



How to Grow, Develop and Nurture Your Most Important Asset...

Your Employees!

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Whenever I conduct a seminar on employee development, I usually begin by asking the attendees to tell me about the worst boss they ever worked for. You can only imagine some of the horror stories I've heard over the years in response to that!

If you thought about it for a moment, what would you say?

There is one common theme that I always seem to hear. It doesn't matter what industry, nor does it matter if it's an hourly wage earner or the vice president of a company.

It usually sounds something like: "My worst boss never gave me any feedback"... "I didn't know if I was doing a good job or not"... "I never knew where I stood."

Your employees depend on you for an accurate, clear and timely evaluation of their performance. They also look to you for assistance in working on im-

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proving, maintaining or maximizing their performance level in their current position.

Daily interaction and feedback (good and bad) is extremely important. Human nature calls for each of us to be given affirmation of where we stand numerous times each day. Part of your responsibil-

ity as a supervisor or manager is to "stroke" your employees every day. Keep in mind that bad strokes are better than no strokes.

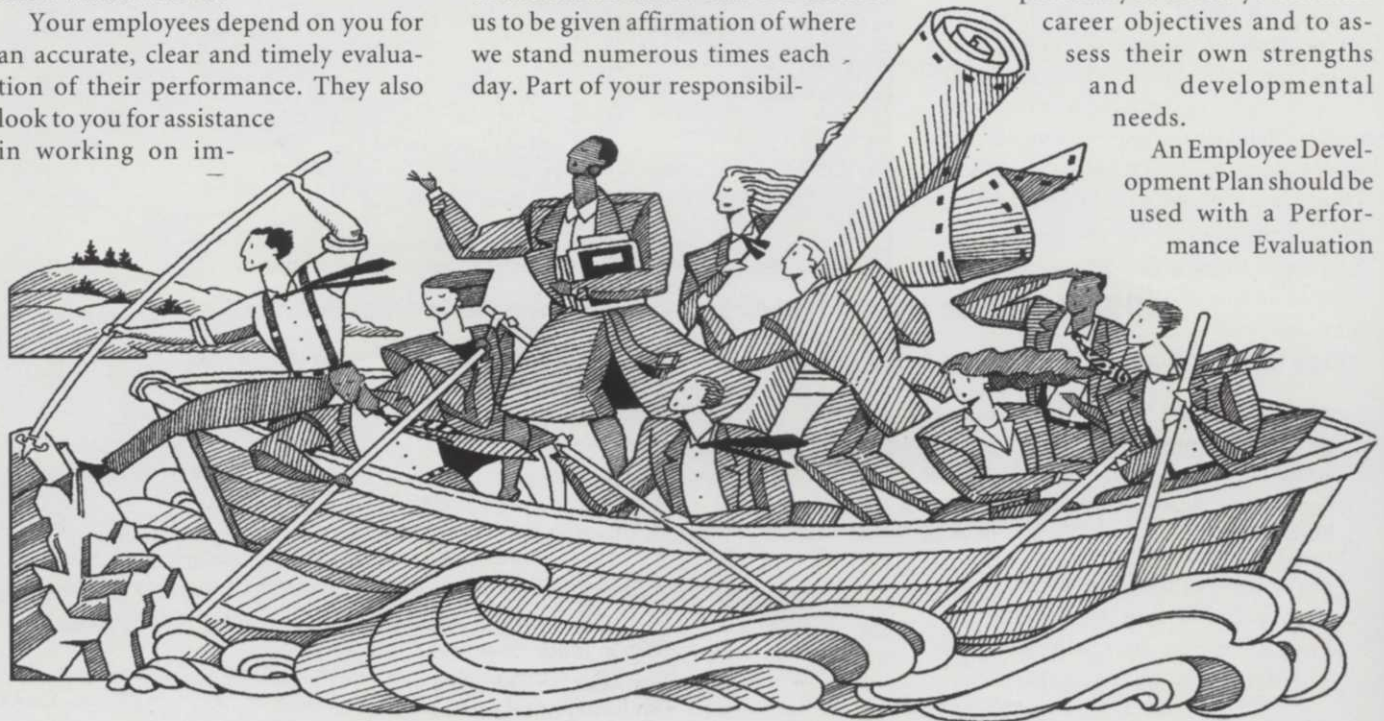
A tool that is often used to formally document an employee's performance is commonly called a "Performance Appraisal" or "Annual Performance Review."

If you or your organization is not using at least this one piece, you're not only doing your employees a disservice, but you may not have sufficient documentation to refute any EEO claim a disgruntled employee may file.

What I commonly recommend is the need for every organization to have in place a Performance Evaluation System.

This is not merely a play on words: a Performance Evaluation System should give your employees an opportunity to advise you of their career objectives and to assess their own strengths and developmental needs.

An Employee Development Plan should be used with a Performance Evaluation





Performance evaluations, therefore, should be based on work accomplishments (results.) They should not be based on just conducting activities alone or for having desirable traits, education or experience for their own sake.

Performance can be defined as the timely completion of the amount of quality work produced, given the conditions surrounding the work. This definition of performance is results-oriented.

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Meeting a supervisor's normal expectations of the amount, quality and timeliness of the work produced within the job is the level which must be achieved as a condition of continued employment.

This means that an employee must achieve a minimal overall performance level rating or meets supervisor's normal expectations.

When performance falls short of these normal expectations, there is a performance discrepancy which must be addressed through some careful performance improvement planning.

In addressing this discrepancy, usually there are competencies in which the employee is lacking or deficient. These competency deficiencies are the target for trying to improve the employee's performance.

In discussing performance evaluations with employees, it is important to keep these key principles in mind at all times:

1. Maintain or enhance the employee's self esteem.
2. Listen and respond with empathy to the employee.
3. Ask the employee for help in solving performance problems.

The performance evaluations you conduct with your employees are a vital part of your supervisory responsibilities. Your performance in this responsibility will more than likely be evaluated by your manager or supervisor.

Strive to provide daily interaction and feedback to your employees...

There are two steadfast rules to use whenever rating an employee's performance:

- Concentrate on behaviors, not attitudes. You really can't see or rate an attitude. You can only rate on-the-job performance.
- No surprises. Think about it - the last place you would want to first find out you're not performing up to your manager's expectations is when it is formally documented for your permanent record.

Well developed, trained and dedicated employees are the by-product of a good manager. Strive to provide daily interaction and feedback to your employees.

Give them the necessary tools to help them succeed, grow and obtain their own personal goals. A Performance Evaluation system provides you with an important tool to use with the employees you supervise.

One way I typically end my seminar is to ask participants to describe their favorite boss. Usually the answers sound something like: "Fair"... "Helped me get ahead"... "Kept me informed."

Hopefully, if one of your current or former employees attends one of my seminars, they'll be more anxious to speak up at the end of the class instead of the beginning.

Charles Cataline is the author of Performance Evaluation - An Effective and Efficient System for Managers and Supervisors copyright 1997. Currently in use at Berkley Hills C.C. For further information call (770) 935-4246.

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form. Working together, you and each employee can agree on specific developmental needs.

So the purpose of a Performance Evaluation System is to enable you to provide performance-related communication and to do development-related planning with employees. Together they serve as the formal documentation of this communication and planning.

You should measure an employee's performance in relationship to the expectations that you've established for his or her job and which you've fully communicated to the employee.

Obviously it would be unfair to evaluate an employee's performance if the employee did not have a clear idea of the expectations beforehand.

And although these are called the "supervisor's expectations," they need to be objective and fair.

The base should be a written job description and objective organization or department guidelines that apply to the employee's job.

Whenever these expectations change, they should be discussed with the employees involved.