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 decision and its supervisors. They can also 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 an employee off guard. An employee should not be surprised or caught 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.

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 Vollbrecht, Three Rivers Park District; Javier Diaz, Indian Hills GC; Mike Sonnek, Spring Hill GC; Andrew Carlson, TPC Twin Cities, and Grayaling 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; Duininck 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.