



BOTILMS

Module 8: Conducting Effective Performance Reviews

Annual performance reviews are not just a formality. They're one of the best tools managers have to develop their teams and improve performance. They're not just inevitable—they're essential.

Click on the first lesson below—or the *"Start eLearning"* button above—when you're ready to begin.



What Is a Performance Review?



Myth or Fact?



Preparing for Performance Reviews



5 Tips to Better Communicate Your Performance Reviews



Summary



Knowledge Check

What Is a Performance Review?



When done well, a performance review can be a positive and empowering experience for everyone involved. Some of the benefits of conducting effective performance reviews include:

- 1** **Aligning expectations.** Team members know exactly where they stand in the company and how their actual performance measures up to their expected performance. This knowledge can be empowering and motivating.
- 2** **Being proactive.** Investing the time to review performance and detect problems early also helps you to be proactive in your management strategy. You can challenge or reward team members who are excelling and coach or support those who are struggling.
- 3** **Communication.** Finally, effective performance reviews help to create open communication channels. They're an opportunity to get out of the daily grind and get in touch with your team's goals and needs.

As a manager, you hold the key to reaping these rewards. A performance review is only as useful or useless as you make it. So, in this lesson, learn how to prepare for and

conduct a performance review that's motivating for your team and improves their overall performance.

 **YOUTUBE**



Conducting Effective Performance Reviews

Watch this video to learn six tips for conducting effective performance reviews.

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A **performance review** is a formal evaluation of a team member's general performance as well as their progress toward achieving individualised goals.

The goal of a performance review is to highlight a team member's strengths and successes; identify opportunities for growth or address performance issues; and talk about action steps for improvement. A performance review is also an opportunity for the team member to give feedback or address any concerns that they have, too.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Myth or Fact?



There are a lot of misconceptions surrounding performance reviews. Click through the following flashcards to dispel three of the most common myths:

Myth: Performance reviews are one-sided. Supervisors talk, and team members listen.

Fact: The best performance reviews are two-sided. They're a dialogue between the supervisor and the team member.

Myth: A performance review is an annual stand-alone

Fact: Effective performance reviews are actually a

Myth: You should prepare for a performance review a day or two in advance.

Fact: You should treat performance reviews as a yearlong activity.



Did you catch that last fact? You should treat performance reviews as a yearlong activity. So, if you're scrounging together notes a few days—or even a few weeks—in advance, then you're already behind. In the next section, learn how to prepare effectively for your team's performance reviews.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Preparing for Performance Reviews



A last-minute dash to evaluate your team's performance won't result in a meaningful (or accurate) performance review. Take the following steps to do the proper prep work and conduct reviews that are complete, insightful, and actionable.

Create a Schedule and Publicise It

First, establish a regular schedule or timeline for conducting performance reviews—and then publicise it to your team. Ask your human resources department if your company has a preferred schedule that you should follow. For example, your company's standard practice may be conducting performance reviews at the beginning or end of every year. Try to avoid scheduling performance reviews during your company's busy season if you can.

Once you've confirmed a regular schedule for performance reviews, publicise it to your team. Encourage your team to keep track of their progress throughout the year and remind them when performance reviews are getting close.

Meet One-On-One and Give Feedback Frequently

Too many managers make the mistake of conducting just one performance review every year. It's unrealistic to cover a team member's performance from an entire year in a single, 30-minute or hour-long session.

Instead, meet with team members one-on-one and give regular feedback throughout the year. Consider one-on-one meetings as informal or mini-review sessions. They give you a chance to check in with team members, talk about how they're doing, and address problems as they arise.

"When you see it, say it," is a good motto for managers to adopt when addressing performance issues. Don't wait until the annual performance review to talk about a problem. Meet with the team member as soon as possible to discuss the issue and brainstorm solutions. With regular feedback and frequent one-on-one meetings, team members should never be surprised or caught off guard by the contents of their formal performance review.

Take Notes —

This leads to the next tip, which is to take notes. Keep a file on each team member, and take notes from every one-on-one meeting or feedback session you have with them throughout the year.

Also, make a habit of gathering periodic reports on team performance metrics. For example, if you manage a customer support team, then you might collect data at the end of each month on team members' customer satisfaction ratings. You might even pull a few positive and negative customer feedback responses that each team member received for that month.

Be diligent and consistent with your notes and documentation. Not only will it give you a more comprehensive picture of a team member's progress and performance throughout the year, but it also will increase visibility on how your team is doing at any given moment.

Do Your Final Prep Work —

Finally, start your final prep work for performance reviews at least two to six weeks in advance. Final prep includes the following steps:

- Review the team member's written job description and duties
- Collect all qualitative and quantitative data on a team member's performance
- Complete a written performance evaluation based on the employee's job description, expectations, and performance metrics or observed behaviours
- Prepare your talking points for the meeting

- Give each team member a self-evaluation form with specific prompts to answer and bring to the meeting

Encourage Self-Reflection

Since performance reviews are two-sided, ask team members to complete a written self-evaluation form. The form can include a handful of open-ended prompts, such as:

- *What are your three biggest strengths?*
- *What are the top three areas you could improve in?*
- *What achievement are you most proud of this year?*
- *Where have you fallen short in your career goals or job expectations?*
- *What is one new skill you'd like to learn—or goal you'd like to pursue—in the upcoming year?*
- *How can I better support you?*

Now that you've done the prep work, learn how to structure your performance review meeting in the upcoming section. Meetings should last roughly 30-60 minutes. They should take place in an environment that's quiet, private, and distraction-free.

How to Structure the Meeting

Having a clear structure for your performance reviews will make the meeting go more smoothly and ensure that you don't miss anything. It also allows you to provide ample time for the team member to respond, ask questions, or share their insights with you. Follow these six steps to structure the performance review meeting:

Step 1

Set Expectations

First, open the meeting by setting expectations. Explain the goals of conducting a performance review and why it's beneficial to the team member's professional development. The team member may be feeling nervous, so it's important to set the right tone for the rest of the meeting. Be friendly, transparent, and positive in your communications. Share how performance reviews are an open dialogue. They're designed to celebrate the team member's accomplishments and promote continuous improvement.

Step 2

Ask the Team Member to Share Their Self-Evaluation

Second, open the floor to the team member. Ask them to share the self-evaluation that they prepared for their performance review.

Starting with the team member's self-evaluation will help you both get comfortable, and it will give you important insights into how a team member views themselves. For example, if your constructive feedback echoes how a team member perceives themselves, they'll likely feel less defensive when you agree with them. Or, if your constructive feedback contradicts how a team member perceives themselves, then you'll need to approach it with more sensitivity.

Step 3

Give Your Positive Feedback

After you've had a chance to react and comment on the team member's self-evaluation, you can then transition into sharing your evaluation of their performance. Start with positive feedback. Identify their strengths, highlight their accomplishments, and give praise where it's due.

Celebrate them! Give plenty of time and space for the employee to understand the biggest ways that they've added value or contributed to the company—and to feel appreciated for it.

Step 4

Address Opportunities for Improvement

Next, address opportunities that the team member has for improvement. Are there any performance issues, including unmet goals or expectations? Or, what are your stretch goals to challenge top performers? Always make sure that constructive feedback is backed up with specific examples or data.

Step 5

Invite the Team Member to Respond

This next step is crucial. Invite the team member to respond to your evaluation and feedback. Ask if they have any comments or additional context that they'd like to share with you. Be open to hearing their perspective or interpretation of a situation.

Step 6

Summarise Your Review and Discuss Action Plans

Finally, the last step is to summarise the performance review from a higher level. What are the main highlights or takeaways from the review? Then, discuss the next steps or action plans. Give two to three practical actions that the team member can take—or you can take—to improve.

Summary

Performance review meetings don't have to be overly complicated. Set the right expectations at the beginning of the meeting, and then open the floor to hear the team member's self-evaluation. Then, transition into your own evaluation of the team member's biggest strengths or achievements, followed by the top areas in which they could improve.

Finally, give the team member a chance to comment on your feedback or discuss your evaluation further before summarising the main takeaways from the review and what action steps you both can take moving forward.



Keep copies. Give the team member a copy of the written performance review that they can take with them. Also, keep a copy of both your written performance review and the team member's self-evaluation for your own records.



Complete the content above before moving on.

5 Tips to Better Communicate Your Performance Reviews



Great feedback won't make an impact if it's not communicated in a way that's easy to digest, understand, and implement. Constructive feedback won't change behaviour if it's communicated in a way that makes the other person feel defensive or insulted. Sometimes, it's not what you say, but how you say it, that counts—especially when it comes to delivering performance reviews.

Follow these five tips to better communicate your feedback:



Be specific. Generic or vague feedback such as “you’re doing great” doesn’t add much value. Do you love a team member’s positive attitude and how it energizes the rest of the team? Are you impressed by a team member’s ability to research and synthesise information quickly? Be specific to make feedback more valuable.



Give examples. Back your feedback up with evidence. Share data or give specific examples to illustrate your point.



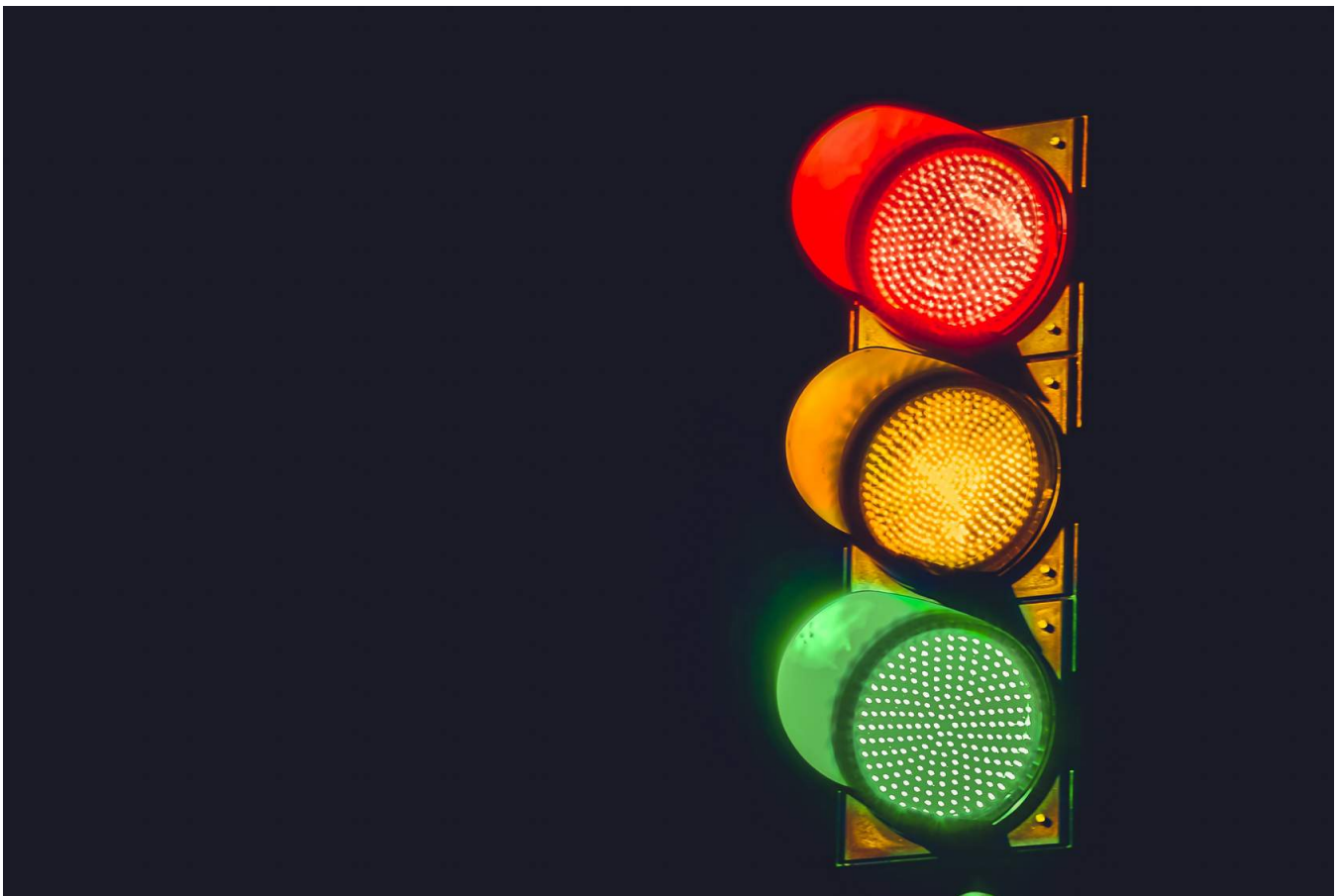
Focus on behaviours—not traits. Another tip is to focus on observed behaviours and results rather than personality traits. Use objective language to describe an unmet expectation. Don’t insult the other person or attack their character.



Don't share your written evaluation beforehand. Don't share your written evaluation with the team member before your meeting. Wait until you talk about it together and provide context in-person or over video chat.



Keep it simple. Don't list all of a team member's achievements or all of their shortcomings. Instead, focus on communicating two to three key messages or themes for each. Make it easy to remember.



Try the start, stop, continue technique. You might find it helpful to try the start, stop, continue technique to make your performance reviews more actionable. This method involves citing behaviours that the team member should start, stop, and continue doing. For example, you might ask a team member to start documenting their processes, stop second-guessing or doubting their work, and continue turning in their reports on time.

CONTINUE

Summary



Great performance reviews are thoughtful, evidence- and behavioural-based, and specific. They highlight just a few, key themes about a team member's strengths and opportunities for improvement. They're also a dialogue, which means that they leave space for the team member to share feedback and comments, too.

The single biggest thing you can do to conduct better performance reviews is to better prepare for them throughout the year. You can also make performance reviews more effective by following these do's and don'ts:

- **Do** conduct regular one-on-one meetings and give feedback to employees frequently throughout the year. An annual performance review should never be the first time a team member is hearing about a performance issue.
- **Do** share your reasoning behind constructive feedback and support it with performance metrics or examples.
- **Do** recognise what works. Highlight the team member's biggest strengths and achievements, and detail how their efforts have made a positive impact.
- **Don't** use emotionally charged or insulting language.
- **Don't** forget to brainstorm one to three practical steps the team member can take to improve.

Finally, **don't** underestimate the power and weight of a performance review for your team. Team members are paying attention, and they're often excited to review their

progress and set new goals. Make it count.



Get a signature. Have the team member sign your performance review at the end of the meeting to confirm that they received it. If you ever need to discipline or fire a team member, then the signed performance review may help to prove that the person was given notice of a performance issue and an opportunity to improve it.

CONTINUE

Lesson 6 of 6

Knowledge Check



Module 8: Review Question

Question

01/01

Review the following feedback and determine which option best describes how it could be improved: "Rowan is argumentative and unreceptive to others' ideas."

- It doesn't need improvement.
- The feedback should be more specific.
- The feedback should focus on behaviours, not traits.
- The feedback should be phrased in a more positive light.