



Flexible, Timely, and Results-Driven Performance Evaluations

By: Kelly Graves "The Corporate Therapist™"

Most organizations approach employee performance evaluations in a 'too little, too late' manner. In addition, organizations often don't allow for the precise kinds of measurements necessary for employees and managers to learn and grow in a methodical manner. Performance evaluations should be driven by these inseparable priorities: individual goals and objectives should directly support and be in alignment with organizational goals and objectives.

Every minute of a performance evaluation should count; every word and action should lead you closer to improved individual and organizational objectives.

Performance Evaluations

Thoughtful, well-planned performance evaluations are a critical undertaking for the following reasons:

- They demand that standards be created to identify business goals and the performer's role in meeting those.
- The performer has an opportunity to contribute to the expectations and contributions that determine his or her own standards for performance.
- The manager and subordinate can objectively discuss progress at any time, informally or formally, and make "mid-course" corrections.
- The performer has the ability to be self-directive and not depend on the manager for daily direction and feedback.
- In aggregation, all individual goals can be aligned with, and made supportive of, the organizational goals.
- The organization has the ability to assess performance and make intelligent selection decisions about promotions, committees, transfers, skills building, and termination.
- All professional development activity can be focused on organizational goals and individual performance needs.
- Performers can be rewarded based on their objective contribution to business goals.

Professional Training Considerations

Too often performance evaluations revolve around once-a-year confrontations that are entirely focused on vague generalities. Usually, by default, these annual events leave both the manager and performer feeling wounded. To avoid this type of outdated, rigid evaluation process, it is recommended that leaders implement a flexible evaluation process designed specifically for their organization and their unique business culture. One clear benefit of a flexible, yet focused, performance evaluation is that education, development, and training may be tightly tied to

**Kelly Graves the "Corporate Therapist" Kelly@ProfitWithIBS.com
800.704.3785 / 530.321.5309 www.ProfitWithIBS.com**

business requirements. Tying together evaluations and trainings will build on each other and provide a direct return on investment. Neither stands alone, nor does either become an end in itself. Standing alone, there are any number of expensive courses or workshops that may or may not be directly beneficial to organizational results. Instead, professional growth is much more cost-effective when it is tied directly to actual job performance and grounded firmly with your specific foundational goals.

Look at your individual performance requirements. Collectively, will your employees be growing in ways that will help to meet business goals? Will individual, educational, and developmental needs support identified performance requirements? Are performance standards focused and targeted toward getting results in a timely, measurable way?

It is only when each of these questions can be answered “yes” that your learning curriculum, let alone the specific interventions needed for specific employees, can be formulated and determined to be of value to the organization.

The difficulties with professional training start when organizations arbitrarily choose programs and courses (i.e., computer training workshops, management workshops, time management, etc.) that may or may not actually have anything to do with individual performance needs or identified business goals. It’s incumbent upon managers to look upward and translate downward. Otherwise, development and results will be following two independent tracks. By definition, no developmental program will be successful if organizational business goals are not met.

Six Steps to Creating Flexible, Timely and Results-based Performance Evaluations:

1. Clarify the results and expectations of the job. These should be in the form of the desired output (e.g., This is what the end result should look like) versus the suggested input (e.g., This is what we want you to do).

a. Example of a clarifying conversation:

“Of the steps you’ve taken toward our organizational goal of lowering our missed orders to 5% or fewer, which ones have been most successful? What are your next steps toward further decreasing the number of missed orders in your department? How may I help you to achieve this organizational goal?”

2. Gain agreement with the performer. Individual goals should be seen as realistic, attainable, and possible, not as orders handed down from above.

a. Example of an agreement conversation:

“Last quarter we lowered our dropped orders to 9%. What do you think is a reasonable figure to shoot for this next month, given that our next quarter goal is 5% or fewer dropped orders? What might you do differently this quarter versus last quarter to help you achieve your target goal? What help or support from me or other departments might you need to reach your target and help your department achieve its quarterly goal?”

3. Agree to the goals in writing. This will establish a baseline, in case individuals or conditions change. It also makes the goal a motivational piece, preventing an employee

Kelly Graves the “Corporate Therapist” Kelly@ProfitWithIBS.com
800.704.3785 / 530.321.5309 www.ProfitWithIBS.com

from being able to claim memory loss or lack of comprehension, if actual performance isn't what it should be.

4. Agree on an intelligent measuring and grading scale.

a. Example of measuring conversation:

“Last quarter our dropped orders were 9%. You and I have agreed that a target of 5% is realistic. We have laid out a plan to help us achieve this. Further, we've agreed that we will measure success with an inventory count in 3 months to determine if our improvement methods were effective....”

b. Example of expectations grading criteria:

i. Meets expectations: *“Our target was to reduce our missed orders from 9% to 5%. We hit our 5% mark”.*

ii. Exceeds expectations: *Our target was to reduce our missed orders from 9% to 5%. We reduced our missed orders to 3.5% over this last quarter.*

5. Provide feedback at least monthly (or more often). Address surprises and deficiencies quickly. This takes the focus of evaluation off the annual monetary (bonus or no bonus) issues and places it on daily performance.

6. Document your comments and findings and share with employee, so there is an ongoing record of progress toward achievement.

Make your performance evaluations pay off. Take the time to plan for:

- ⌚ **Flexibility** – *the performer should be an integral part of the goal setting, on-going evaluation, and, if needed, improvement actions.*
- ⌚ **Timeliness** – *coaching needs to be done regularly and informally with all employees, and direct intervention (whether you call it managing, counseling, coaching) should occur quickly, at the moment performance deviations become apparent, no matter how awkward or unpleasant.*
- ⌚ **Results-based performance evaluation conversations and procedures** – *should reflect specific, measurable, and positive information, directly related to your business goals.*

Through improved performance evaluations and procedures, let us take your organization, your people, and your market share or profits to the next level.