

Why You Shouldn't Dump Appraisals

www.shaughnessyhowell.com

It is no secret that many managers would like to dump any semblance of appraisal systems that still remain in the depths of their organizational files and leave employee performance to luck and the moon. But it may not be the system itself that is at fault – it may be the way the system is applied.

The performance management system

The key to the success of any performance appraisal system is to make the actual interview one small part of a much larger process for enhancing communication between managers and the people they manage. The process begins and ends with the annual interview and is called a *performance management system*.

"During the annual interview, managers and employees agree on objectives for the coming year and an action plan is set."

- Managers participate in training that includes the handling of face-to-face interviews, conflict management, communication skills and goal setting.
- There is commitment from the most senior levels of the organization supporting the managers' efforts at perfecting the process.
- Accurate, current job descriptions are in place to use as a guideline for developing realistic performance standards.
- A fair, objective, and job-specific appraisal form that measures performance-based data is used at all levels throughout the organization.
- During the annual interview, managers and employees agree on objectives for the coming year and an action plan is set.

- Managers meet with each employee both formally and informally on a regular basis throughout the year to discuss the employee's progress, coach, and assess goals.
- Two to three weeks before the annual interview the employee is asked to complete an evaluation form. This is not so that employees do their own evaluations, but rather that managers be able to compare their assessments with the employees.
- A meeting takes place between the manager and the employee to discuss the employee self-evaluation. The role of the manager is to listen to the employee and clarify understanding of the information, not to discuss its validity.
- The manager then completes the appraisal form, using all of the information collected over the past year.
- The formal interview takes place to summarize what would have been discussed throughout the year. Ideally this discussion is honest and non-threatening in which insights and ideas are shared and goals for the coming year established.

A "performance management system" eases the apprehension of managers by giving them the skills they need to work with their employees. The interview itself is a less frightening experience for employees when its focus shifts from a yearly report card to an honest and fair summary of discussions of the entire year.

