

Performance Evaluation

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Who doesn't love visiting the dentist? You get to look forward to all those x-rays, cleanings, fillings and drillings. Sounds like a great time, right? So why do we do it? The short response is regular visits with your dentist have proven health benefits for your teeth. Employee-performance reviews have proven benefits for businesses. Yet much like the dentist, they are often avoided.

Although performance reviews have a tendency to get pushed to the bottom of the "to do" list, there is not much that will annoy an employee more than reviews that are not timely or accurate or that never take place. Employees are correct--the review process is important. To make decisions about salaries, promotions or specific responsibilities without a fair and objective review may come across as impulsive and biased.

You may believe employees are acutely aware of their performance, but the truth is, they often are not. The employees who are aware of their performance would like to have their suspicions confirmed. Employee-performance reviews should be viewed as tools to enhance the performance of individuals in their areas of responsibility. In addition, reviews help to strengthen the credibility of an organization and its supervisors. They can also be useful in defending an organization's decisions in the wake of a lawsuit.

A system should be in place that focuses on making reviews a regular and routine priority. Setting a date with employees to discuss their performance is a strong stimulus to ensure the review actually occurs. Such an appointment should never be cancelled, except for very good reason. Likewise, time should be set aside to actually write up the review.

Performance reviews should be written in a standard format. Generic forms can be purchased from most office/business-supply companies, but you may find you will want something more specific to the golf course industry. If you would like to create your own form, consider including the following elements:

- Attendance (no-show, tardiness, extra hours, etc.)
- Cooperation with others within the organization (staff, other managers, etc.)

- Course knowledge (of the site and operations)
- Key result areas (ability, proficiency, delinquency, etc.)
- Golfer relations (sociability, letters of praise or objection, etc.)
- Compliance with policies and procedures (employee handbook, operational standards, etc.)
- Use of systems and equipment (irrigation, equipment operation, etc.)
- Other matters relevant to the job (job description, crew morale, etc.)

Typically, performance-review forms are set on a rating scale, either numerical or subjective, e.g., "excellent, good, average, fair, poor." No matter the format you choose, include sufficient space for further explanation or definition. Once your form has been established, use it consistently and be sure you are reviewing job-related skills and actions.

When preparing performance reviews, thoroughness is the best policy. Focus on the entire time period since the last review, not just the last 60 or 90 days. This is an important point because reviews often focus only on what is fresh in our memories from just before the evaluation. You do not want to fail in recognizing outstanding performance that happened early on or ignore large problems that took place within the review period.

When rating your employees, always be professional and truthful. Never rate an employee better than he deserves simply because you do not want to face a disagreeable situation or emotional episode. On the other hand, do not purposely hold back a top rating on the assumption that, once this is awarded, there is no room for improvement or no such thing as "perfection." If you cannot show the employee how he can do a better job in a particular area, he should get the top rating. Anything else will cast doubt and tear down the entire process.

Reviews should substantiate and validate. They should not surprise or catch an employee off guard. An employee should not have to find out he is in risk of losing his job during a performance review. Issues of this magnitude should be addressed immediately as they surface. Reviews are just one of several discussions

you will have with employees concerning performance.

Employee reviews are not a one-sided process. They are opportunities to exchange opinions and ideas, for employer and employees. Employees should be encouraged to rate themselves. You may want to include questions designed to lend insight to their own performance perceptions, such as:

- Which of your achievements in the past year has been most satisfying and why?
- With which accomplishment are you least satisfied and why?
- How can the organization better help you reach your goals?

A performance review should not just be about what has taken place in the past. A good review also helps lay the framework of a career path for the employee that matches the company's, a road map to assist him in focusing on things to come. Goals should be discussed, as well as other opportunities that exist within the organization and how they are awarded. If there are no changes anticipated in the employee's responsibilities, he should be made aware of this. If there have been drastic changes in his responsibilities, you may wish to cover an updated job description during the review.

When establishing a performance-review program, be sure to do the minimum:

- Conduct reviews in a timely and consistent manner.
- Put everything in writing.
- Tell it like it is--accurately, honestly and based on fact.
- Meet with employees face to face to discuss their reviews.
- Give employees the opportunity to express their opinions. Listen to their feedback.
- Have employees sign their reviews, and leave a space for them to write their comments.
- Keep reviews confidential and keep copies in a personnel file.

There are some common errors to be avoided as well:

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- Measure the employee's performance to the job standards and not against other employees' performance in the same job.
- Poor performance is just that: poor -- not good, average or even acceptable. Be careful not to allow the performance of one employee affect your review of another. *(For example, do not let a top performer raise your expectations when conducting the next employee performance review. Understand the difference between good performance and someone being otherwise friendly.)*

Write reviews when you are free from distractions and your mind is fresh. Not while you are weary or in a foul mood. If you have more than one review to complete on a given day, space them out and leave enough time for each. You should spend no less than half an hour performing a review. Go back and read each review at least a day or two after you write it, prior to sitting down in the review session.

Regardless how you decide to measure and evaluate your employees, it is important to remember that an organization - no matter how large or small - is evaluated each day by the people it serves. If a golfer comes in contact with an employee who is rude or inefficient, it will take double the courtesy and efficiency to overcome the negative perception created by your employee. Every grounds crew member who comes in contact with the golfers is a representative of the organization. The impression they make is a public notice, for good or bad.

MGCSA BOOTH CHALLENGE WINNERS AT THE MINNESOTA GREEN EXPO



Pictured from left to right: Front: Eric Counselman, Somerby GC; Ben Just, Midland Hills CC; Jeff Vinkemeier, Glencoe CC; David Wetenkamp, Branch River CC; **Middle:** Erik Pille, TPC Twin Cities; Drew Larson, Medina G & CC; Jamie Plomedahl, The Bridges GC; Dean Wojtczak, Whispering Pines GC; Todd Kranz, Woodhill CC; **Back:** Bill Vollbreacht, Three Rivers Park District; Javier Diaz, Indian Hills GC; Mike Sonnek, Spring Hill GC; Andrew Carlson, TPC Twin Cities, and Grayling Ihle, Minnlowa GC. Not pictured is Grand Prize winner, unbelievably for the third year in a row, Jim Nicol, CGCS, Hazeltine National GC, who was on a tight schedule. As rumor has it, he wanted to buy a lottery ticket and catch a plane to Vegas! A sincere thanks goes out to the following companies who participated in this year's booth challenge: Twin City Seed Company; Superior Tech Products; Sustane Natural Fertilizer, Inc.; The Tessman Company; Plaisted Companies, Inc.; MTI Distributing Inc.; Superior Turf Services, Inc.; CycleWorks Golf Supply; ProSource One; Duinick Bros. Inc. - Golf; Hartman Companies, Inc.; Syngenta; Excel Turf & Ornamental; Precision Turf & Chemical; Helena Chemical Co.; Bayer Environmental Services; Sports Turf Specialties, Inc.; Bioverse, Inc.; Ramy Turf Products; Turfwerks, and Versatile Vehicles, Inc.

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