects of the performance review is a lack of detail. If your staff member doesn't qualify for an annual increase, make sure he or she understands the exact reasoning behind the decision. Without these details, staff morale can decrease, and employees start to dread the evaluation period.

One way to make the process clearer is to have employees or supervisors set goals, and then assign weights to each goal. This ensures that the employees understand areas of importance and how they will be evaluated.

### **PUT THE EMPLOYEE AT EASE**

The performance evaluation shouldn't be used as an HR platform to air grievances about a staff member's contributions throughout the past year. Instead, focus on creating a positive and collaborative atmosphere where both the supervisor and employee feel comfortable expressing their concerns, goals and achievements.

Start by selecting a smaller room where confidentiality is guaranteed. Arrange it so supervisors can sit adjacent to their employees to encourage a good flow of communication.

### **BRING AN AGENDA**

Without a written agenda, it may be tough to remember exact points you wanted to discuss during a performance evaluation. Creating an agenda also gives you time to prepare and review what the employee has contributed during the review period, making sure that you come prepared.

In the past, many employers were able to heap generous benefits on their top-performing employees, but business has changed. Stricter guidelines on kickbacks and cost-cutting measures make it harder on many companies to give tangible incentives. That said, you can still provide positive feedback and praise to employees who go above and beyond.

This is also a prime opportunity to discuss areas of improvement and set goals for tracking and measuring success.

### **KEEP AN OPEN LINE OF COMMUNICATION**

It is too easy to close the employee's file after a performance evaluation and forget everything you have discussed during the process. But the best way to avoid this common pitfall is to check in frequently with staff.

Schedule quarterly meetings to discuss progress on various goals, or send routine emails every month to remind employees to continue working to achieve those goals. Be sure your employees also know that you are available to discuss any questions or concerns outside of their allotted time slot for performance reviews.

Make use of technology and post reminders on company web pages or shared collaboration sites — whatever works so that employees should never be surprised by anything discussed during the annual review. Regular communication is key.

Talent management is an important aspect of any company because it encourages staff members to thrive in a company where they receive coaching and positive feedback. Performance reviews can be a key part of managing employees, as they provide a channel where supervisors and team members collaborate to establish goals and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Julie Gettys** is a member of the Senior Leadership Team for Infinisource. In her role, she aligns with leaders across the company to encourage employee engagement, and promotes the standardization of policies and technology platforms to provide greater cohesion across multiple geographic locations. Her expertise includes employee engagement, staffing, benefits design, talent management and organizational development.

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