



INSIGHT LEAD...

THE ANNUAL STALE PERFORMING APPRAISALS

The Annual Stale Performance Appraisals!

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When you mention performance appraisals, two things come to mind, stress, and apprehension. Most stakeholders are not that enthused about appraisals. The question is why? This lack of enthusiasm I believe may be linked to the fact that a lot of organizations do not have in place an appropriate appraisal process to effectively measure or assess their people's performance. Many appraisal models are subjective rather than objective and therefore, it makes it difficult to explain outcomes to employees who disagree with their final evaluations. The other issue is on the effective definition of key performance indicators (KPI's), which can sometimes be unclear. If the indicators set to measure performance are poorly defined it makes it very difficult for managers to appraise employees. More often than not these KPIs are more based on job tasks than actual key KPIs linking to the overall business strategy or fiscal objectives.

Furthermore, the whole process is often unclear and complicated to management and employees, everyone is aware that this process takes place but its effectiveness is not clear to managers or employees. This may be because some HR departments merely facilitate the process, by this I mean they make sure it happens, but the outcomes in many instances are not used for business decisions. A lot of the time employees are not even given copies of their appraisal outcomes at the end of the process but they are reminded of their KPIs when the cycle starts again.

The other problem relates to constructive feedback, especially the negative part of constructive feedback. It is a fact that not all managers can communicate negative feedback and also not all employees can receive negative feedback. As a result in some instances,

discussions can end in disagreements and parties refusing to sign the final appraisal evaluation form where this is required.

This sometimes leads to a situation where managers avoid giving negative feedback. This kind of avoidance to give negative feedback can have an impact on addressing unsatisfactory performance issues. By this I mean the feedback on low performance is not given nor managed until it gets out of control and then one day HR is told to “terminate”. As practitioners we know it's not just a matter of terminate!

However, if we have proper performance appraisal measures in place that is as objective as it can be, it will help us to feedback on positive and negative information as well as help us to effectively manage good and unsatisfactory performance, and thus minimize the anxiety appraisals.

FEEDBACK



Additionally, many employees find out about their performance levels at the annual appraisal. The best practice encourages that feedback on performance should be regular, at least on a monthly or quarterly basis. To wait until the end of the year to tell me I am not performing is counterproductive.

So what can HR do to improve the process and get the buy-in from managers and employees? Performance appraisals have evolved over the years into as a strategic, integrated process that incorporates goal setting, performance appraisal, and development into a unified and coherent framework with the specific aim of aligning individual performance goals with the organization’s wider objectives.

HR needs to get managers and employees to understand that performance appraisals are based on an agreement between a manager and an individual, a shared understanding of and continuing dialogue about an individual's goals, the performance standards expected and the competencies needed, together with an appreciation of the organization’s wider mission, values, and objectives.

The fact is, as HR leaders we have to work harder to get managers to engage with the process by getting them involved at the planning stage of the organization’s performance appraisal process; as well as training on the process before it is implemented. We also have to look at performance management from the business perspective and not from the HR administrative or operational perspective. This requires HR to gain a better understanding of the appropriate performance measures for the business. The CEO and the board want to know how the workforces are performing and how their performance is impacting the bottom- line and set objectives. Senior management is more interested in the outcome and its impact on set objectives for their departments than the actual process. Employees want to know if they are meeting performance expectations and how that influences their pay and rewards.

