

Performance Appraisals: One Size Does Not Fit All

Performance appraisals, when done right, are valuable tools to focus on work well done, to ignite the desire to continually improve/grow, and to clarify expectations for the future. Is that what you have experienced in giving or receiving an appraisal? No? Why not?

Often there is a “one size fits all” mentality. We know that doesn’t work with clothes and it certainly doesn’t work with people! To be effective, a performance appraisal needs to be given in a way that meets each person’s specific needs for feedback. With four generations in the workplace, this can take time and effort to figure out.

First, it’s beneficial to understand how communication differs among the generations, especially when it comes to giving/receiving feedback.

Traditionalists (born before 1946): This group is sometimes called the Silent Generation, so it’s not surprising that they often feel “no news is good news”. They don’t give feedback often, which can be difficult if they are managing the other generations. At the same time, they don’t expect or need a lot of feedback on their own work.

Baby Boomers (1946–1964): It’s all about feelings and communicating. These ones have a strong need to know how they are doing, and they love feedback, but it needs to be structured and couched in the proper language, planned out, not blunt. This can mean that, when they give feedback, you have to sift through what was said to find the message.

Generation Xers (1965–1981): This group also loves feedback, but they want it and give it candidly, at any time. A once-a-year review is not enough; they want to know how things are going continuously. And if they have feedback to give, you will hear it right away.

Millennials (1982–2000): These ones, raised with the instant access to information and communication, want feedback and praise instantly, even more so than Xers.

Second, after getting these generalities firmly in mind, it’s important to get to know each individual’s particular style and work with that. We don’t want to fall into the trap of thinking “one size fits all” in each generational group. Find out how each one would like to receive feedback – face-to-face, email, phone, formal meeting, informal over coffee, etc.

Another important aspect to consider is instituting self assessments in addition to managerial appraisals. These opportunities for self reflection allow employees to examine their own work and results, and have a greater role in directing their own careers. The

manager will see things from the employee’s point of view and the employees will see things from the manager’s perspective, giving a good starting point for the performance appraisal discussions.

As the appraisal process gets tailored to each individual’s needs, the outcomes of the reviews will be more positive and helpful in advancing careers and companies.



Quotes of the Month

“Feedback is
the breakfast of
champions.”
~ Ken Blanchard ~

“Thank not those
faithful who praise all
thy words and actions;
but those who kindly
reprove thy faults.”
~ Socrates ~

“He that will not
reflect is a ruined man.”
~ Asian Proverb ~

To **subscribe** just email us at
subscribe@dimension11.com

Please send **feedback** to
annette@dimension11.com.
We love to hear what you
have to say.