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by Ken Lloyd, PhD

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Ken is a frequent television and talk-radio guest. He has appeared on ABC's *Good Morning America,* CNN, and NPR's *Morning Edition,* as well as KABC, KTLA, and the Fox Morning News "Ask the Expert" segments. He received his BA from UC Berkeley and his PhD in Organizational Behavior from UCLA. He taught for many years in the MBA Program at the UCLA Anderson School of Management, and he continues to lecture at various universities and speak before numerous organizations. Ken is a member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

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Dedication

To Roberta, of course!

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Introduction

As the time to conduct performance appraisals approaches, many managers experience one or more of the following feelings: anxiety, nervousness, nausea, aggravation, frustration, confusion, fear, stress, or dread. Frankly, based on the way that many companies put together their performance appraisal programs, these reactions aren't surprising.

The good news is that today's performance appraisals are user-friendly, easily administered, and an essential component of effective management. Performance appraisal plays a central role in developing your employees and enhancing their performance and productivity. As such, the appraisal process plays a key role in adding value to your employees — and ultimately to your department and your company at large.

And as for those negative feelings aroused by performance appraisal, the antidote is in your hands!

About This Book

I wrote this book to identify every key piece of the performance appraisal process, and to provide up-to-date information and tools to help you effectively manage them. Every chapter stands on its own, and you can jump around this book as much as you like, without missing a beat.

If you're interested in (or concerned by) a particular aspect of performance appraisals, you can flip right to it and hit the page running. For example, if you're interested in how to conduct an appraisal session, there is a chapter just for you. And the same applies if you're interested in knowing more about the kinds of performance appraisals, how to gather the right performance data, how to avoid mistakes, how to follow up with employees, and how to do just about anything else when it comes to performance appraisals.

If you're interested in seeing the best phrases to use in the process, there are nine whole chapters of phrases — more than 3,200 phrases in all — waiting for you!

Conventions Used in This Book

I don't use many conventions in this book, but I do use a couple that you should be aware of:

- Anytime I refer to a Web address, I put the address in `monofont`, to make it easier for you to spot.
- I alternate the use of masculine and feminine pronouns for gender equality.

What You're Not to Read

Although I encourage you to read the whole book, you can still build your performance appraisal skills if you pass on anything marked with the Technical Stuff icon. (For more on icons, see the "Icons Used in This Book" section, later in this Introduction.)

This book has thousands of phrases that you can use when evaluating your employees, but you certainly don't need to read every single phrase. Think of these phrase chapters the way you would any other reference book — search for what you need when you need it and leave the rest for later.

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made a number of assumptions about you:

- **You're responsible for appraising employees.** I assume that you're in a supervisory or managerial position, and that one of your responsibilities is to appraise the performance of each of your employees.
- **You're nervous, anxious, or annoyed with performance appraisals.** And you're seeking new, user-friendly, and

productive ways to carry out your responsibilities in this area.

- **You want to build your performance appraisal skills.** Whether you're new to management or you're an experienced veteran, I assume that you aren't satisfied with your current appraisal skills and you're looking for a way to improve them.

If at least *one* of these assumptions sounds like you, then this book has some sound advice for you.

How This Book Is Organized

I've divided this book into four parts. Although the order of the parts basically follows the same sequencing that you would follow in the actual performance appraisal process, you can easily target any section and find all you need to know without having to read anything that precedes or follows it.

Part I: When It's Time to Appraise Your Employees

This part provides you with the full range of foundational information on the performance appraisal process. I cover the widespread and major roles that performance appraisal plays, as well as the vast array of performance appraisal systems, techniques, and forms, and the effectiveness of each.

Part II: Working Your Way through the Process

In this part, you find the best ways to carry out each of the performance appraisal steps. I give you hands-on information on topics that cover the full range of planning and preparation, gathering and analyzing employee performance data, completing the evaluation forms, and avoiding the most common mistakes.

This part concludes by focusing on the best ways to work with your employees in establishing performance and developmental goals, and then following up with appropriate coaching, guidance, feedback, and support.

Part III: Phrases and Expressions That Work

Part III provides the best appraisal phrases to cover the full spectrum of employee performance. There are over 3,000 such phrases, and they're specifically designed to encourage employees to continue their successful performance, while simultaneously energizing them to make appropriate improvements in areas where problems are found.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

Every *For Dummies* book ends with the Part of Tens, and this book doesn't drop the ball on that tradition. Here, I offer ten powerful words to include in any performance appraisal, and ten employee behaviors that deserve special recognition in a performance appraisal. When you're short on time, this is the part for you!

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, I use three different icons to highlight different points. Here's what they mean:

I use the Remember icon to emphasize a point for you to keep in mind whenever you're conducting appraisals.

The Tip icon highlights particularly effective ways for you to carry out various performance appraisal steps.

The Technical Stuff icon flags information that focuses on, well, technical stuff — in other words, stuff that you can safely skip without missing the main point.

When you see the Warning icon, take heed: This icon marks common mistakes or problems that you can sidestep if you know where to look.

Where to Go from Here

If you're about to begin the performance appraisal process, your first stop should be the beginning of this book, namely Chapter 1. If you're ready to schedule a performance appraisal session, Chapter 6 has all the information you need to cover all the bases. To avoid making the most common mistakes in the process, it would be a real mistake to miss Chapter 7. And if you're seeking the best appraisal phrases for your employees' performance, you can easily find them right now in Chapters 9 through 17. You can use the table of contents and index to locate the information you need — including phrases to use in your written appraisals. Or just dive in anyplace that looks interesting to you!

Part I

When It's Time to Appraise Your Employees

In this part . . .

Performance appraisals play a remarkably wide range of roles. Instead of being an isolated annual event, appraisals are but one component in the overall process of performance management. Within this framework, a state-of-the-art performance appraisal system generates a vast array of positive and productive outcomes.

The chapters in this part show you how appraisals motivate your employees, build their self-insights, and set the groundwork for training and developmental programs, all the while enhancing individual and departmental performance.

You also find a snapshot of the wide range of appraisal systems, techniques, processes, and forms, along with insights into their strengths and weaknesses. Looked at in a slightly different way, these chapters conduct a performance appraisal of the various performance appraisal systems.

Chapter 1

Building Success with Performance Appraisals

In This Chapter

- Facilitating the performance appraisal process from start to finish
- Generating great results with state-of-the-art performance appraisals
- Using performance appraisals to build your employees and their productivity

Many managers see the performance appraisal process as an administrative rite that consumes a lot of time, while producing little more than frustration, confrontation, and piles of paperwork. This reaction is totally understandable if your company is relying on a performance appraisal system that has fallen woefully out of date.

However, as I explain in this book, the performance appraisal process *can* play a remarkably powerful role in building your employees, as well as their performance and productivity — when it's done right.

Part of the problem with the appraisal process is that managers often see it as an isolated annual set of steps that are separate from all other managerial responsibilities. In actuality, today's performance appraisals are integrated into your ongoing managerial functions, year-round.

As a manager, a key part of your role is to maintain strong contact with your employees and provide them with ongoing coaching, guidance, and feedback. These steps are called *performance management.* As part of the performance management process, there is a specific time — typically once a

year — when managers gather all the performance data on their employees, analyze it, document it, and then provide employees with specific feedback. This piece of the performance management process is *performance appraisal.*

Laying the Foundation

In order to take full advantage of the wide range of measurable benefits associated with state-of-the-art performance appraisals, you need to start with a few foundational steps.

Recognizing the roles of performance appraisal

Managers who view performance appraisal as an isolated annual event tend to regard documentation as its sole and primary purpose. Although documentation has a place in the process, it sits beside numerous equally important functions:

- Motivating employees
- Educating employees
- Clarifying performance expectations
- Increasing self-awareness
- Building your managerial skills
- Communicating and reinforcing company values
- Establishing performance goals and developmental goals
- Establishing training and reviewing its effectiveness
- Setting the bases for promotions, transfers, and raises
- Preventing legal problems

I discuss all these functions in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Seeking additional sources of feedback

Most people think that the only source of feedback during the appraisal process is the manager herself. Although the manager's role in the process is central and essential, the quality and effectiveness of the entire process is significantly upgraded when two additional sources are included.

These two primary additional sources — self-evaluations and 360-degree feedback — provide insights that lead to the continuation of excellent performance and improvement of sub-par performance.

Turn to Chapter 3 for more on these types of feedback.

Strengthening your role

As your employees' manager, you play the central role in the performance appraisal process, because you're still the primary source of feedback.

In order to effectively carry out this responsibility, one of the most important foundational steps is to have a clear understanding of the different types of performance appraisal systems that are available, along with the pros and cons of each. This information helps you understand, enhance, and succeed with any system that you may be using.

Here are your options for performance appraisals (all of which I cover in greater detail in Chapter 3):

- Essays
- Graphic rating scales
- Checklists
- Forced choice methods
- Employee ranking
- Critical incidents
- Behavioral checklists
- Management by objectives

Successfully Navigating through the Appraisal Process

With the foundation in place, you can take some specific preparatory steps that help set the stage for highly effective and productive performance appraisals.

Generating the right mindset and the right plans

As I explain in Chapter 4, an essential step in the appraisal process is to establish a performance appraisal mindset in which you:

- Truly see yourself as the leader.
- Set positive expectations regarding the entire process.
- Take productive steps to identify and overcome any fear or reluctance you may be experiencing regarding the appraisal process.

TIP

By applying specific strategies to build your self-awareness and empathy, you'll greatly enhance your understanding of your employees as well as your skills to appraise them. When you combine these steps with some advance planning, anticipation of the kinds of questions you may encounter, and preparation of the kinds of answers that you can provide, you reduce your personal reluctance and increase your confidence.

Accumulating and examining performance data

In order for your feedback to have relevance and a lasting impact, you must base it on specific examples of employee performance. You can't glean this information from quick visits with your employees, nor is it accessible at the last minute.

As I explain in Chapter 5, accurate appraisals require a real understanding of your employees' performance throughout the evaluation period. The only way to effectively reach that high level of understanding is by sharpening your observational skills, continuously managing by wandering around, and using all your senses in the process.

In addition to carefully monitoring your employees' performance, you can enhance the quality, reliability, accuracy, and acceptance of your performance appraisals by familiarizing yourself upfront with other important pieces of data as well (such as job descriptions, last year's appraisal, performance objectives, notes you've been taking, employee files, and previous performance evaluations).

WARNING!

Marginal data gathering leads to useless feedback, which leads to employee resistance.

Preparing evaluations

After you've reviewed all the performance data from a variety of sources, the next step is to complete the evaluation form. These forms vary from one company to another, but some overarching principles will help you handle this step more easily and effectively. Some of these steps include evaluating your best employees first, entering your written comments before the numerical ratings, and considering how your employees will feel when they read your comments.

WARNING!

Your comments will generate resistance if they're invalid, unsubstantiated, or focused on personality instead of performance.

Conducting highly effective appraisal sessions

After you've completed evaluation forms with ratings that are based on direct observations of your employees' performance, behaviors, and results, you're ready for the face-to-face performance appraisal sessions.

Because you're providing your employees with feedback, coaching, and guidance throughout the evaluation period,

your employees already have a clear understanding of how they've been performing on the job, so you've all but eliminated the likelihood of resistance or defensiveness during this meeting.

Some of the key steps that will help make these meetings even more successful include

- Understanding your objectives for the meeting itself
- Setting an agenda
- Practicing any comments that may be difficult to express
- Bringing your notes and relevant forms and files with you
- Entering with positive expectations
- Preventing interruptions
- Scheduling sufficient time for the appraisal
- Selecting a private venue for the appraisal

As you hold appraisal sessions, you also need to take some key steps when opening the discussions, giving your employees opportunities to talk, engaging in active listening, reviewing objectives and results, analyzing critical incidents, discussing strengths and areas needing improvement, going over the final rating, and properly concluding the sessions — all of which (and more) I cover in Chapter 6.

Avoiding mistakes

As you navigate through the performance appraisal process, be sure to note and avoid the common errors that can instantly undo all your efforts in this area. As I outline in Chapter 7, some of the strategies to identify and deal with these errors include

- Accurately assessing recent events
- Removing bias and stereotypes
- Ending the halo-and-horns effects
- Thinking twice about first impressions

- Understanding the contrast effect
- Controlling your emotions
- Avoiding the central tendency and skews
- Eliminating labeling, arguing, defensiveness, excessive talking, postponed sessions, and surprises

Taking follow-up actions

Although some managers believe that the appraisal process ends when the performance appraisal session ends, that ending is actually more of a beginning.

With the evaluations completed, you'll have plenty of data to use in developing real goals with your employees (namely, goals that are clear, specific, prioritized, challenging, measurable, and supported by action plans). In order to be truly effective, these goals should be in sync with company goals as well as your goals, and they should be designed to enhance your employees' performance, productivity, and development.

With these goals in place, your next step is to manage by wandering around and providing your employees with ongoing communication, coaching, guidance, and feedback. By doing so, you'll be able to keep your employees on track to meet their goals. You'll also be able to identify and correct any number of departmental issues before they become serious problems.

With the appraisal process functioning as but one component in the performance management process, a cycle is actually developed: First, you and your employees jointly establish and agree upon specific performance and developmental goals. Then you provide ongoing coaching and feedback throughout the evaluation period. When the time for performance appraisals arrives, both you and your employees know exactly how they've performed, so you have no difficulty creating the evaluation or conducting the face-to-face sessions. And after you've completed those sessions, the goal-setting process starts anew. Chapter 8 contains a detailed discussion of this cycle and the follow-up actions you need to take.

Using Effective Phrases and Expressions

Your written comments in the performance appraisal process offer an excellent opportunity to present compelling, long-lasting, and motivational feedback to your employees. In order to do so, the phrases you use must be specifically designed to energize your employees to continue and even surpass their excellent performance, while simultaneously helping them to understand and upgrade their questionable performance.

The best way to reach this objective is to identify the key areas of performance and then provide powerful phrases that target the full range of employee behaviors. With this in mind, Chapters 9 through 17 provide more than 3,200 such phrases.

With a state-of-the-art performance appraisal system in place, backed up by the best phrases to use in this process, you're in an excellent position to enhance the performance and productivity of your employees, your department, and your company.

Chapter 2

What Performance Appraisals Do for You and Your Team

In This Chapter

- Unlocking unexpected motivational powers
- Providing education through evaluation
- Fulfilling administrative needs

Picture yourself as an archer, your bowstring fully extended and ready to sail an arrow toward the target 50 yards down the range. You carefully aim and let the arrow fly. But this is a different kind of range — you can't see where your arrow actually lands. You have no way of knowing if you hit the target or the bail of hay behind it. As a result, you don't know what to improve, how to improve, if you're actually improving, or whether you need to improve at all. What you do know is that archery is no longer interesting, motivating, or fun.

Welcome to life without performance appraisals.

Everyone needs feedback. Without it, you have no way to learn, grow, and fully reach your potential.

The problem is, many managers see appraisals as annual rituals that drag them and their employees away from their work, seemingly satisfying no one but the human resources department. And this feeling is natural — after all, most businesses haven't taken the time to explain the purpose of appraisals or train their managers in how to conduct them.

Performance appraisals shouldn't be isolated events that stand starkly removed from the rest of your managerial responsibilities. As a manager, you're communicating with your employees on a regular and frequent basis. You're providing them with assignments, updates, information, and feedback on their work. You may even be writing up their performance on various projects during the course of a year.

By taking these steps, you're engaging in what's called *performance management.* And within the framework of performance management, there is one point each year when you provide your employees with formal and documented feedback regarding their performance. That piece of the process is called the *performance appraisal.*

If I told you I knew about an easy-to-use managerial strategy that improves employee motivation, focus, insights, and growth, you'd probably be intrigued — especially if that strategy were free. Good news: Performance appraisals have all these intriguing advantages, and many more!

In this chapter, I explore the rationale behind performance appraisals. I also give you steps you can take to easily, seamlessly, and effectively incorporate performance appraisals into your managerial style.

Harnessing the Motivational Power of Appraisals

Motivation is the process that energizes employees and propels them to pursue their goals. Well-designed and well-executed performance appraisals have a strong motivational impact. Appraisals have the power to motivate employees because they provide a number of interconnected benefits:

- **They demonstrate the need for improvement.** If employees don't have a clear understanding of how they've been performing, they can't be motivated to make any improvements. After all, if they haven't been told that there are issues regarding their expertise, their communication, or the quality or quantity of their work, and if they don't sense that any improvements are needed,

then they certainly won't be motivated to work harder in these areas.

- **They meet higher-level psychological needs.** Researchers continue to find that recognition is one of the most powerful forms of motivation for large numbers of employees. Although you can find numerous possible sources of recognition on the job, performance appraisals are an opportunity for employees to receive formal, significant, and enduring recognition from their manager. This prospect is particularly energizing for that large percentage of employees who have strong needs in this area.
- **They build a sense of personal value.** When managers take the time and effort to carefully review, analyze, document, and discuss performance with employees, the underlying message to the employees is that they're important and valuable, and this alone is quite rewarding, whether the feedback is positive or not.
- **They enhance personal development.** Performance evaluations are motivational for employees who are looking to enhance their personal learning, growth, and development. Appraisals are a highly valuable source of information, insights, and tools necessary for such progress. Performance appraisals are similarly motivational for employees whose needs are centered on achievement, goal attainment, and sensing personal effectiveness, respect, and trust.
- **They turn employees around.** When employees are performing poorly, performance appraisals can provide the wakeup call that they need to get refocused and reenergized. Perhaps a struggling employee has been given a verbal warning, and maybe she was written up along the way. This type of negative documentation is often perceived as self-serving for the company, and it can easily generate resentment, anger, and defensiveness, none of which is much of a precursor to improved performance. With performance appraisal, however, the purpose of the session is not strictly disciplinary, so the employee is more likely to walk in with a more receptive and open mind. As a result, your comments regarding an employee's questionable performance have an excellent chance of being heard and generating action as a result.
- **They increase satisfaction.** When performance appraisals meet the employees' needs in such areas as gaining

> recognition, sensing achievement and competence, experiencing growth, and meeting objectives, they're also contributing to the employees' job satisfaction, and this is one of the most important elements at work today. When employees are satisfied, some of the most visible indicators are reduced turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness.

On the flipside, when employees are subjected to a shoddy or even nonexistent performance appraisal system, the opportunities to fulfill these higher-level employee needs are substantially reduced.

If you think about this in psychological terms, when the employees' needs are not being met on the job, employees are likely to try to meet them elsewhere. The result can be joining another company or simply spending less time on the job and more time on activities that *do* meet their needs — and those are the very pursuits that can cause them to miss work or be less than productive when they're at work.

Just as a solid performance appraisal system is motivational, the lack of such a system undercuts motivation and fosters a growing sense of dissatisfaction, frustration, and confusion. Employees who aren't given regular performance appraisals become hapless archers who don't know where their arrows have landed.

Educating while Evaluating

Performance appraisals are also important because of the numerous ways in which they contribute to employee education and development.

In order for anyone to learn, he needs to receive feedback on his performance. Performance appraisal is an outstanding educational tool because the entire process is based on providing feedback. Employees learn a great deal about themselves through performance appraisal, whether the appraisals take the form of self-evaluations or evaluations from their managers, peers, and others in the workplace. (For more information on the types of appraisals, turn to Chapter 3.)

TECHNICAL STUFF

Feedback: Would you like a little formality with that?

There are actually two types of feedback:

- **Informal feedback:** Informal feedback is brief and intermittent advice, typically provided spontaneously or in a casual discussion. When you provide your employees with informal feedback, it's often regarded as passing news that may or may not require much attention or action. Your employees may hear what you're saying, but you have no guarantee that they're actually listening or learning.
- **Formal feedback:** Formal feedback is a planned and structured discussion in which the objective is to give the employees clear and specific information regarding their performance. This automatically means that your employees' attention levels are more likely to be turned up and tuned in. Employees enter this session with the expectation that they're about to receive key information regarding their performance. This expectation sets the stage for them to listen more attentively to what you're saying.

In this section, I fill you in on the many ways in which performance appraisals can help your employees — and you! — learn and grow.

Setting expectations

When an employee starts a new job, she's typically provided with a job description that spells out her responsibilities and functions, which, ideally, helps her understand *what* she's supposed to do. But in order to perform at peak levels, employees also need to know *how* they're supposed to work. This type of information is not usually found in a job description, but it's critical when the time comes for the employee to be evaluated.

A performance evaluation plays a powerful educational role by providing employees with an essential counterbalance to

their job description. By understanding the content of the job description as well as the content of the performance evaluation, an employee is armed with full knowledge of the meaning of excellent performance. This knowledge can actually help draw out such performance.

Building self-awareness

Performance evaluations have the unique power to help employees throughout the company build their self-awareness, whether they're being evaluated or doing the evaluating. The better that employees truly understand themselves, the better they'll be able to learn, grow, and perform on the job. If their self-insights are marginal, their work is likely to be marginal, too.

Generating insights for your employees

A well-crafted performance appraisal is one of the most powerful tools for increasing your employees' self-awareness. With greater understanding of their strengths and weaknesses on the job, it's far easier for them to be more focused, goal-oriented, and productive.

TIP

An effective way to teach your employees is to focus on them as individuals, instead of taking a one-size-fits-all approach to education. As an educational process, performance appraisal is 100 percent focused on your employees as unique individuals.

Although most of life's experiences offer a degree of learning, there is a random aspect to many such experiences. Incorrect, inappropriate, or meaningless lessons can be learned at any time, often leaving a person on the sidelines, in the wrong game, or generally out of it. But this doesn't happen with performance appraisals. When they're conducted properly, information is direct, factual, and specific, and it's tailored to just one person (namely, the employee you're evaluating).

REMEMBER

The feedback that your employees receive during a performance appraisal has extra credibility for one main reason: You're providing it. Employees are more likely to believe and internalize your comments because you've observed and analyzed their performance, and because you're one of the most important people in their lives. If you're unsure about this, just ask them.

Points of reflection

When you look at yourself in the mirror at home, you're essentially getting a look at yourself from one perspective. Granted, it's an accurate view, but it isn't the *complete* view. If you have full-length folding mirrors that allow you to see yourself from many different angles, you're sure to get a more thorough look and a good deal more information, for better or for worse.

The same principle applies to performance appraisals. The feedback you provide to your employees essentially holds up one mirror that gives them a look at themselves, while feedback from others in the workplace holds up many mirrors from entirely different perspectives. With all this additional data, there are great opportunities for additional self-awareness and growth.

And if your company's appraisal system gives employees the option to complete self-evaluations, there are even more opportunities to build self-awareness. When employees take the self-evaluation option seriously, they tend to spend some quiet time truly thinking about their performance, productivity, skills, knowledge, and other key elements that are central to their jobs. The mere act of sitting down and looking honestly at their work not only helps them understand their performance on the job, but also helps them understand themselves.

At the same time, when employees take this option casually and automatically rate themselves as outstanding in every category, the opportunities for self-awareness will arrive when you sit down with them and paint a more accurate picture.

And if your company's appraisal process includes feedback from the employees' peers and subordinates, the opportunities for self-awareness and growth are multiplied.

Generating awareness for yourself

As a manager in the performance appraisal process, you have three key opportunities to build your *own* self-awareness. (You didn't think your employees were the only ones who had something to learn, did you?)

- The feedback that you receive from your own manager can be a major help in strengthening your self-awareness, just as your comments do for your employees.
- If you opt to complete a self-evaluation form, you, too, are afforded the opportunities for self-awareness that accompany this step in the process.

- If your company uses a 360-degree feedback program (see the nearby sidebar, "Points of reflection"), your peers, employees, and others in the workplace can enhance your self-awareness on a wide range of workplace behaviors, including planning, organizing, communicating, delegating, and leading.

With a greater understanding of how you're perceived in these areas (and in many others that are part of managerial performance), you, too, now have the advantage of looking at yourself in many mirrors. You can truly see yourself as others see you, and that is one of the premier building blocks for self-awareness.

Increasing your managerial effectiveness

While you're carrying the various responsibilities that are part of the performance appraisal process, you're also profiting from one of the less apparent roles that this process plays. By definition, in order to conduct effective evaluations, you need to have finely tuned observational skills. Without such skills, your reviews will be full of misstatements and mistakes, and the one-on-one sessions with your employees will miss the mark. When you have excellent observational skills, you're empowered with accurate firsthand data, one of the true keys to building successful evaluations.

TIP

Managers quickly learn that one of the best ways to gather accurate data about their employees is to engage in a highly regarded practice called *managing by wandering around.* This doesn't mean having constant face time with your employees every day, but it does mean that you get out of your office frequently and visit with your employees in their work areas.

When you take these steps, you end up creating a mental grid for yourself in which you can file the behaviors and actions that you observe. And the more frequently you use this framework with your employees, the more astute an observer you become.

REMEMBER

As you spend time in a department gathering performance appraisal data, an important byproduct is that you're likely to gather firsthand information about new developments,

problems, issues, and concerns. In many cases, these matters may not have been brought to your attention until they've morphed into full-blown crises.

Plus, face time with your team has a positive impact on their motivation and morale. When a manager spends time with her employees, the employees simply feel better. The unspoken message is that the employees are important and valuable, and that's a message you want to convey.

There is more to observation than meets the eye. If you really want an accurate picture of employee performance, think about observing with *all* your senses. The next time you wander through the work area, turn up your antennae and concentrate on what you're seeing, hearing, touching, and even smelling. In every respect, this is a sensible way to manage. (Turn to Chapter 5 for more on managing with all your senses.)

Transmitting company values

Performance appraisals educate the employees on the company's culture. For example, some companies place a premium on independence, creative thinking, and assertiveness, and language in their appraisals reinforces these types of behaviors.

Other employers may speak glowingly of their support for such behaviors, but they don't mention them in their performance appraisals. In fact, in such companies, these behaviors may be viewed as trouble-making, boat-rocking, or arguing. Their reviews may emphasize such qualities as "obedience," "respect," and "following company procedures."

Performance appraisals spell out valuable information regarding the behaviors that are valued and rewarded in the company. If employees want to succeed and thrive in a given company, paying attention to which company values are highlighted in their performance appraisals is essential.

Understanding and meeting goals

A performance appraisal is an excellent time to confirm that the employees understand your goals, as well as the goals for your department and the company at large.

Employees are often provided with this information when they join a company, but that can be the first and last time that they ever hear anything about it. Performance appraisals offer the perfect time to clarify and reinforce the company's objectives and align the employees' goals with your goals.

The better your employees understand the objectives, especially reasonably challenging objectives, the more motivated they'll be to meet them.

Defining a career path

When employees receive performance-based feedback through the appraisal process, it's as if they've plugged into a navigation system that pinpoints their exact location on their career path. But employees need to know more than where they are — they need to know if they're on the right road, and if that road is taking them where they want to go.

Through the appraisal process, you gain a better understanding of each employee. This insight is generated from the most valuable indicator of a person's strengths and weaknesses — namely, her behavior. People can talk about performance, standards, and goals, but their performance on the job speaks much louder.

With in-depth knowledge of each employee, a manager is in the perfect position to work with an employee to help set the most appropriate career path and objectives. Employees should be receiving some of this feedback on a regular and informal basis throughout the year, but performance appraisals guarantee that they receive a current road map at least once a year.

REMEMBER

When performance appraisals are overlooked or given short shrift, employees will still be on a career path — but their navigation system will be turned off.

Identifying training needs and evaluating the results

Before you implement any educational program, whether conducted on the job or in sessions that are held off-the-job,

the most critical step is to determine the areas in which your employees actually need to be trained. The data that you generate through performance appraisals provide a solid basis for determining training and educational needs, whether on an individual or departmental basis.

For example, maybe you find a significant number of evaluations that point to problems in teamwork and cooperation. This finding would highlight a need for training in these areas, such as a team-building program. On the other hand, if the performance review data indicate that there are no teamwork or cooperation problems, even the best team-building program in the world will be of only marginal value.

In the world of training, excellent programs are described as having a high degree of *transference,* meaning that the information learned in these programs can be readily applied to the attendees' jobs. Training that is conducted without consideration for the employees' needs is destined to have minimal transference at best, and this means minimal interest, attention, and learning. For example, in order to perform more effectively on their jobs, apparel designers don't need training on tax laws.

When a training program is completed, one key step is to evaluate its effectiveness. And one of the best ways to do this is to compare performance evaluations prior to and after the training. If the evaluations included consistently low ratings and negative comments on teamwork and cooperation prior to the training, while the ratings and comments became more positive in later evaluations, then the training most likely worked. However, if later evaluations show that the ratings and comments remained poor or even dropped, then the issue needs to be revisited.

When employees are provided with clear and specific examples of performance where they fell short, and they understand the consequences associated with continued poor performance, their interest in taking corrective steps is significantly enhanced. As a result, they enter an educational program as motivated learners, which is essential for learning to occur.

Aiding Administration

Performance appraisals play a key role in several administrative areas. As a result of the data generated through the appraisal process, you're better able to make good decisions about a wide range of matters that directly impact your employees, your department, and the company at large.

These decisions, many of which are life changing for the impacted employees and critical for the organization, are best based on facts, and one of the best sources of such facts is performance appraisals. With accurate hard data in hand, employment-related decisions are easier for managers to make — and they're easier for employees to understand and accept.

Setting the groundwork for promotions

One of the strongest motivators that many employees bring to the job is focused on being promoted.

As manager, you can look back on an employee's performance over a given period and have a general impression regarding his promotability. However, if you base a promotion decision on feelings rather than findings, you actually generate difficulties in three distinct arenas.

- **Problems for the promoted employee:** Without accurate performance data, you're likely to promote the wrong person. In such a case, the outcome is obvious. Namely, she's likely to fail. This creates an entirely new menu of problems that await you, such as extra time monitoring, coaching, counseling, disciplining, and perhaps terminating this individual. Plus, you've lost an employee who probably was performing satisfactorily in her original position and became just a marginal person in the newly filled position.
- **Problems for the employee who is not promoted:** By promoting the wrong person, you've most likely also upset at least one other person in the department — namely, the person who deserved to move up the ladder.

This person is likely to be upset and believe that promotions in the department are unfair and arbitrary. These types of feelings eat away at an employee's motivation, commitment, and performance — which means one of your best employees is now dissatisfied.

- **Problems for the rest of the team:** Employees get a strong sense of which co-workers are actually deserving of promotions. When they see a promotion decision that ignores a truly outstanding co-worker, they too develop doubts about the role of equity and merit in the department. Such doubts can chip away at their attitudes and job behaviors as well.

When the wrong person is promoted, dissatisfaction is promoted throughout the department.

Setting the groundwork for job transfers

A transfer can be a great way for an employee to advance his career and undergo a significant growth experience. Although the new position may be essentially at the same level as the employee's current position, a transfer allows him to have an expanded opportunity to learn, acquire new skills, work with different people, and possibly open a wider and more suitable career path.

If you have a job opening and an interested employee asks to be considered, whether through a job-posting system, internal advertisement, or simply word of mouth, you'll need some accurate performance data in order to make a good decision. Certainly some important information can be gleaned by an interview, but the decision needs to be based on more than a friendly conversation.

Assuming there is mutual interest, the next step is to speak with the applicant's manager. Just keep in mind that any number of factors can contaminate the data that the manager provides. For example, that manager may be upset that her employee wants to make a change, which could lead to some biased comments.

Here's where performance appraisals again enter the scene. When you're looking at an employee who wants to

be transferred, one of the best steps is to review all the appraisal data on him. And if you have multiple applicants, this approach can help you put all of them on a level playing field, matching each against the other on comparable work-related skills and behaviors.

Establishing meaningful raises

The raises that you provide to your employees can lead to positive, neutral, and negative reactions, all heavily influenced by the performance appraisal process itself.

Garnering bravos for the raises you give

With solid performance appraisal data, you can look back at clear, specific, and consistent measures of performance for each employee on your team. Instead of trying to recall how an employee did or simply relying on gut feel, a state-of-the-art performance appraisal system allows you to accurately focus on such factors as quality, quantity, communication, cooperation, attendance, and much more. As a result, you're able to base your raise decisions on factors that are fair, consistent, and tailored to individual performance.

When raises are based on accurate, fair, and measurable behaviors and outcomes, all your employees are literally on the same page. With a clear link between performance and pay increases, the entire process becomes more transparent, equitable, and motivational.

One of the major sources of pay-related dissatisfaction is not the actual amount of an increase. Instead, the dissatisfaction emanates from what is called *pay equity*. For example, a person may be satisfied with a raise until she finds out that a co-worker with less skill, training, or productivity has received an equal or larger raise. When this happens, that satisfying raise instantly morphs into a source of dissatisfaction, frustration, and demotivation. You can prevent this from happening by making sure that the raises you grant are clearly related to your employees' performance.

Dodging rotten tomatoes after you hand out raises

If raises appear arbitrary or unfair, employees view them negatively. When employees believe they've met all the criteria for a specific raise, but they're granted a lower raise for no apparent reason, their reaction will be a combination

of dissatisfaction, disappointment, distress, and resentment. And these feelings aren't likely to energize employees to put forth extra effort in the future.

In fact, when an employee believes that he is under-rewarded, he has a conscious or unconscious tendency to get even with the company. The attitude goes something like this: "If they're going to shortchange me, I'm going to shortchange them." And employees do this by cutting back in such areas as quality, quantity, commitment, and dedication.

On the other side of the coin, believe it or not, employees generally don't like being over-rewarded. When they receive a raise that greatly exceeds their expectations, their reaction is not necessarily positive. In these scenarios, many employees experience a combination of guilt, nervousness, and anxiety. They don't sense the feelings of competence and accomplishment that accompany a reasonable raise, and they wonder if there are strings attached to this unexpected windfall.

Putting your employees to sleep with your raises

Sometimes raises elicit a ho-hum response from employees, indicating that the pay increase neither dissatisfies nor energizes them.

This response is typically what you see when all employees receive essentially the same raise, year after year. In this scenario, the raises are simply expected, and the employees believe that they're automatically entitled to them. When raises have nothing to do with performance, they actually become background noise. Employees typically receive them with a shrug, and there is no measurable positive impact on motivation or performance.

The employer spends money and gets nothing in return. And by the way, the only time these raises impact employee behavior is when an employer eliminates them. So, although such raises have no motivational power, the raises will demotivate employees if they're reduced or removed.

Preventing legal problems

One of the less obvious but equally important roles of performance appraisals comes from the legal protection that they can provide.

Evaluations without raises

Some managers wonder if they should conduct performance evaluations when an employee isn't going to be given a raise. Maybe the employee doesn't deserve a raise, or maybe the company's financial situation has led to a freeze on all raises. Either way, evaluating performance is still very important.

If an employee's raise is being denied because of performance issues, the evaluation helps the employee understand not only the specific areas in which she has fallen short, but also the consequences of her actions or inaction. The process also gives an employee the key tools that she can use to do better in every respect in the future.

Employees should also be evaluated if financial developments have caused a company to freeze raises. Even if there is no raise, all the motivational and administrative benefits of the process still apply. Plus, when employers opt to eliminate performance evaluations during tough times, other problems develop down the road. For example, when raises are reintroduced, there can be confusion over how to reward employees when no evaluative data exists.

In today's workplace, you must fairly, fully, and formally document employee performance before you take any kind of action — positive or negative, promotion or termination. Such documentation is extremely helpful in preventing legal claims and in dealing with claims if they're made.

The documentation associated with performance appraisals can clearly demonstrate that decisions on such matters as work assignments, transfers, promotions, and raises were made on the basis of performance and merit.

At the same time, if an employee is struggling on the job and is ultimately terminated, the data and feedback in his performance review will provide strong documentation showing that the employee was well advised regarding performance issues, and was equally well informed regarding the consequences of continued questionable performance.

REMEMBER

If an employee is terminated and she's surprised, don't be surprised if she considers legal options.

Chapter 3

The Types of Performance Appraisals

In This Chapter

- Building on self-evaluations
- Capitalizing on the input of others
- Strengthening your skills with a full range of appraisals

Performance appraisals come in three main categories: feedback from the employee himself; feedback from the employee's co-workers and customers; and feedback from you, the manager. In order to generate the most thorough and accurate feedback for your employees, the best approach actually combines all three components.

The feedback that you provide is a critical part of the process, but it isn't necessarily the first step in the annual performance appraisal. You can build a better foundation for your feedback by first gathering performance data from two other workplace sources: the employee who is about to be evaluated, and the employee's associates.

In this chapter, I walk you through each of the three types of evaluations, showing you how they work together to give you the full picture of an employee's performance.

Feedback from the Employee: Self-Evaluations

One of the most powerful ways to open the evaluation process is to have your employees do a self-evaluation. There is

nothing complicated about this step. All you need to do is give the employee a blank copy of the exact form that you're using and ask her to complete it for herself.

Encourage her to truly think about her performance during the year and to be totally honest and forthright. In addition, let her know that you'll be carefully looking over her self-evaluation and you'll be considering her ratings and comments when determining her performance appraisal.

Be sure to tell your employees that this isn't a bargaining game, where their 5 and your 3 for the same factor average out to a 4. They should be as honest as possible and not overrate themselves to try to balance out a low score they expect to receive from you.

Some companies exclude the self-evaluation step altogether, while others merely recommend it. If your company offers the option to include self-evaluations, seize the opportunity and ask all your employees to evaluate themselves. The advantages of self-evaluations cover a broad spectrum:

- **They demystify the process.** When employees sit down and complete the same evaluation form that you'll be using, any mystery in the process is immediately wiped out.
- **They help employees focus their behavior.** The better employees truly understand the criteria on which they're being judged, the better they're able to target their efforts on the job.
- **They send a motivational message.** Employees view the opportunity to evaluate themselves as an indicator of respect and trust and as a sign that their ideas and inputs are important and valued — all of which motivates them to work harder and care more.
- **They improve communications.** Your understanding of your employees' appraisals leads to a more open, focused, and effective discussion when you meet with them.

If you've given an employee a low rating on a factor that he sees as an area of significant accomplishment and success, the discussion can become tense, argumentative, and sidetracked. By reviewing an employee's self-evaluation

in advance, you'll be able to either prepare for this difference of opinion or make an adjustment in this particular rating (for example, if you somehow overlooked some compelling aspects of the employee's performance).

Especially revealing are the areas in which you've rated your employees higher than they've rated themselves. Don't lower your rating just because you came in higher than your employees. Instead, discuss this point with them — it's a great opportunity to provide recognition and support.

The way in which employees approach self-evaluations is quite revealing. Whether they realize it or not, self-evaluations are actually work assignments. Employees who simply plug in all the same scores and make no effort to elaborate on their ratings are giving you additional insight into their work ethic, attitude, and motivation.

Feedback from Others: 360-Degree Feedback

You can learn a great deal about the performance, productivity, and overall effectiveness of your employees by gathering feedback from selected associates at work.

Known as *360-degree feedback,* this evaluative technique provides employees with performance-based feedback from a dozen or so anonymous raters in the workplace — including peers, subordinates, additional members of management, customers, and vendors — all of whom have had work-related dealings with the employees being evaluated.

These raters are asked to complete questionnaires that focus on the performance of individual employees. There is no single and widely accepted form or format for 360-degree feedback, and the approach varies in terms of areas probed, numbers of questions, and types of questions.

Some of the forms that the evaluating individuals complete are lengthy questionnaires with hundreds of questions, while other forms have fewer than 20 questions. Some forms are developed and implemented internally, while other forms are the work of outside experts.

The underlying premise of 360-degree feedback is that if one manager can gather meaningful data about an employee from the top-down angle, a significant amount of additional performance data can be gathered by looking at an individual from all the other angles and degrees.

A professionally operated 360-degree feedback program can be an excellent source of feedback for whoever is being evaluated. But what to do with this feedback is hotly debated among human resources experts. Some experts contend that 360-degree feedback should be part of an employee's formal appraisal, while others contend that such data should be limited to employee development.

The resolution to this conundrum is for you to carefully consider any 360-degree feedback that you obtain as part of the performance appraisal process and use it as a source of additional data but not as a *key* factor in determining ratings. Because you've been managing by wandering around and providing your employees with ongoing coaching, feedback, and guidance, you already have a clear idea of their performance. The data from 360-degree feedback can help support the ratings that you provide.

Besides, employees tend to be receptive to feedback from their peers and others at work when such information is used for training and development, but they tend to be less comfortable with the prospect of having peers and other individuals impacting their evaluations, raises, or promotions.

Feedback from You

Several performance appraisal systems exist, from classic to cutting-edge. Some of these systems work better than others, and there is some overlap among the various systems. The most successful systems are tailored to the companies in which they're used. No matter what performance appraisal approach your company uses, there is one element that can make any of them work better, and that element is *you.*

If you do all the following, you're likely to generate highly effective evaluations:

- Keep the evaluation process transparent.
- Jointly establish fair and challenging objectives.
- Maintain a high degree of contact and communication with your employees.
- Engage in regular coaching.
- Focus on behaviors and results.
- Use meaningful and appropriate phrases when providing feedback.

In this section, I cover the various types of appraisal systems your company may use.

Writing essays

If the word *essay* gives you the same queasy feeling that you had in high school English class, you're not alone. Essays were among the earliest performance evaluation techniques — and they're among the most trying as well.

As the name implies, this approach consists of little more than a manager's written overall opinion of each employee's performance. Under this system, when the end of the year rolls around, a manager is typically handed a form that reads something like, "Please evaluate your employee's performance during the year." The rest of the page is blank — and, interestingly enough, so is the manager's face. Armed with little more than a hint of guidance, the manager writes whatever comes to mind.

For managers who find writing to be a chore, and evaluations to be a bore, the write-up typically contains a few scribbled points that may or may not relate to the employees' performance. Such comments are generally off the cuff, off the top of their heads, and, as a result, off target. There is no reason to assume that such information will have even a hint of accuracy, relevance, or usefulness to employees.

The situation isn't much better for managers who are more verbose. They may fill up the page with words, but all of it may be irrelevant. The form doesn't provide a framework for them to follow, nor are they given any direction regarding rating criteria and focus. As a result, their essays tend to

be filled with impressions, biases, distortions, and rambling comments that run far astray from the real meaning of performance appraisal.

Whether the essay-writer is terse or wordy, you can only imagine what a one-on-one session with the evaluated employee would be like. With the essay written by the minimalist, the evaluated employee will feel short-changed, ignored, and insulted. And in the session conducted by the purported wordsmith, the evaluated employee will be instantly defensive and ready to argue each point vociferously. Neither scenario sets the stage for an open discussion in which actual performance, behaviors, and outcomes are discussed and reviewed.

When an evaluation form provides no structure in terms of topics, techniques, and criteria, the raters can provide highly impressionistic feedback that can easily wander far from work itself. This type of form can lead to biased and discriminatory comments (whether intentional or not), which can lead to legal problems for the company.

There is still a place for essays in the evaluation process — but not lengthy diatribes, and not at center stage. Instead, today's essays should be short, focused, and performance-related, and they should be provided along with your rating or ranking of your employees. At the heart of these mini-essays are the specific, targeted, job-related phrases that are among the most powerful tools for performance appraisal and improvement — the kinds of phrases I provide in Part III of this book.

Using graphic rating scales

Graphic rating scales are among the most common tools in the performance appraisal process. They typically contain a list of the following, which employees demonstrate on the job:

- **Traits and characteristics:** Traits and characteristics are parts of an employee's personality. As such, they tend to be quite stable and unlikely to change over time, especially as the result of a performance appraisal.

Rating scales that focus on traits and characteristics tend to run into trouble. Traits and characteristics are difficult to identify, measure, and evaluate, and there isn't much an employee can do with feedback in this area. For example, when you give an employee a low rating in "self-esteem," she can't go back to her workstation and start working on that.

- **Competencies:** Competencies are the overarching, measurable, and observable attributes deemed necessary for successful performance on the job. Depending upon the position, they can include such topics as knowledge, supervisory skills, communication, and problem solving.
- **Actions and behaviors:** Actions and behaviors are the specific, observable, and measurable behaviors that employees have taken in the course of carrying out their job responsibilities. Feedback in this area is factual and performance-based. This type of feedback is easier for employees to understand, accept, and act upon.
- **Results:** Results are the benchmarks, outputs, and objectives that your employees achieve. Feedback in this area is clear, specific, measurable, accurate, and based upon the employees' meeting specific agreed-upon standards. Appraisals that focus on objectives are easier for you to structure, because the data speaks for itself. At the same time, appraisals in this area help employees focus their attention on the right targets, which can be motivational as well.

The forms usually include a numerical scale, often from 1 to 5, indicating whether the employee is outstanding, excellent, competent, marginal, or unsatisfactory in each described area.

Some of these forms also include a section where you can write comments and phrases to further describe the employee's performance. This is where you would include specific examples, supporting data, and meaningful phrases to support the ratings you provide (see Part III).

Graphic rating scales offer several advantages:

- The forms are easy to design for most organizations.
- The forms have a clear rating scale, with a description of the level of performance associated with each numerical ranking.
- The forms are easy to complete, and they don't take much time.

One main problem with graphic rating scales occurs when they focus on traits and characteristics rather than performance. Other problems are caused by errors that managers make when completing these forms (see Chapter 7).

Choosing checklists

Another basic evaluation method relies on checklists, the most common of which is a broad listing of work-related behaviors, characteristics, and outcomes. With this list in hand, you place a checkmark indicating "yes" or "no" next to any of the descriptors that apply to the employee who is being evaluated.

A variation on this method is the weighted checklist. This approach uses the same process, but the descriptors in the checklist are given different values based on their role and importance in the employee's position.

In either case, you total the scores and determine the employee's overall rating.

The checklists approach is a quick way to evaluate an employee. It can be used to evaluate employees in any position.

At the same time, the checklists approach has some noticeable deficiencies:

- **It's incomplete.** Some key outcomes and performance measures can be missing from the checklist, while other measures don't lend themselves to the simplicity of a "yes" or "no" response.
- **It's uncontrolled.** Without specific performance indicators, various biases can enter the equation.

- **It's muddled in the middle.** Managers can encounter additional difficulties when using this approach for employees who are neither stars nor strugglers — people who fall somewhere in between a definite "yes" or "no" response.

Forcing the choice

Some managers have the tendency to give many employees the same ratings, whether positive, neutral, or negative. Although this problem can be addressed by training, some employers opt for an appraisal method called *forced choice.*

Under the forced choice approach, managers use a list that contains several groupings of four statements. Each of the four statements describes a work-related behavior. Developed through careful prior analysis (typically conducted by outside specialists), two of these statements (the weighted ones) are most typical of the performance of excellent employees, and the other two statements are unrelated to the performance of excellent employees. However, they all look equally positive to the manager doing the evaluation.

For each grouping of four statements, you select any two statements that appear to best describe the employee you're evaluating. When you select either or both weighted statements, the employee's appraisal score is increased. When you select the non-weighted statements, there is no impact on the employee's score.

The good news is that there is greater objectivity when you don't really know how positively or negatively you're rating your employees. Without the influence or distraction of specific rating scales, you're more likely to focus on behaviors rather than scoring. Plus, this method eliminates the tendency to give all employees the same rating.

Still, there are some downsides to consider:

- The actual process of determining the groupings of statements calls for considerable technical expertise, which can be costly.
- This approach can leave out some of the specific behaviors associated with the quality and quantity of an employee's work or attainment of goals.

- The process can be annoying to complete, especially when managers feel forced to select an inaccurate option when none of the statements applies.

When the design of an evaluation form overlooks important behaviors and provides no leeway for a manager to tailor his responses, the most likely outcome is an evaluation session that is uncomfortable for the manager and his employees.

Ranking employees

Referred to as *multi-person comparison methods,* these appraisal strategies match each employee's performance with that of her peers and then generates a rank order from top to bottom.

In some cases, comparing employees can be based on any number of criteria conjured up by the managers themselves. In fact, it can be as basic as asking managers to rank their employees from the best to the worst. In other cases, the ranking process and strategy can be more focused, structured, and sophisticated.

TIP

Multi-person comparisons work best when you have large departments or groupings of employees in the same evaluation unit.

Forced distribution

The forced distribution approach is a lot like that high school or college class you had that was graded on a curve. In the workplace, the manager doing the evaluating is supposed to look at each employee's performance, compare it to the performance of the employee's peers, and then place each employee in an appropriate percentile grouping — slotting the top 5 percent to 10 percent in the "excellent" group, the bottom 5 percent to 10 percent in the "poor" group, 15 percent in the "fair" group, 15 percent in the "very good" group, and the balance in the "competent" group.

WARNING!

Some companies believe in the forced distribution approach so strongly that they terminate employees who land in the bottom group.

Here are the advantages of forced distribution:

- It eliminates the possibility of a manager giving all employees similar or equal ratings, whether unduly low or unduly high. By definition, the evaluations are going be spread out from highest to lowest, even if the range is quite narrow.
- The forced distribution scale forces managers to put some serious thought into their evaluations.
- This approach is more likely to highlight the real factors that are used to measure success in a company.
- Some employers contend that this approach leads to higher-caliber employees, especially if the bottom ranks are eliminated each year.

On the flip side, here are some of the drawbacks to the forced distribution approach:

- It can have a negative impact on teamwork because employees sense that they should set aside any notion of working as a cohesive entity, and instead focus their attention on outdoing, outperforming, and outshining their co-workers whenever possible.
- If the program is used for several years, the bottom 10 percent has been getting better and better, and the prospect of continuing to eliminate employees in this grouping can have a chilling effect across the company.
- This approach may not be successful in laying the appropriate groundwork for employee development and growth.

Pairing up

A second well-known multi-person comparison method is called *paired comparisons.* With this approach, the manager pairs an employee with another person in his department or work unit; then he looks at the pairing and chooses the better performer from the pair. He pairs the better employee with another employee in the department, and evaluates that pair to see who is the better performer. As employees continue to be matched up in pairs with each other, the manager continues to choose the better performing individual.

When all the possible pairings and selections have been made, it's time to total things up. Employees who are selected more frequently move toward the top of the list, while those who are selected less frequently drop toward the bottom. Ultimately, there is a rank ordering of employees from the highest to the lowest. Those at the top receive the top rewards, such as raises, while those at the lower end receive lower-level rewards, if any at all.

This approach prevents all employees from getting the same ranking, and it can be used in many departments across a company.

At the same time, this process can easily be subjective, and factors other than performance can leak into the mix. In fact, popularity can play a greater role than performance.

Finding critical incidents

Critical incidents are a special category of employee behaviors that focus on two distinct areas: particularly outstanding behaviors and particularly questionable behaviors. The critical incidents method of performance appraisal is based on managers spending time during the year observing and gathering behavioral data on their employees, while looking extra carefully for those critical incidents.

At the end of the year, the managers take out all their notes on these critical incidents and categorize them as either positive/satisfactory behaviors or negative/unsatisfactory behaviors. An employee's rating is then heavily influenced or even determined by which pile of data is taller — the satisfactory or the unsatisfactory.

Here are the advantages of the critical incidents approach to performance appraisal:

- **It's based on direct observations.** The greatest strength of this approach is that performance evaluations are based on actual performance that is observed firsthand by the employee's manager.
- **It's time-tested.** In this approach, managers gather data over a full year, so it's less likely to be influenced by a mad last-minute scurry for data or the undue impact that can be associated with an employee's most recent behaviors.

- **It provides more face time.** By definition, the critical incident approach encourages managers to spend time on the floors with their employees, which allows them to provide more coaching, guidance, and feedback, while also learning more about overall developments in the department

On the other hand, the critical incidents approach has some drawbacks:

- **It delays the giving of feedback.** In order for feedback to be truly effective (whether the feedback is positive or negative), it should be linked as closely as possible to the behavior in question. With critical incidents, a greater emphasis may be placed on gathering data and tallying it than actually using it to inform, educate, and motivate employees.

  As the distance between behavior and feedback increases, the value of feedback decreases.

- **All satisfactory and unsatisfactory behaviors are not equal.** Throughout the year, a person may display many excellent behaviors but only one unsatisfactory behavior. In that case, her pile of satisfactory behaviors would be much greater than her pile of unsatisfactory behaviors. But weighing the number of satisfactory behaviors against the number of unsatisfactory ones can lead to an erroneous conclusion if the one unsatisfactory behavior cost the company its best client, or its computer system, or its line of credit.

  In order to increase the accuracy and utility of the critical incident method, managers who use it should attach a numerical value to each positive and negative behavior.

- **Although managers should engage in managing by wandering around, the critical incident approach can cause managers to spend too much time on the floors.** If the manager is constantly wandering around with his employees, the employees can start to feel as though the team is being micromanaged.

Going paperless

Many companies rely on paperwork for completing, communicating, and documenting performance appraisals, but a burgeoning industry is offering a wide range of Web-based applications to cover virtually every aspect of the performance appraisal process. With these paperless solutions, it's easier for managers to:

- Oversee, coordinate, and expedite the appraisal process.
- Eliminate masses of paper and paperwork.
- Collect and analyze a wide range of performance data.
- Maintain high levels of employee involvement in every step of the performance appraisal process.
- Track the employees' progress toward their goals.

There are several outstanding providers of online performance appraisal tools and systems. The pricing of these online solutions varies by provider and by the programs and tools that you select. The best approach is to visit the Web sites, look over the range of offerings, and find out more about features, benefits, and costs of the solutions that appeal to you.

Some of the best providers are the following:

- **EchoSpan (`www.echospan.com`):** EchoSpan offers a full range of Web-based feedback and evaluation tools that you can easily customize and implement, including 360-degree feedback, goal-setting and management, dashboards that facilitate the process, tailored reports, and expert advice.
- **GroteApproach (`www.groteapproach.com`):** GroteApproach offers online performance appraisal software with a library of competencies that you can tailor to your company, self-evaluations, a dashboard to track the process, 360-degree feedback, online approvals, and the full range of reporting.
- **Halogen Software (`www.halogensoftware.com`):** Halogen offers a full array of performance appraisal software that is Web-based and includes highly customizable forms, dashboard reporting, goal setting and management, competency libraries, and career planning.
- **SuccessFactors (`www.successfactors.com`):** Tailored more to businesses in the small to mid-size range, this Web-based performance management solution includes a broad range of tools such as online evaluations, 360-degree feedback, goal planning and setting, and reporting through a customizable dashboard.

Using rating scales tied to behavior

Instead of relying on behaviors that can be appraised in any position in a company, one well-known appraisal method takes the process into a different arena and bases evaluations on specific behaviors required for each individual position in an individual company. This approach is known as *behaviorally anchored rating scales* (BARS).

Development of BARS evaluations requires an in-depth understanding of each position's key tasks, along with an understanding of the full range of behaviors displayed by individuals in carrying out such tasks. You rate these behaviors for each employee; then you anchor each behavior to points on a rating scale, which indicates whether the behavior is exceptional, excellent, fully competent, or unsatisfactory. The result is a rating scale for each task.

For example, in a hypothetical position of human resources coordinator, one of the job holder's responsibilities is to complete status change notices, which update the personnel system regarding changes in employee pay, position, title, supervisor, and personal data. The BARS method for this specific task in this specific job could read as follows:

5 — Exceptional performance: Accurately completes and submits all status change notices within an hour of request.

4 — Excellent performance: Verifies all status change notice information with requesting manager before submitting.

3 — Fully competent performance: Completes status change notice forms by the end of the workday.

2 — Marginal performance: Argues when asked to complete a status change notice.

1 — Unsatisfactory performance: Says status change notice forms have been submitted when they haven't.

The BARS approach offers several key advantages:

- **It's behaviorally based.** The BARS system is totally focused on employee performance. Ideally, it removes all uncertainty regarding the meaning of each numerical rating.
- **It's easy to use.** The clear behavioral indicators make the process easier for the manager to carry out and the employee to accept.
- **It's equitable.** With its heavy emphasis on behavior, the evaluation process comes across as fair.
- **It's fully individualized.** From the standpoint of consistency within a company, BARS is designed and applied individually and uniquely for every position.
- **It's action-oriented.** With an understanding of the specific performance expectations and standards of excellence, employees can much more easily take steps to improve their performance, and they're more likely to do so as a result.

Like any method, BARS isn't perfect. Here are some of the drawbacks to the BARS approach:

- **The process of creating and implementing BARS is time-consuming, difficult, and expensive.** Each BARS form must be created from scratch for every position in the company.
- **Sometimes the listed behaviors still don't include certain actions required of the employee, so managers can have difficulty assigning a rating.**
- **It's high maintenance.** Jobs change over time, which means that BARS requires a high degree of monitoring and maintenance.
- **It's demanding of managers.** In order to successfully conduct BARS evaluations, managers need detailed information regarding the actions of their employees. Gathering such data can be quite time-consuming, and many managers end up letting this slide.

Managing by objectives

Another well-regarded and widely used approach to performance appraisal is called *management by objectives* (MBO). By definition, under this method, you evaluate your employees on the basis of results.

MBO is more than performance appraisal — it's a construct for managing the entire organization. Its breadth includes the organization's vision, values, strategies, goals, and performance measurement.

MBO begins with managers at the top of the company setting goals. Then managers and employees at each successively lower level develop their own goals. Employees' goals are designed to support the goals of their own managers. In this way, the entire organization is linked together in the pursuit of objectives.

The focus is on outcomes that are clear, specific, measurable, and supported by action plans, benchmark dates, and deadlines. All aspects of the goal-setting process also apply to the employees' personal and developmental goals, such as building their skills or knowledge base.

After employees meet with their managers to establish their goals and action plans, the employees return to work newly energized and focused on specific short-term and longer-term targets. Simultaneously, their managers monitor the employees' performance, provide coaching and support, remove barriers or help employees overcome them, and make adjustments and course corrections as necessary. The employees' performance and progress are clear, measured, documented, and transparent every step of the way.

Employees are highly motivated through MBO because they've been able to actively participate in the process of setting goals, instead of simply having the goals dumped on them. Their involvement in this type of decision making helps meet many of their higher-level needs for accomplishment, achievement, recognition, and self-worth.

When the time arrives for the annual appraisal, there is no mystery or surprise in the evaluation — a plus both for managers and the employees they're evaluating. With MBO, employees clearly know how they've been doing along the way because they've been given regular managerial feedback starting from the point when the objectives were originally set. Because employees know where they stand, they aren't likely to be resistant, argumentative, or defensive.

As part of the annual appraisal process, employees and their managers establish objectives for the coming year, and the cycle starts anew.

TIP

MBO brings a wide range of advantages to the appraisal process:

- **It helps build relationships between managers and employees.** MBO includes a great deal of contact and communication between managers and their employees, which builds camaraderie, communication, and trust — all key elements in strengthening teamwork.
- **It fosters a comfortable climate in the workplace.** MBO helps build an atmosphere of respect and trust within a given department and beyond.
- **Because managers work directly with employees to identify and solve problems, MBO improves the quality of decision making and problem solving.**
- **It's fair.** Employees are evaluated on the basis of their performance and attainment of goals, which is regarded as fair and energizing.
- **It's quick and easy.** Performance evaluation forms associated with MBO are a breeze to complete. Typically, they spell out each objective as established at the beginning of the cycle, and then provide a space for the manager to summarize the results.

Some MBO forms also include a scale that asks for a numerical assessment of the employees' success in meeting their goals. These scales guide the managers in the rating process by including specific descriptions of excellent, good, fair, and poor levels of goal attainment.

Part II

Working Your Way through the Process

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant

"How'd my performance appraisal go? She said I was supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, and if you can tell me what that means I'll tell you how it went."

In this part . . .

The chapters in this part provide you with hands-on tools to make performance appraisals smooth, functional, and highly effective. Starting with the steps you should take to prepare for evaluations, these chapters carry you through data gathering and analysis, planning and logistics, and ultimately conducting highly productive appraisal sessions.

Although tipping points and tripping points await unwary managers, these chapters show you how to easily prevent or manage all of them. They also tell you what to do after you've completed the evaluations. This part is where you find the great benefits that are associated with goal setting, managing by wandering around, and providing your employees with ongoing coaching.

With these strategies, you'll literally and figuratively be in a great position to build your employees' performance — and build your employees as well.

Chapter 4

Getting Started

In This Chapter

- Developing a mindset that strengthens the appraisals you provide
- Preparing yourself for any questions your employees might ask
- Organizing the appraisal process

With so many appraisal forms, techniques, and strategies at your command, you can easily become sidetracked and overlook the most important element in the entire performance evaluation process: *you!*

Researchers continue to find that, although it's obviously important for companies to select and implement performance appraisal systems that match their culture, style, and standards, the individual who conducts the evaluations is the key factor in determining the effectiveness of the system itself.

TIP

Think of your company's performance appraisal system as a car — in fact, think of it as a high-performance car. And think of yourself as the driver. If you're not driving the car or the appraisal process, neither will go very far.

Building Your Evaluation Mindset

Before you start looking at your employees, you need to look at yourself. In order to provide the most relevant, compelling, credible, and effective appraisals, you need a mindset that is fully supportive of the process. Managers who approach performance appraisal as a ritual, a chore, or an isolated event undercut their own effectiveness before they even start.

To have the right mindset, you need to:

- See yourself as a leader.
- Set positive expectations.
- Overcome your own fear, reluctance, and resistance.
- Gain self-awareness.
- Empathize with your employees.

With this foundation in place, you'll be in a much better position to understand and analyze your employees' performance and, ultimately, to help each individual achieve greater productivity, growth, and satisfaction.

Seeing yourself as a leader

One of the primary reasons that managers struggle with the performance evaluation process is that they haven't mentally crossed the bridge to management. Perhaps they were promoted over their workplace friends, maybe even long ago, but they still see themselves as part of the old group rather than as a member of management.

These managers are the ones who don't want to give their employees any negative feedback because they're afraid that their friendships will be disrupted. For these managers, being liked is more important than being a leader.

TIP

If you're concerned about upsetting your employees because you have to deliver negative performance-related feedback, you haven't fully crossed that bridge to management. And until you do so, the evaluation process is going to be uncomfortable for you and meaningless for your employees.

Managers who want to be effective leaders while simultaneously remaining buddies with their employees find that these two desires don't mix. By continuing to play the buddy card, they undermine their influence, power, and ability to guide the team to meet its goals. Plus, instead of coming across as likable, managers who act this way appear weak.

A manager needs to act like a manager, and that includes providing employees with honest, accurate, job-related feedback, especially during the performance appraisal process. Acting like a manager generates something more important than popularity: It generates respect — and managers who are respected tend to be well liked.

Unless you see yourself as a manager, your employees won't see you as one — and they won't accept or act on the information you give them during the performance appraisal.

Setting positive expectations

Your expectations are directly linked to your employees' performance and, hence, to the performance appraisal process itself. Why? Because your expectations have a measurable impact on how your employees ultimately perform on the job. Not only do you need to have accurate expectations, but the expectations you set for your employees need to be positive.

If you expect an employee to perform poorly, you telegraph that expectation in many subtle and not-so-subtle ways:

- **On the subtle side, your body language can clearly signal your negative expectations.** You may have the perpetual hint of a frown when communicating with the employee. Your brow may be furrowed, your arms may be crossed, and you may even shake your head in an almost imperceptible way.
- **On the not-so-subtle side, you may talk and behave in a way that clearly communicates your negative expectations.** You may speak curtly; frequently use the word *no* in your comments; give better assignments to other employees; and give minimal signs of thanks, appreciation, and recognition.

Your employees pick up *all* these cues — whether subtle or obvious. They internalize your cues and act accordingly, which leads to negative attitudes and diminished performance.

At the same time, when you expect your employees to do well, you deal with them in an enthusiastic, upbeat, and supportive style. You tend to smile and nod more, and your speech is likely to be more animated and filled with the word

yes, as well as with encouraging phrases. The work you assign and the feedback you provide tell the employees that they're terrific, and they respond with terrific performance.

Think of expectations as self-fulfilling prophecies.

Your expectations have a major impact on your employees' performance and ultimately on the evaluations that you conduct.

As you prepare yourself to appraise your employees, think of your employees as individuals, and then consider the expectations that you've established for each one of them. You'll find that the employees for whom you have low expectations are, indeed, the weaker performers, while the better performers are the employees for whom you have high expectations.

The annual performance appraisal is a perfect time to take a careful look at your expectations for all your employees and then commit to building more positive expectations for each of them. Be sure to express positive expectations during the performance appraisal process.

Overcoming fear, reluctance, and resistance

When you're confronted with the prospect of several performance appraisals looming on the horizon, you may feel queasy. In fact, some of the more common reactions that managers have to performance appraisals are fear, reluctance, and resistance.

If you're experiencing any of these emotions, the best way to dig yourself *out* of them is to dig *into* them. After all, if you carry these feelings into the performance appraisal process, they'll carry you and the process far from where you want to go.

Eliminating fear

Fear is an emotion that is aroused by imminent danger — whether real or imagined. In the case of performance appraisals, fear belongs in the imagined file. Instead of sensing that there may be significant danger in the various stages of the appraisal process, managers have more mundane fears that can hold them back, such as:

- **A fear of looking foolish:** Managers who have this fear are primarily concerned that their ratings, comments, and face-to-face appraisal sessions will put them in situations that highlight their lack of knowledge, lack of accurate information, and even lack of managerial skills.
- **A fear of confrontation:** Some managers are also afraid that their one-on-one sessions with their employees will turn into arguments and disagreements. Instead of opening the door to these encounters, some managers simply opt to provide unwarranted positive reviews to avoid confrontation. Unfortunately, these reviews don't do anyone any good.

Providing undeserved positive reviews in order to avoid a confrontation doesn't qualify as a method of *overcoming* fear. Actually, it's a method of *surrendering* to fear.

Fortunately, there are two major steps that you can take to help yourself overcome your fears about conducting performance appraisals:

- **Spend more face time with your team.** Not only will this strategy help you gather the factual, specific, and job-related performance data you need to create and provide a valid evaluation, but it will demonstrate to your employees that you aren't pulling data out of thin air.

  In every respect, your firsthand knowledge provides you with first-rate confidence.
- **Become an expert in your company's performance appraisal system.** If you're thumbing through the documents and rating forms the night before an evaluation, you're likely to miss key points, emphasize the wrong points, and move in a direction that has nothing to do with the evaluation or its objectives. Plus, your employees will react negatively to any or all of these indiscretions, bringing out the very behaviors that you fear.

A key source of fear is a perceived lack of power. When you have in-depth knowledge of your employees' performance and the appraisal system, your fears will be alleviated — because knowledge is power.

Just as your expectations about your employees' performance will strongly influence how they ultimately perform, the same applies to your expectations about how the performance appraisal process will go. If you enter the process expecting an embattled exchange, that's precisely what you're likely to get. On the other hand, if you approach the process with positive expectations, it's far more likely to go well.

Eliminating reluctance

Managers who are reluctant to provide performance reviews aren't necessarily *afraid* of conducting appraisals. They're just hesitant, tentative, and likely to defer the process until a later date — a much later date.

One of the primary sources of this reluctance stems directly from a manager's prior experiences with performance evaluations — both the kind they gave to other employees and the kind they received from their own managers:

- **Problems with reviews you gave:** If you've had difficulties providing performance appraisals in the past, you're likely to feel reluctant to give another appraisal now. Perhaps you gave reviews based on information that wasn't fully substantiated, or maybe you had to give an employee a negative review when he expected a great review. Either way, the outcome most likely was conflict. And now you're reluctant to enter the ring again. That reaction is a normal one — after all, you don't want to repeat a less-than-pleasant situation.
- **Problems with reviews you received:** You can also experience reluctance about conducting performance appraisals if you had a particularly dissatisfying experience when you were on the *receiving* end of an appraisal. Perhaps you had a manager who evaluated you unfairly or focused on traits and characteristics that had nothing to do with your performance. Because you don't want to put your employees through this type of ordeal, you're reluctant to appraise them at all.

By definition, *reluctance* is not an absolute refusal to conduct the process. Instead, it's a hesitancy to do so until you reach more of a comfort zone. You can take a couple of key steps that can help you get to that place of comfort:

- **Set goals for yourself.** When you carry out most of your other managerial functions, you establish specific objectives, strategies, and deadlines — do likewise for performance appraisals. Try to determine the measurable outcomes that you'd like to achieve from this process, and spell them out in specific terms. These objectives can focus on actual improvements in employee performance, upgrading of employee skills, and achieving greater results.

  When you include specific objectives and an action plan as part of each appraisal, your reluctance will decrease. You're implementing the appraisal process similarly to your other managerial functions.

- **Practice.** A second important way to overcome reluctance is to build your appraisal skills. One way to do this is to conduct a mock evaluation session with one of your fellow managers or your company's human resources (HR) representative. The practice will increase your comfort level with the process, and the feedback provided in this mock session will help fine-tune your skills and confidence.

Eliminating resistance

When managers resist performance appraisals, they flat-out oppose it. Typically, resistance doesn't have anything to do with being afraid. Instead, managers who resist appraisals tend to believe that the process is an unnecessary intrusion on their time or that it doesn't provide them with useful results.

When some managers first look at performance appraisal materials, their brains go immediately into overload. The result is that they either close the file or set the pile aside. This step, also known as avoidance, does nothing to help them. In fact, although they may physically remove the performance appraisal materials, they still know that the appraisals must be completed. And whenever that thought resurfaces, the queasy feeling returns, along with another round of avoidance.

For some managers, conducting real performance appraisals is very different from what they've been doing in the past, which leads to additional resistance — they want to avoid change. (See the "Resistance to change" sidebar for more on this topic.)

Resistance to change

Some managers resist performance appraisals because appraisals call for a change in long-term and well-established daily behaviors. It doesn't take long for someone to say, "Well, it's human nature to resist change." But believe it or not, this may not be the case.

If you were told that you were going to experience a gigantic change in your life, a change so profound that it would definitely change your relationship with your employer, family, friends, and community at large, would you resist it? Well, it's human nature to resist change, so the answer must be "yes," right?

But what if this gigantic change is that you just won the state lottery and a cool $50 million? That's probably a major change for you, but would you resist it? If not, how can it be human nature to resist change?

The answer is clear: Change itself is not automatically resisted. But people do resist the unknown elements of change. When a change is being introduced, people instantly wonder how it'll impact them. And when the change is filled with unknowns, they resist it.

The best way to reduce resistance to change is to make the entire process more transparent. The more people know about the change, the more they're able to make an intelligent judgment about the best way to react to it. This applies to any change that people encounter in life, including the actions that they're expected to take in the course of a performance review. Taking the time to practice the evaluation process is a great way to reduce your resistance to it.

If you find that your approach to the performance appraisal process is best described as resistance, you can take two key steps to help remove this barrier:

- **Consider the advantages.** Instead of approaching the appraisal process as a time-consuming exercise with minimal usefulness, take a look at the potentially positive outcomes associated with it, especially in terms of advantages for you. For example, with a well-tuned appraisal process, your employees are likely to be more satisfied, energized, and productive, which means that your department will be more successful.

  At the same time, if you resist the process, the likelihood of these outcomes will diminish, and you'll be forced to spend more time trying to focus and motivate your

team. In fact, you're likely to spend more time on *those* efforts than you would have spent on the evaluation process.

- **Demystify the process.** Grab the appraisal materials by the horns and read them. One particularly effective strategy is to sit down with a couple of managers or even the HR representative and do a point-by-point run-through. As you'll no doubt find, the process is not as daunting as you thought. And as your familiarity and understanding increase, your resistance will decrease.

Gaining self-awareness

Effective performance appraisals require managers to have considerable insight into their employees, but this task is virtually impossible for managers who lack insight into themselves. When self-awareness is lacking, managers easily miss the main event when appraising their staff and focus on performance issues that are secondary, off the mark, or simply meaningless.

At the same time, self-awareness is a personality trait that employees and managers can't just snap into place overnight. Upgrading skills in this area takes time, focus, and practice. Still, if you want to carry out excellent performance appraisals, you need to address your self-awareness and, if necessary, do some building in this area.

One of the most valid and effective sources of information that can strengthen your self-awareness is the feedback that you've received over the years. Here's the catch: If you've been in denial mode and deflected all negative feedback, you've blocked out information that could help you see yourself more accurately, make some upgrades, and ultimately see others more accurately as well.

TIP

With that in mind, one of the best ways to build your self-awareness is to carefully consider the feedback that you receive from the credible sources in your life. This doesn't mean that you have to roll over every time someone says something about you that doesn't sit well, but it does mean that you should truly *listen* to what others are saying and then try to make an honest judgment.

Walking the walk

One of the key ways in which your self-awareness directly impacts your performance appraisals is the extent to which you literally and figuratively "walk the walk" that you expect of your employees. The more you understand yourself in this area, the more effective your evaluations will be.

For example, if you have a casual attitude toward safety and your employees are well aware of your lackadaisical comments and behaviors in this area you won't have much credibility and impact if you try to emphasize safety when evaluating your employees. This applies to *every* component of the performance evaluations that you provide.

As a manager, you need to continuously monitor the degree of consistency between your behaviors and the standards you're using to evaluate your employees' performance:

- **Your self-evaluation:** Regardless of whether your manager requires you to complete a self-evaluation, do one — even if it's just for yourself. This self-evaluation will give you a hands-on opportunity to see whether you're truly performing at least at the level that you expect of your own employees. Go through every component of the evaluation process and look honestly at your specific performance on each factor.
- **Your support for the process:** In order for your performance appraisals to have real significance, you need to not only get actively behind them but also let your employees know that you're doing so. If you make offhand negative comments about the appraisal process, or if your evaluations run late, your employees will respond in kind, not only verbally but behaviorally.
- **Your questions:** In order to continue to build your self-awareness, ask yourself the following key questions — and answer honestly. As you do so, the self-portrait you paint will help you see and evaluate the work of your employees more accurately.
  - What are my greatest strengths and weaknesses?
  - What am I most and least proud of at work?
  - What is my greatest success? What is my greatest failure?
  - How would my manager describe me? How would my co-workers describe me? How would my employees describe me? How would my friends describe me? How would my family describe me?
  - What steps am I taking to continue my growth and development?

If the feedback you receive starts to fall into a pattern or common theme, you should definitely give it a second thought, or even a third. In particular, pay attention to feedback from:

- **Your manager:** Part of your manager's job is to observe and evaluate your performance, which requires her to learn a lot about you. Your manager probably gives you feedback throughout the year, as well as during your performance review. If you want to build your self-awareness, take this feedback to heart.
- **Your co-workers:** Your fellow employees spend a lot of time with you every day. Some of the feedback they provide may come out during informal conversations, but you may also have the benefit of their insights through a 360-degree feedback program as well (see Chapter 3 for more on 360-degree feedback). Either way, your co-workers have lots of data on your personality and performance. Their comments, insights, and suggestions are definitely worth considering.
- **Your friends:** By definition, true friends are open and honest with each other, which means that they can provide you with feedback that can enhance your self-awareness. When you're with your friends, you're free to be yourself — certainly more than you are in the workplace — which means that your friends see a much wider range of your behaviors. As a result, when friends give you feedback, it's worth hearing.
- **Your family:** Your family knows you in an entirely different context, but — like it or not — your family does know you. For some people, feedback from family members is wrapped in so much emotional baggage that it's difficult to accept. Nonetheless, if you truly want to build your self-awareness, try to set some of your own baggage aside and listen to what they have to say.
- **Professionals:** If you've taken any tests during the employment process — including tests in such areas as personality, math, reading, job knowledge and aptitudes, and even physical abilities — go back and look at that data. If you've ever met with a career counselor or mental health professional, take a second look at what he said to you as well. Because these are professional observations, they merit some extra observation from you.

- **Yourself:** The messages that you give yourself will provide you with some of your most compelling self-insights. Maybe you're too hard on yourself, or maybe you don't expect enough from yourself. Either way, listen to what you say to yourself during the course of the day. Each message gives you one more piece of useful data.

If you pause to look at your behaviors and listen to your own messages, you can gain significant insight into your confidence, self-image, ethics, attitude, self-control, communication skills, interpersonal skills, energy, and much more.

Empathizing with your employees

Empathy is the quality of sensing the feelings and thoughts of other people. As you may expect, empathy is a particularly valuable and desirable quality for any manager to have.

During the performance evaluation process, your ability to feel what your employees are feeling will help you craft written and verbal feedback that will be more meaningful and useful to them. When employees sense that you feel what they feel, their trust in you increases, as does their acceptance of your messages.

Managers who are low in empathy tend to resort to a one-size-fits-all style of appraisal, but they soon find that this approach doesn't fit at all.

Although you can't develop empathy overnight, you can take some steps right away to upgrade your skills in this important area:

- **Understand your own feelings.** The better you understand your own emotions and feelings, the better you'll be able to experience the emotions and feelings of others. You can build your abilities in this area by stepping back and taking a good hard look at yourself in situations in which your emotions are actively in play. Feedback from the significant others in your work life and personal life can also help you strengthen these abilities.
- **Widen your network.** The more people you know, and the more varied and diverse the situations in which you

place yourself, the greater your opportunities will be to enhance your ability to empathize with others. As you experience the ways in which others display empathy, you can learn from their examples and try to emulate their behaviors.

- **Practice empathy.** In the various interactions that you have with others, whether in the workplace or in your personal life, try to direct your thinking onto what other people may be feeling, sensing, and seeing.

TIP

The more you can see and experience the world from the perspective of those around you, the more compelling and effective your evaluations will be.

Playing the "What If?" Game

By identifying the most difficult questions that your employees can ask during the appraisal process, and then coming up with answers to those questions, you increase the likelihood that your evaluation sessions will be successful.

Many of today's highly successful salespeople try to come up with the most difficult questions that a customer can ask and then develop solid answers to them. This is called the "What If?" game, and it applies to the performance appraisal process as well.

Being stunned by an employee's questions isn't pleasant; neither is stumbling around for answers. By reviewing some of the more frequent questions that employees ask during the face-to-face sessions, along with sample answers, you increase your likelihood of keeping your appraisal sessions on track and on target.

REMEMBER

The following answers may not be perfect for your individual situation, but they can give you an idea of the direction to take:

Question: Why am I not getting a raise?

Answer: When you and I originally set goals for this year, we agreed that raises would depend on how successfully you met them.

Question: Why is my raise so small?

Answer: Your raise is in line with what we talked about when we set up the goals.

Question: What did you rate Joe?

Answer: Everyone's rating is confidential.

Question: I thought my performance was better than that. Why did you rate me so low?

Answer: I based the ratings on direct observations of your work that we talked about during the year. Let's talk about the specific ratings that you feel are too low.

Question: Why don't you like me?

Answer: Actually, I do like you. But your evaluation isn't based on that. It's based totally on your performance.

Question: Who told you I did that?

Answer: None of this is based on comments from any single person.

Question: Doesn't loyalty count for anything?

Answer: Loyalty counts a lot, and you received strong ratings in areas that dealt with commitment and dedication.

Question: What do I need to do to get higher ratings?

Answer: Great question. Let's talk about it.

As part of the performance evaluation process, meet with your fellow managers, discuss the most common and difficult kinds of questions they've faced during the evaluation sessions, and then work together to craft some excellent answers to each. This approach is the perfect way to play the "What If?" game.

Planning and Scheduling

As the time for the performance evaluation grows near, you need to move into an administrative role to handle the planning and scheduling of the process.

Set dates and times for all of the key benchmarks in the process. One of the best ways to do this is to use a process called *back-timing*. With this approach, you establish the specific date that you want to conduct the sit-down session with each individual employee and then work backward to set up the benchmark dates for all the activities that need to occur prior to the meeting.

Start the process by contacting each employee at least six weeks ahead of the proposed date. For example, if you want to have your review sessions with your employees in mid-December, contact each of your employees by November 1 to set up a mutually acceptable day and time for your one-on-one session.

When you and one of your employees have agreed on a date and time to meet, set up advance benchmark dates for that meeting to occur:

- **Six weeks before the meeting (as soon as you've set up a date and time for the meeting):** Meet with the employee, discuss the evaluation process, and give the employee the self-evaluation form. Advise the employee of the due date for this form (see "Four weeks before the meeting," later in this list). Reserve a conference room if you don't have a private office. If you're using 360-degree feedback (see Chapter 3), advise these individuals that you'll need their input on this employee within two weeks.
- **Five weeks before the meeting:** Assemble all your performance data, notes, and documentation for the employee.
- **Four weeks before the meeting:** The employee returns her self-evaluation form to you. If you use 360-degree feedback, those forms are returned to you at this point as well.
- **Two weeks before the meeting:** Complete the review of your documentation, self-evaluation form, and 360-degree feedback.
- **One week before the meeting:** Complete the first draft of the employee's evaluation. Review the recommended raise, if any.

- **Three days before the meeting:** Finalize the raise, if any.
- **Two days before the meeting:** Finish the final draft of the employee's evaluation. Plan the agenda for the meeting.

Be sure to put each of these benchmark dates on your calendar. By setting specific dates for every step of the process, you're able to give your employees the time and attention that they deserve for their performance appraisals.

Without planning ahead, you can easily let the time slide by. Then, all of a sudden, there are three days left and you haven't even gathered all the information and documentation, let alone reviewed it and completed the evaluation materials. You can save yourself a lot of stress, and ensure that your performance appraisals are a success, by getting ready ahead of time.

Chapter 5

Gathering and Analyzing the Data

In This Chapter

- Unleashing the power of your senses
- Mining for performance data
- Capturing information from day one
- Writing relevant evaluations
- Drawing the most accurate conclusions

Most managers understand the necessity of basing performance evaluations on workplace behaviors, competencies, and results. But there is less of a consensus and understanding of how to gather and analyze this information. If you don't pay enough attention to this part of the process, you end up with flawed performance data — and equally flawed evaluations.

The information that you need in order to precisely and productively evaluate your employees' performance won't suddenly appear on your desk. Gathering what you need for this process is a year-round responsibility, and handling it effectively helps not only in the performance evaluation process but also in the daily process of managing your employees.

Numerous workplace sources and resources provide the kind of information that's essential for an accurate and meaningful performance appraisal. Of course, as important as these resources are, you're the most important resource of all.

You're at the center of the entire evaluation process for your employees. You're most familiar with them, you've spent the most time observing them, you have access to more data about them than anyone else in the company, and you're the one who will ultimately make sense of all the information and turn it into an accurate and relevant appraisal for each of your employees.

If you scrimp in the data-gathering phase, your evaluations will show it, and so will your employees' reactions.

In this chapter, I show you the state-of-the-art methods to gather, analyze, and utilize the most important performance data on each of your employees.

Managing with All Your Senses

One of the most important ways to gather the kind of information you need to appraise your employees' performance is to manage by wandering around and spending time side by side with your employees as they do their work.

By intermittently visiting your team, you gather some excellent firsthand performance data. Plus, you're carrying out several key functions in the realm of performance management (for example, providing coaching, guidance, support, and feedback right at the point when your employees need it most).

When you spend time working with your employees, you can easily get so caught up in their projects that you miss other subtle yet important developments that are occurring simultaneously. One key way to capture the less obvious, yet strikingly important, subtleties is to apply all of your senses to your managerial style. Together, your five senses — hearing, touch, taste, sight, and smell — play a key role in understanding the world around you, and that world includes the workplace. Even if one or more of your senses is impaired, your other senses still provide extremely valuable data.

Here's how you can expand each of your senses:

- **Hearing:** When you meet with your employees, don't just listen to what they're saying. Listen to the speed of their delivery; the length of their sentences; and their

vocabulary, pitch, tone, and volume. Try to listen for any other sounds in the department, from disgruntled whispers to possibly malfunctioning equipment.

- **Smell:** Most managers don't enter a meeting with their employees thinking about what they're going to smell, but that's exactly what you should do. By tuning into your sense of smell, you may discover alcohol, illegal substances, mold, fumes, and even extreme perfumes, all of which could be tip-offs in terms of employee performance.
- **Touch:** Carefully consider what your sense of touch is telling you when you meet with your employees. For example, when you pick up a piece of your employees' work, ask yourself if it's heavier or lighter than it should be. If your employee was supposed to provide you with a brief report but he delivers one that immediately feels as heavy as a phonebook, that may raise some questions about his performance, regardless of the contents.
- **Sight:** The next time you meet with your employees in their work areas, take a careful look around. Look at their desks, the photos on the walls, the piles on the credenzas, the in-baskets, the junk on the floors, or the half-open drawers. Most managers walk into an employee's office or workstation, have their meeting, and then leave. If you take the time to look around, you'll actually be able to see into your employee.
- **Taste:** When it comes to evaluating employees, *taste* is more figurative than the other senses. For example, when you meet with some employees, the discussion may leave a bad taste in your mouth and give you a gut feeling that something is amiss. On the one hand, you can easily ignore these feelings and refocus on the task. But, by doing so, you may be overlooking information that you should be taking into consideration. If you're getting a bad visceral reaction, acknowledge it and try to figure out what's behind it.

In each of these ways, the real message is to try to draw all your senses into your interactions with your employees. By combining this data with the broad array of performance data, you're more likely to generate deeper and more useful information and insights, followed by more accurate and effective performance evaluations.

Focusing On the Entire Year

In order for your performance appraisals to be effective, you need to maintain regular communication, contact, and coaching with your employees throughout the entire evaluation period (typically, one year). Your employees shouldn't have any doubt about how they're doing. If they run into performance glitches, issues, or problems, they should feel confident that you'll identify and address these situations quickly.

Think of it this way: You're conducting mini-appraisals and feedback sessions all year.

Still, many managers base their annual performance evaluations on selected chunks of time and individual incidents during the evaluation period, rather than on the entire period. When they do this, they end up short-circuiting the evaluation process — and their employees.

Managers offer many excuses for gathering limited data, but all are dubious at best:

- **There's not enough information.** This claim typically means that the managers haven't been wandering around or focusing on the myriad available sources of performance information. And now, with evaluations around the corner, they don't have any clear and specific examples of their employees' performance.

  With limited data, their evaluations suffer from a lack of thoroughness, specificity, and meaningful examples. Employees typically react to this type of feedback with denial, defensiveness, and disappointment.

- **There's not enough time.** This pronouncement comes from managers who may be aware of the various sources of performance data, but who lack a true sense of interest, involvement, and commitment to the evaluation process itself.

  These managers base their judgments on limited and arguably questionable performance data, and they tend to rely on general impressions. The employees' reactions

to their appraisals will again be distress, but they'll also feel a sense of frustration and humiliation in seeing the minimal amount of time and interest that their managers put into their appraisals.

- **There's enough information already.** For these managers, the rationalization is that people don't change very much, so it makes just as much sense to do a cut-and-paste and provide the employees with essentially the same evaluation as last year.

  This approach is thoroughly dissatisfying and upsetting to employees, especially those who sincerely tried to improve their performance, competencies, and results. More than likely, they won't make that "mistake" again.

- **The most recent behavior is most important.** Instead of taking the time to look at an entire year's worth of performance, these managers rely heavily on recent events, whether positive or negative. They then justify their stance by claiming that these events are more important than events from months long gone by.

  If you want your employees to do next to nothing for the first few months and then come to life in the final quarter of the year, this plan is perfect. It punishes the employees who give their all throughout the year. It also punishes employees who had a great year, only to hit even a minor stumbling block toward the end of the year.

- **Only a few incidents really matter.** Managers who rely on this excuse believe that there's no need for a year's worth of data because it only takes a few critical incidents to really understand employee performance.

  This belief is problematic for a couple reasons:

  - The critical incident method (see Chapter 4) includes numerous incidents from throughout the year, not just a few.
  - When a manager relies only on a few key incidents, there is no way to know how accurately these incidents reflect the employees' overall performance. With limited performance data, the evaluations can be unduly positive or negative, both of which will be unfair not only to the employees who are being evaluated but also to the rest of the department.

- **I already know these are strong employees.** These are the conflict-avoidance managers, the ones who view the appraisal process as a time to praise rather than appraise. Their evaluations are filled with happy talk and language designed to build bonds of friendship and goodwill with their employees. They enter the process with the preconceived notion that their employees are terrific, and that's how they appraise them, regardless of the facts.

  Providing employees with recognition and building a strong working relationship with them is important, but that's not appraisal — that's another activity altogether: team building.

- **I already know these are weak employees.** These managers use the performance appraisal process as an opportunity to strike back or put down their employees, regardless of the employees' accomplishments or achievements during the year. The twisted idea behind this approach is that the employees need to be tougher, and those who can take this heat will stand out and stand up for themselves.

  This macho approach generates little more than annoyance, frustration, and hostility from the employees. For those who have worked hard and met their goals, this type of feedback tells them that their efforts and accomplishments during the year were meaningless.

REMEMBER

Regardless of explanations or rationalizations, appraisals that fail to look at the full range of employee performance and competencies throughout the entire year are destined to fail.

There are four additional advantages associated with performance evaluations that cover a full year:

- **They put the employees on a level playing field.** It isn't fair to have employees in one department evaluated on a few samples of performance during the past month, while other employees are being scrutinized for an entire year.

- **They're accurate.** When evaluations are based on performance data gathered over the evaluation period, the employees' ratings are not excessively downgraded

because of a couple of mistakes they made. When evaluations cover only a few critical incidents or a few weeks, any number of invalid and unwarranted conclusions can be drawn.

- **They're motivational.** If employees see that all of their behaviors throughout the year will be considered as part of their performance evaluation, they're more likely to be motivated to maintain high standards and output throughout the year.
- **They lead to better documentation.** If a need arises to look back at an employee's performance, data that covers the entire evaluation period is very useful.

Accessing the Information

One of the main determinants of the effectiveness of your appraisals is the quantity and quality of performance-based information that you gather. This information provides the foundation and support for the evaluations you create as well as for the feedback that you provide. If the information is thin or flimsy, the same will be said of your appraisals.

In any company, numerous resources can provide you with important performance-based data. Your notes on your employees' performance are at the top of the list, but several resources beyond your notes provide additional insight into your employees' performance — and give your evaluations additional impact.

Getting back to basics

Before looking at your notes or at any other resource related to performance appraisals, there are three basic preparatory steps you need to take.

Checking out job descriptions

Take a look at your employees' job descriptions. You need to be sure that the criteria you're using to evaluate your employees' performance are actually part of their job today.

As the year goes by, any number of formal responsibilities can slip by the wayside, while other roles, expectations, and standards can slip in and take their place. Sometimes this happens so subtly that neither you nor the employees notice it, but by the end of the year, their jobs can only bear a slight resemblance to what they were when the year began.

When you find that a job has changed but the job description has not, you need to make a decision: Either update the job description or update the employees and let them know that they need to refocus their energies and efforts back onto the central responsibilities that were originally assigned to them.

Reviewing last year's appraisal

Assuming that your employees worked for you last year or worked for another manager in your company last year, another important early step is to take a look at last year's evaluation. Presumably, that evaluation contained areas in which the employees needed to demonstrate some improvement. Identify those areas, as well as possible sources of such deficiencies, and keep them in mind as you conduct this year's evaluation.

For example, if a particular performance issue is interfering with an employee's effectiveness, it would be very helpful to know whether this is a new development or whether it's a problem that was apparent last year. If this is a new development, you can address it in the performance evaluation and offer some strategies to correct it.

At the same time, if this problem was addressed in the employee's evaluation last year, then you're dealing with two issues:

- There is a performance problem with this employee that needs attention and a plan of correction.
- This employee failed to take adequate action regarding an issue that was identified in last year's evaluation.

Revisiting the objectives

The final step is to go back to last year's evaluation and look at the specific objectives that you established with your employees for the current evaluation period. At this point in the process, you aren't evaluating their performance. Instead,

your goal is strictly to familiarize yourself with the objectives and the priorities that were attached to them.

Reviewing your notes

When you regularly spend time on the floors with your employees, you're in the perfect position to observe their work and provide them with the coaching, feedback, guidance, and support that they need to do their jobs well. Your face time with them also allows you to gather data regarding all aspects of their performance.

Your notes don't need to be a detailed treatise. They can be a list that includes the dates, a few words describing the incidents, and a few more words describing their impact. When the time for the annual evaluation arrives, these notes will provide you with accurate firsthand information regarding your employees' performance during the entire course of the evaluation period.

If you rely on your memory for all this information, you probably won't remember exactly what happened, when it happened, and who did what to whom, especially over the course of a year.

When you go back over the log that you've kept on your employees' performance over the year, you'll find several areas that are rich sources of data for their evaluations:

- **Getting the job done:** Upon initial review, your notes are going to provide you with the factual information you need in order to determine whether your employees actually carried out all their job responsibilities.

  The idea at this point is not so much to evaluate data as it is to gather it. Depending upon the job position, this is where you generate specific and measurable performance-related totals (such as sales calls made, number of designs completed, number of programs accepted or rejected, amount of errors, number of returns, number of projects completed on time, training programs attended, and the like). You can feed this information back to your employees, and it establishes a credible framework for the evaluative feedback that you'll also be providing.

- **Meeting objectives:** Your notes will tell you whether your employees met the agreed-upon objectives. Because you've already reviewed the objectives, you're also able to make an accurate judgment regarding the value of meeting one objective versus the value of meeting another.
- **Performing up to par:** Your notes will also show you how your employees handled the full spectrum of incidents that they encountered, all the way from carrying out the most important functions of their position down to their handling of the most basic chores. You can find clear and specific examples of your employees' key behaviors, actions, and interactions, and importantly, the results that your employees achieved in these myriad situations. You'll have clear documentation on how the employees handled each incident, as well as how each situation ended up.
- **Applying competencies:** Your notes will provide you with valuable insight into the full range of your employees' competencies in such areas as communication, technical knowledge, dealings with others, managing time, and so on. Although observing your employees' skills in these areas is important, it's even more critical for you to see how effectively your employees are able to apply these skills to their work. Your on-site observations will also provide you with firsthand data on your employees' commitment to upgrading their competencies, as well as their ability to impart their knowledge to others.

Reviewing the files

As part of the process of accessing and gathering a full range of information about your employees' performance during the year, take a look at each employee's file. The file can contain important pieces of performance-related data that can enhance as well as round out the information you've already assembled.

If other managers have work-related contact and dealings with your employees, you can gather additional information for the evaluations by discussing your employees' performance with them. Don't forget to ask your own manager.

Considering complaints

During the course of the year, complaints about an employee can be documented. The complaints could have come from other managers or employees, or possibly from customers or vendors.

If the complaints were focused on incidents that occurred early in the year, you may not be aware of them at evaluation time, unless you specifically check the employee's file.

Regardless of whether these complaints impact the employee's ratings, you need to be aware of them, review them, and calibrate the role you believe they should play in the employee's appraisal.

Considering compliments

As you look through your employees' files, you may also find letters, e-mails, and other documentation praising your employees. Compliments can come from people at any level within the company, as well as from outsiders who have contact with your employees. Depending upon the sources and incidents behind this praise, you may also want to consider this data in preparing your evaluation.

TIP

Be sure to mention these compliments when you're conducting evaluation sessions. They'll motivate your employees to keep up the good work!

Reviewing reprimands

Your review of the files may also turn up some reprimands. You may have entered these reprimands in your notes, but they may have slid under the radar, which is why checking the employee files is so important.

When you find reprimands, consider the number of incidents, their severity, and any actions taken as a result, whether by the employee or the company. If the problematic behaviors are continuing, make a note of that.

Homing in on honors and awards

Companies provide awards for all sorts of behaviors, such as for volunteering, coming up with suggestions for safety or sustainability, or referring friends to come to work for the

company. In addition, you may find honors that have been bestowed on your employees from outside organizations. If your employees have received awards of any kind, consider them as you compile the evaluations.

In some cases, honors and awards can be just enough to tip a given employee's evaluation into a higher range.

Mulling over milestones

Documentation associated with employees' efforts to continue their education and self-development is often found in their files. Look for information regarding classes, seminars, continuing education credits, certifications, degrees, and designations that your employees have pursued and achieved during the year.

In many cases, these milestones are met off-site, and, as a result, they may not appear in your notes. These accomplishments clearly fall in the area of competencies, and they're worth considering as part of the appraisal process. After all, by enhancing their knowledge and skills, your employees bring additional value to their jobs and to the company at large.

Reviewing the evaluations

If your company's appraisal process includes self-evaluations, or if you've opted to include them in the process, this is the time to look them over. The same applies to 360-degree feedback (see Chapter 3), if your company uses it.

Evaluating self-evaluations

When reviewing your employees' self-evaluations, the first step is to take a look at how your employees approached this assignment. Employees who are careful, thorough, and detailed in their approach to work will demonstrate these characteristics in the way that they complete their self-evaluations. At the same time, employees who are lackadaisical or careless will reflect these attitudes in this assignment.

After you've looked over the appearance of the forms, it's time to look at the content. Look carefully at the employee's ratings and try to get an overall sense of how she sees her

own performance. If the employee's ratings are in sync with the data that you've generated, you can make three strong suppositions:

- Your employee has a realistic view of how she's been performing.
- You've been providing the employee with effective feedback during the course of the year.
- The employee is being honest in completing her self-evaluation.

As a result of these suppositions, you shouldn't have any trouble discussing your ratings during the evaluation sessions.

If you find that an employee's self-ratings are totally different from what his performance data indicates, a couple things could be going on:

- Either your employee is living in dreamland, or you haven't been adequately monitoring his performance and providing feedback.
- If you have overwhelming performance data to substantiate your views of the employee's performance, and you've been actively managing by wandering around, then the employee is naïve, lying, manipulative, or uninvolved and uninterested in the evaluation process.

As a result of these two possibilities, you may face some difficulties when you and your employee sit down to discuss the performance appraisals. Make sure you're thoroughly prepared with clear, accurate, and specific performance data.

Evaluating 360-degree feedback

Companies use 360-degree feedback for different purposes. Some use it for employee appraisal, some use it for employee development, and some use it for both. (See Chapter 3 for more on 360-degree feedback.)

If your company includes 360-degree feedback in the appraisal process, this is the time to review the findings. This data — gathered from an array of anonymous individuals, such as co-workers, managers, peers, customers, and others — can

provide a good deal of additional insight regarding your employees' performance competencies and effectiveness.

If you've been provided with an overview of the 360-degree feedback findings, you should find significant overlap between this feedback and the data you've generated on your own. If there are major differences, stay with *your* assessments, because your data focuses more directly on your employees' specific job responsibilities and goal attainment.

360-degree feedback can help you further understand your employees and assess their performance, but this information should not be a substitute for your own appraisals, nor should it trump your own judgment.

Regardless of its role in the appraisal process, if your company uses 360-degree feedback, it's most helpful to bring the feedback into play when you're establishing a development plan with your employees.

Completing the Evaluation Form

After you've reviewed all the performance data from the various sources and resources that you were able to access, the next step is to complete the evaluation form. These forms vary from one company to another, but there are some overarching principles that can help you handle this step more easily and effectively:

- **Start with your best employees.** As a result of your direct observations and analysis of the performance data, you're probably able to name the better employees in your department. These employees should be the first ones that you evaluate.

  By starting your evaluations with these individuals, you can clearly define, for yourself, the actual meaning of excellent performance. With this standard in place, you'll be able to interpret and evaluate the performance of the rest of your team more easily.

- **Write first, rate later.** Because many companies have evaluation forms that combine written comments with numerical ratings for each component that's being

evaluated, it can be difficult to know which to do first — ratings or written comments.

The best approach is to go to a given item, write out your written comments, and then enter a numerical rating.

When you write the numerical rating first, you may find yourself adjusting your writing in order to match those numbers. For example, if you think an employee is average and you immediately enter an average numerical rating, your writing will tend to confirm this rating. At the same time, when you do your writing first, you aren't consciously or unconsciously influenced to color your comments to fit your predetermined numerical rating.

Many performance appraisal forms that call for written comments also provide information on the kinds of factors to consider in your write-up. Be sure to look over these tips very carefully before starting your written comments.

- **Think while writing.** By writing out the assessments of your employees' performance in a particular category, you're forced to think specifically about their actions, their objectives, their competencies, and the outcomes of their efforts.

  Whether you're writing a positive or negative comment, be sure that it's laced with examples and supported by times and dates as you deem necessary. As you create and review your written comments, adding appropriate descriptive phrases as needed, you'll be generating a clearer picture of your employees' performance and the rating that it merits.

- **Consider how it will be read.** Don't forget that whatever you write in the appraisals is going to be read by your employees. If your comments are vague, unsubstantiated, or focus on personality over performance, you're setting the stage for problematic sessions with your employees.

Selecting a rating

After you enter your comments for each factor that you're appraising, you're ready to enter a numerical rating (assuming your form calls for one). The key to success with this step is to fully familiarize yourself with the rating scale.

With many numerical rating scales, there is a mini-description associated with each number. For example, the rating form may list several behaviors associated with communication, accompanied by a rating scale that reads:

5 — Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations.

4 — Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations.

3 — Fully competent: Meets expectations.

2 — Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations.

1 — Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations.

Without the mini-description following each rating, it would be easy for each manager to have a different opinion on what *outstanding* means. The descriptions result in far greater consistency in the process.

One of the major concerns in the performance appraisal process is called *inter-rater reliability.* Essentially, this is the extent to which the 5 that you rate an employee is equivalent to the 5 that other managers rate their employees. With increased clarity in the evaluation forms, such as including mini-descriptions for each rating, the chances of increased inter-rater reliability improve. This reliability can be improved even further through training, practice evaluations, and additional information in the evaluation forms themselves.

At the same time, it's at least as important for a manager to maintain a high degree of internal consistency when rating employees — in other words, all the employees who merit the same rating from you in a particular category should be essentially performing at the same level. Even if a 4 from you is closer to a 3 from most other managers, the internal consistency of your ratings will allow your scores to be better understood if one of your employees is being considered for a transfer, a promotion, or even a layoff.

Describing strengths and weaknesses

With all your numerical ratings and written comments in place, some forms will pose additional questions, the most

common of which focus on the employees' strengths and areas for improvement.

Strengths

When writing about your employees' strengths, your comments will be most effective if they focus on specific behaviors and competencies. For example, although it's nice for employees to hear that they "do excellent work," the focus is totally unclear and the employees can't anchor your comment to any particular action. So, although your employees would like to receive positive feedback in the future for their excellent work, they don't know which behaviors to repeat.

Your comments will take on more meaning, have a greater motivational impact, and have a longer shelf life if you phrase them in behavioral terms. For example, instead of saying that your employees do excellent work, give them specific examples of such work, such as "Provides extremely high-quality work on time." With this type of comment, your employees clearly know the two components that generated this positive feedback — quality and timeliness.

Weaknesses

When writing about your employees' weaknesses, the same basic framework applies. You need to be specific and avoid phrases such as "attitude could use improvement." Your comments will be more effective and more motivational if you leave out the word *attitude* and focus specifically on behaviors that are indicative of a questionable attitude, such as complaining, arguing, or refusing to help others.

After the review, part of your job will be to work with the employees to help them become more effective in the areas currently needing improvement. The more specific you are in your description, the better able you'll be to focus your developmental efforts. And because your employees understand the specifics of the areas needing improvement, they're likely to be more receptive to your guidance.

Determining an Overall Rating

As you work your way through the performance appraisal form, you'll start to get a sense of the overall rating of each of

your employees. In some evaluation forms, the final rating is based on little more than this overall perception. In this case, you're asked to give your own overall rating of the employee based on all the comments and rankings that you've entered into the form. The best guideline in this case is to make sure that the overall rating you provide is consistent with the individual ratings that you've provided in each category.

The only time to stray from this strategy is if your employee has done extremely well or poorly in parts of the job that are truly the most important elements of the job itself.

If you have full latitude in determining the final rating, you can add weightings to various areas that you evaluated in order to make sure that performance in those areas has a greater impact on the employee's final rating.

At the other end of the continuum, some performance evaluation forms include mathematical calculations and weightings for each of the ratings that you enter. In some cases, these forms are designed to take the ratings that you provide for each component, calculate an average score, and convert that into the overall rating.

When you've finished writing the appraisals and made your final evaluations, set them aside for a few days. This will give you some time to think about them and let any of your concerns incubate. When you revisit these evaluations, you'll do so with a fresh perspective. Give each evaluation a final look, make any needed adjustments, and then lock them in as final. You're guaranteed to be more certain about your ratings, and more comfortable with them, after this second visit.

Chapter 6

Running a Productive Appraisal Session

In This Chapter

- Effectively preparing for an appraisal
- Planning and coordinating for successful sessions
- Leading the sessions from start to finish

By the time you've completed your employees' evaluations, the scheduled dates for your one-on-one sessions loom large on your calendar. Some managers feel uneasy at this point. But I have good news for you: If you've worked through Chapter 5, you've already taken three major steps to quell such feelings:

- **You've gathered and documented accurate and specific performance data for each of your employees.**
- **In order to gather such data, you spent a lot of time in direct contact with your employees, providing them with feedback, coaching, guidance, and support.** In doing so, you've provided them with a clear understanding of your thoughts regarding their performance, so you've eliminated the element of surprise from the forthcoming session. And this means that the likelihood of resistance, defensiveness, or disagreement is dramatically reduced.
- **You've written performance evaluations that are thorough, fair, and focused on specific and measurable behaviors, competencies, and results, rather than on personalities.**

In order to have highly productive appraisal sessions with your employees, all you need to do at this point is prepare and plan for each face-to-face discussion and then make sure that you stick to your plan and run each session in an organized, businesslike, and positive style.

Setting the Stage for the Appraisal

A few days before the sit-down sessions, you can take several key steps that will greatly increase their effectiveness and improve their chances of succeeding.

Identifying your objectives

Your employees won't remember everything you say during their appraisal sessions. Because of the amount of information and the nature of the feedback that you're providing, employees often get overloaded and zone out a bit.

Plus, if an appraisal contains some negative feedback, or it's a positive appraisal but still lower than what your employee expected or wanted, she's likely to focus on this discrepancy and fail to absorb all your other important comments and points.

TIP

Regardless of the nature of the feedback that you'll be providing, take the time to note two or three major points that you definitely want your employees to hear and remember. For example, these points may focus on specific competencies that your employees need to upgrade, various behaviors that are interfering with individual or departmental performance, or opportunities for growth and development.

By identifying these major points before the sessions, and then emphasizing and reemphasizing them during the sessions, you'll greatly increase the likelihood that your employees will leave with a clear understanding of the most important components of your feedback.

Setting an agenda

You don't need an iron-clad agenda for appraisal meetings because the dynamics of these sessions can draw the discussions into unplanned topics — and that's not necessarily a bad thing. After all, such topics can include unanticipated suggestions, complaints, and concerns that can help identify existing problems or prevent new ones.

However, when the discussion strays from what you had intended, you need to be able to eventually guide the discussion back to the main points that you need to cover. An agenda can help you keep your discussions on target.

Your agenda should include

- The highlights of your opening remarks
- The step-by-step sequence of the performance-related feedback that you're planning to provide
- A list of the key points that you want your employees to remember
- The point in the session where you plan to discuss the employee's raise (or lack thereof)
- The key points you want to make when closing the session

TIP

In developing your agenda, jot down some estimates on the amount of time that you're planning on spending on each item. Granted, some areas may take longer than you plan, but having a sense of timing will help you keep each session focused on the higher-priority topics and issues.

Scripting your delicate comments

When you have to provide negative feedback to an employee, knowing exactly what to say can be difficult. If you fumble for words and then hedge around a problematic issue or behavior, your employee will sense your apprehension and confusion and either shrug off your comments or seize the opening and challenge you.

One of the best ways to prevent this problem is to look carefully at the areas in which you're going to give some negative feedback and then write down exactly what you want to say. You don't have to give a lengthy diatribe — a well-crafted sentence or two can say it all.

Don't rush this scripting process. You may need to spend quite a bit of time, writing several drafts, to come up with the right handful of words, but they'll be valuable to you during the session. After you've scripted your comments, be sure to practice them aloud several times until you can say them easily and naturally.

Bringing the data

Before the evaluation session, decide which pieces of documentation you're going to bring. You don't need every piece of data that you touched in determining the ratings, but you should have some data at your side:

- **Evaluation forms:** Be sure to bring two hard copies of the completed evaluations. If your employee completed a self-evaluation, bring two copies of that as well.
- **The employee's file:** You aren't likely to need to thumb through the employee's file during the evaluation session, but if you do need to access some primary support data, having the files nearby is helpful.
- **Your notes:** If your employee raises questions about specific times and dates regarding the issues that you're discussing, having your log or notes nearby is helpful.

Setting positive expectations

Your expectations play a key role in many aspects of effective management (see Chapter 4), and they come into play again at this point in the performance appraisal process.

One of the most effective ways to increase the likelihood of a positive, open, and highly productive two-way conversation during an appraisal session is for you to set positive expectations. Visualize how you want each session to go — you'll have an easier time achieving your goals if you've visualized them.

Handling the Logistics

Several premeeting administrative steps play an important supporting role in determining the success of your sessions with your employees.

Scheduling the time

As part of the back-timing process, you most likely scheduled the discussion sessions with your employees several weeks in advance. At that time, your calendars and theirs probably had a fair share of wide-open spaces, but that's likely not the case anymore — now your schedules are jam-packed, and you need to make sure you've allotted enough time for each meeting.

Clearing the deck

Always place scheduled appraisal sessions at the top of your priority list. Remove all other projects, meetings, and tasks from your calendar during the hours that are scheduled for these sessions.

If other assignments come your way, or if other people want to meet with you during these scheduled times, do everything you can to defer or delay them until you've completed the sessions.

TIP

Clearing the deck also means clearing your desk. Remove, file, or cover all documents on your desk while you're conducting these sessions. If these documents are visible during the evaluation session, they can distract you and your employees — plus, they may reveal confidential information.

Blocking extra time

In most cases, you should schedule appraisal sessions to last an hour. Just to be safe, though, don't schedule any other appointments that end right before the evaluation sessions or start right after them. Leave yourself at least a 30-minute cushion both before and after every evaluation.

REMEMBER

Dashing into an evaluation session after the scheduled starting time sends a message of disinterest and carelessness to the employee, and it's sure to raise his anxiety, distress, and ire.

Recognizing the role of reminders

When the times and dates for the sessions are around the corner, send e-mail confirmations to your employees. Make sure the confirmation e-mails are clear and direct, not wishy-washy. Don't ask an employee whether the date and time still works for her — remind her of the date and time you agreed on.

Unless a real crisis, crunch, or emergency occurs, avoid rescheduling these meetings. Each time an appraisal meeting is deferred, its role, impact, and significance decrease in the employee's eyes.

Giving out the appraisals

One of the most important decisions to make prior to the evaluation sessions is when to give the completed evaluations to your employees. You can opt to give them their formal evaluation forms at one of three different points.

When the session starts

Some managers start evaluation sessions by handing the completed evaluation forms to their employees. On the one hand, this approach reduces any mystery and doubt over the points to be covered in the sessions. The employees have an immediate idea of the focus and even the tenor of the discussion.

On the other hand, when managers hand employees completed forms at the beginning of the sessions, the employees tend to rush through the forms and typically have trouble absorbing all the detail. Feedback of any kind arouses emotions, and these heightened emotions further interfere with the employees' abilities to concentrate on what they're reading. Plus, most employees aren't comfortable sitting and reading their evaluations while their managers are staring at them.

When the session ends

At the other end of the spectrum, some managers discuss the entire evaluation with their employees, and then give out the evaluation forms at the end. Although this approach eliminates the speed-reading and concentration issues associated with handing out the forms at the outset, it has its own problems: When managers go point-by-point through evaluations

that the employees haven't seen yet, employees typically hear the first few words of their managers' comments regarding performance in a particular area and then start to wonder how they'll be appraised on the next item.

Before the session

Many managers find that the best time to give the completed forms to their employees is *before* the sit-down sessions. Some managers give out the forms an hour or two ahead, while others give them out a day or two in advance.

Either way, the idea is to give employees a chance to understand their evaluations and remove any initial knee-jerk reactions. This approach gives the employees time to think more about their performance, formulate productive questions, and consider their own ways to make improvements where needed.

When you give the evaluations to your employees ahead of the discussion sessions, your employees come to these sessions better prepared to have a productive two-way conversation.

Selecting the right venue

As the time for your sit-down sessions with your employees draws nearer, carefully consider where you're going to hold the meetings. You can do a great deal of preparatory work and create the most perfect evaluations in the world, but if you hold the sit-down sessions in inappropriate locations, their effectiveness instantly evaporates.

One of the best places for your sit-down evaluation sessions with your employees is your office, as long as you have a private office. Only hold evaluations in your office if it's not a cubicle or workstation but rather a traditional office with a door and four walls that extend from floor to ceiling.

Even if your employees have their own private offices, you should still conduct the evaluations in your own office. Your employees will sense that they have more power and control in their own offices, but this can make it easier for them to resist or reject your comments, input, and guidance.

If you don't have a private office, try to reserve a conference room or an available private office if your company has any. The goal is to find a site where you can meet privately, confidentially, and out of the earshot of anyone else.

If you don't have a private office but your manager has one, ask her whether you can use it for your evaluations. Many managers will go along with this request, especially those who take the process seriously and expect their employees to do likewise. Your manager may also have some suggestions for other options or meeting areas in the company.

Keeping it private

The concept of privacy is central to an effective performance evaluation session. Without privacy, both parties in the session feel awkward, distracted, and unable to be totally honest. And if these sessions lack honesty, there's no point in holding them.

In order for evaluations to be productive, you need to have privacy both during and after the appraisal session.

During the session

In order to have an open and honest exchange, you need to have absolute privacy during appraisal sessions. This means that there are no visitors, audiences, or eavesdroppers of any kind.

After the session

The information that you discuss in appraisal sessions is private and confidential. Don't discuss the contents of these meetings with others unless necessary in the context of doing business (such as in terms of promotions, transfers to other departments, or staffing cutbacks).

You're not the only one who needs to keep the contents of appraisal meetings private. Employees shouldn't discuss their ratings or your comments with others — either to brag or complain. In fact, if you find out that employees have freely discussed their performance evaluations with their co-workers, you may want to note this as a critical incident in their next performance evaluations.

Performance appraisals don't contain state secrets, but as you wrap up your review sessions, give your employees a friendly reminder that you won't be sharing what you've discussed and that you expect them to do the same.

Holding the Meeting

When the time for the evaluation sessions with your employees arrives, several strategies will help make these meetings more effective from start to finish. You've already put the foundation in place, and now you're ready to build some solid review sessions.

Opening the discussion

Your opening comments will set the tone, tenor, and atmosphere for the entire discussion. Maybe you scripted them earlier (see "Scripting your delicate comments," earlier in this chapter), or maybe you're winging it. Either way, your initial comments in each session should do the following:

1. **Greet the employee.**

   Start by making friendly and welcoming comments to break the ice. To help further relax your employee, you can even ask a question or two about some informal topics that interest both of you.

2. **Set the framework.**

   This is the "here's what we're going to do" section of your opening. The idea is to give your employee an understanding of the structure of the meeting, including an overview of the topics and timing.

3. **Ask for questions.**

   If an employee asks questions that deal with your opening remarks or with matters that should be addressed on the spot, this is the time to answer them. However, if the questions pertain to matters that you plan on discussing later in the review, advise the employee of this fact and make a note to yourself so you don't forget to cover these topics later.

Leading the discussion

There is no single path for you to follow in order to conduct highly successful evaluation sessions. At the same time, when you're leading these discussions, ten steps will help make the meetings more interactive and productive:

1. **Let your employee talk.**

   If your employee has completed a self-appraisal, your first step is to indicate that you'd like to hear his thoughts. Although you already have a copy of the appraisal and you've looked it over prior to this session, tell your employee that you'd like to know more, especially in terms of his performance and results that he believes are particularly important, as well as the way in which he arrived at his specific ratings.

   If you or your company doesn't use self-evaluations, you can still encourage the employee's input at this point in the session by asking a question such as "How have things on the job been going during the past year?"

   Giving your employees the chance to discuss their actions, achievements, and competencies is rewarding to them because it further emphasizes your respect and trust, while also reinforcing your partnership with them.

2. **Give an overview of the session.**

   After you've heard your employee's thoughts regarding her performance, your next step is to give her a brief overview of overall topics that you'll be covering in the session.

3. **Focus on objectives.**

   This part of the discussion focuses on the agreed-upon objectives and the extent to which your employee met them.

4. **Focus on performance results.**

   The emphasis in this section is on the various additional performance-related outcomes that were the result of your employee's actions and efforts, even if such outcomes were not directly attached to the overall objectives.

5. **Focus on critical incidents.**

   Your comments in this area are focused on the way in which your employee handled particularly noteworthy situations, whether positively or negatively.

6. **Focus on competencies.**

   This is where you discuss instances in which your employee applied his skills effectively to the job, shared his knowledge with others, or took specific steps to further build his competencies.

7. **Focus on points of agreement.**

   Whether based on your employee's self-evaluations or on her opening comments regarding her performance, your focus at this point in the session is on the areas in which your employee agrees with your ratings.

   These points are typically the more positive ratings in your evaluation. Many of your comments at this point are focused on encouraging your employees to continue to engage in the behaviors that generated these positive outcomes and ratings.

8. **Focus on points of disagreement.**

   This is the time to discuss the areas in which you rated your employee lower than he rated himself, whether based on his self-evaluation or his opening comments. Your objective is to learn more about your employee's rationale for giving himself ratings that are higher than yours and for him to understand the rationale behind the ratings that you gave.

   This is not a negotiation session, and you should not revise your ratings based on your employee's comments. Even after you provide an explanation of the rationale behind your ratings, your employee may still disagree. However, that isn't a major problem as long as he truly comprehends the reasons why his ratings were lower than what he expected or wanted.

9. **Focus on the overall rating.**

   At this point in the process, you and your employee have discussed all the key performance-related issues and concerns, and it's now time to discuss the overall rating. Your comments should focus on the steps you took to determine this rating.

If part of this overall rating is based on additional weightings that you placed on any of the areas within the performance appraisal, make sure that your employee understands the rationale and methodology behind this adjustment.

10. **Focus on raises.**

    There is a good deal of debate among managers as well as management theorists as to where to place raises in the performance appraisal session. Some managers don't even think that raises belong in the session at all. Here are your options:

    - **Bringing up raises in the beginning:** This approach is premised on the belief that employees don't pay much attention during appraisal sessions with raises at the end because they're fixated on what their raises will be. Letting them know at the outset is supposed to put an end to their wondering and allow them to pay attention to the feedback you're providing. However, if they expected a better raise, they may end up being consumed with their disappointment and not hear what you're saying anyway.
    - **Bringing up raises toward the end:** Here, the idea is to provide employees with a clearer understanding of the relationship between their performance and the raise they receive. After giving glowing reviews, you're ideally able to provide a direct reward for the employees' stellar behavior, demonstrating the clear link between better performance and better rewards. The same principle applies in reverse, when you're providing less of a reward (or no reward) for less-than-stellar performance. The primary concern with this approach is that employees won't hear what you're saying until you talk about raises.
    - **Eliminating raises from the discussion:** The idea behind this approach is that raises don't belong in the performance appraisal session at all. Instead, these sessions should focus exclusively and extensively on the employees' past performance, while issues such as raises and objectives should be discussed in separate sessions.

Separate sessions for separate purposes

Although some companies still include raises in performance reviews, many employers have separated the goal-setting and development phases from the performance-review phase. One main reason for this separation is that employees who sit through reviews aren't ready to immediately shift gears and start talking about objectives, growth, and development — and neither are their managers.

Plus, if the review has been less than glowing, employees are even less inclined to start thinking and talking about their objectives. They're still licking their wounds from the evaluations and need some time and distance in order to process what they've heard before reopening their minds to goal setting and development.

Finally, the objectives of these meetings are entirely different. Performance appraisals look *backward* and evaluate the employees' past actions, competencies, and outcomes; employees leave these sessions with an understanding of the areas in which they did well and the areas in which they need to improve. Goal-setting and development meetings are designed to look at the *future* and help employees set development plans and objectives to enhance their own growth and performance on the job.

Remember: When holding meetings of any kind, the attendees must literally and figuratively be on the same page. That doesn't happen easily or naturally when performance appraisals and employee development are bundled into one session.

TIP

Because there is no uniform agreement on this matter, be sure to have a clear understanding of the way in which your company's raise process is linked to the performance appraisal process. If you're given a choice, opt for separate sessions to discuss raises. Doing so will allow you to focus thoroughly and unequivocally on an employee's performance during the appraisal session, while focusing equally thoroughly on raises in a later session. With this approach, your employees will have a clearer understanding of the most important factors in both of these key areas.

In some companies, managers advise their employees of the dollar amount of the increase they'll be given. In other companies, managers discuss only the percentage increase. In many companies, managers don't provide any final information regarding raises; instead, all they're allowed to do is recommend raises to senior management. In this case, they tell the employees the raise amounts or percentages that they're recommending and explain that they'll provide the employees with the exact amount at a later date.

If your company includes goal setting as part of the performance appraisal session, this would be the point in the evaluation when you and your employees discuss specific objectives and action plans for the coming year. Shifting gears can be difficult for you *and* your employees, so I recommend that you try to set up a separate time with your employees to carry out this very important function. (See the nearby sidebar, "Separate sessions for separate purposes," for more information.)

Providing negative feedback

Many managers have lingering fears about giving negative feedback to their employees during their evaluation sessions. But the negative comments that you provide in these sessions will be less stressful for you because this won't be the first time that you've made them to your employees. By wandering around and spending a good deal of time with your employees (see Chapter 8), you've already provided them with negative feedback when their performance merited it. They already know where they're performing well and where they're performing poorly, and they could just as easily provide themselves with the same negative feedback that you provide in these sessions.

Nonetheless, three strategies can make this process even easier for you:

- **Sit down.** Obviously, performance appraisals are sit-down activities, which is a plus because providing negative feedback to your employees is much easier when you're both seated. Why? Because people are far less likely to get heated up when they're sitting down.

  Also pay attention to *where* you're seated. A desk that separates you from your employees can be a psychological

as well as physical barrier. In order to send a message to your employees that you want to partner with them in the appraisal process, try either sitting next to them or pulling your chair around your desk and sitting face-to-face with no barriers between the two of you. In either setup, you'll be able to give negative feedback more easily, and they'll be able to receive it more easily as well.

- **Use *I* not *you*.** When you're providing negative feedback to your employees, one surefire way to generate a harsh reaction is to lace your comments with the word *you*. Frequent use of the word *you* sounds like a combination of accusation and scolding, and employees are likely to become increasingly defensive with each additional *you*.

  Try using the word *I* instead of *you* when possible. For example, instead of saying "You didn't complete the project on time," try saying "I'm wondering why the project came in late." In this way, you've centered the issue on yourself and the project, which opens the door for a conversation instead of a confrontation.

- **Focus on behaviors.** The essence of performance appraisal is focused on behavior — and that's essential to keep in mind when providing negative feedback. The idea is for your employees to sense that you're concerned or upset with some aspect of their *behavior* but not with them as individuals.

  For example, if you asked an employee to give a particular report to certain employees, but she gave it to all the employees, you *could* say, "You made a mistake by giving this report to everyone," but your employee will probably perceive this as a direct attack, and she's likely to react in kind. With some minor tweaking of the wording, you can rephrase and refocus the feedback so that it's targeted on the behavior and perceived as less of an attack: "Giving this report to everyone was a mistake."

Eliminating interruptions

By selecting appropriate venues for the appraisal sessions (see "Selecting the right venue," earlier in this chapter), you've automatically reduced the likelihood of interruptions.

However, when it comes to these sessions, reducing the likelihood of interruptions is not good enough. In order to gain the

full measure of value from performance appraisal sessions with your employees, you have to eliminate interruptions, or at least bring them down to the absolute minimum.

Advising the team

Prior to the evaluation session, be sure to let others know that you are not to be disturbed while this meeting is in progress. This means no paging, no one knocking on the office door, and no one opening the door slightly just to peek in and see if you're serious about not being interrupted.

Taking no phone calls

If you have a "do not disturb" function on your phone, set it for this meeting. If not, let all calls go to voicemail.

If you have a caller identification system, don't look over every time your phone rings. Doing so is rude, inconsiderate, and a disruption.

Don't forget to turn off your cellphone during the meeting. Let all calls to your cellphone go to voicemail. You shouldn't be doing anything with your cellphone during this meeting — no texting, no e-mailing, and no talking.

Avoiding your computer

Don't sit at your computer during this meeting. Managers who do so often can't resist the temptation to look over every time a new e-mail arrives, and some can't keep their hands off the keyboard.

Actively listening

As you lead appraisal sessions, your effectiveness will be enhanced if you display solid listening skills. By listening carefully to what your employees are saying, not only will you be able to learn more about their actions and their motivations for taking them, but you'll also be better able to determine whether your employees fully understand the reasons behind the ratings that you provided.

Regardless of ratings, employees feel better about the evaluation process if they truly sense that they're being heard.

As part of the open exchange of ideas that is at the heart of appraisal sessions, you can take some steps to strengthen your listening skills.

- **Focus on what your employees are saying.** Some of the best ways to do this are to restate, rephrase, and summarize what they say — for example, you can say, "Let me make sure I understand," and then put their comments in your own words. Anytime you aren't sure what they mean, ask for clarification.
- **Focus on what they're *not* saying.** Pay extra attention to their body language, such as their facial expressions, whether they're slouched or sitting forward, whether their arms are crossed, and whether they maintain eye contact.
- **Show your employees that you're engaged in the discussion.** Your body language and comments should show your employees that you're interested in this dialogue with them. You can do this by sitting forward, nodding when appropriate, and adding occasional comments and interjections indicating that you're involved and listening (such as, "I see" and even "Uh-huh").

Wrapping up the discussion

If you've fully worked your way through the agenda that you created for a given session and you're satisfied that the objectives you established prior to the session have been met, it's time to bring the session to a close. As you do so, follow these key steps:

1. **Give your employees a recap of their performance, particularly their major areas of strength and success, along with the one or two areas where the most improvement is needed.**
2. **Tell your employees that you'll be meeting again soon to talk about objectives and plans for growth and development for the coming evaluation period.**

   Ask the employees to do some thinking in these areas and to write a draft of their objectives and development plan between now and that next meeting.

If you can do so on the spot, set a specific date and time for that meeting. If you can't finalize a date at this time, let your employees know that you'll be setting a date to meet within two weeks.

3. **If you did not discuss raises during the appraisal sessions, let your employees know that you'll soon be setting up a separate meeting to do so**.

4. **Ask your employees if they have any further questions or if there are any other matters that they want to discuss in this session.**

5. **Sign and date the evaluation forms and ask your employees to do likewise.**

   Be sure to mention that they can add their own comments to the form if they want.

6. **Express your positive expectations as you bring the sessions to an end.**

   Let your employees know that you have confidence in them and their ability to succeed in making the improvements that were discussed during the appraisal sessions.

Chapter 7

Avoiding the Most Common Mistakes

In This Chapter

- Eliminating the interference that distorts evaluations
- Removing the barriers that block two-way communication
- Correcting problems that are masked as solutions
- Removing the element of surprise

As you work your way through the performance appraisal process with your employees, you need to be on the lookout for the tripping points that can undercut not only *your* effectiveness but the effectiveness of the appraisal process itself. Managers have myriad opportunities to make mistakes in the appraisal process, and sometimes just one slip-up can render the whole process useless.

Fortunately, these pitfalls aren't hidden or camouflaged subtleties. They're far more apparent than that — especially when you know what to look for.

In this chapter, I shine a spotlight on the range of mistakes that *other* managers often make in the evaluation process, so that you don't make the same mistakes yourself.

Managing Your Misperceptions

One of the main errors that managers make in the performance appraisal process is failing to see employees as they truly are. When this happens, managers typically place too much emphasis on matters of minimal importance and too little emphasis on the stuff that matters most.

Managers who misperceive the realities of their employees' behaviors do so as a result of their own needs, biases, expectations, prior experiences, and memories. And no matter what the source of these misperceptions may be, the result is the same: The managers' thinking is distorted, and they end up with evaluations that are equally distorted.

Calibrating recent events

Whether your employees have recently done something great or something that grates, the most likely outcome is that these recent actions and outcomes play a greater role in appraisals than is actually warranted.

Say an employee has been doing a good job throughout the year, consistently meeting her objectives. It wouldn't be surprising to find that her performance appraisal is, fittingly, in the "good" range. But if she makes a mistake toward the end of the evaluation period, her appraisal is likely to suffer in a totally disproportionate way. In fact, even small recent mistakes can trump much greater successes from months ago.

Why? Because recent events are far fresher in your memory than are the distant events that happened early in the evaluation period. With recent events, you can relive the exact feelings of satisfaction or annoyance that you experienced just a few weeks ago — whether your employees leaped over the bar or tripped over it.

At the same time, as you think back to your employees' successes and failures earlier in the year, you can review the facts as spelled out in your notes or log, but the physical and emotional reactions are gone, which reduces their influence on your thinking today.

REMEMBER

As you complete your appraisals, make sure you're not placing undue emphasis on the good or bad things that happened in the past month or two — be sure to consider the events of the *entire* evaluation period.

TIP

As you're making notes on your employees' performance throughout the year, write down more than just the facts. Whether you're truly excited by your employees' performance or results or you're supremely dissatisfied, try to capture some of your enthusiasm or disappointment in your notes as

well. This way, your notes will help you consider the entire year's worth of events — not just the ones that happened in the last couple of months.

Overpowering bias and stereotypes

Another misperception that managers may have about their employees may have nothing to do with the employees at all: I'm talking about biases and stereotypes. ***Remember:*** Such notions can be favorable or unfavorable, but either way, they're a clear source of inaccurate appraisals.

Biases and stereotypes are really about prejudice, which literally means "to prejudge." Prejudging is particularly problematic in performance appraisals because one central managerial role in the process is to judge the employees' behavior. If the judging component is completed before the process even starts, there's no point in starting the process at all.

If the potential damage that bias and stereotyping heap on the performance appraisal process is not enough to convince you to dispel your prejudicial beliefs, something else just might grab your attention: a lawsuit. That's right: If you allow factors such as race, religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or disability to affect your appraisal of your employees, you and your company are likely to face a claim of discrimination.

Beating bias

Managerial bias is a strong preconceived leaning or inclination about a person or situation. Such bias can be positive or negative, and it can cause managers to look at their employees' performance and see accomplishments where there are none and overlook failures where there are many.

One of the most compelling ways to conduct a bias test on yourself is to take a sample of one of your employee's behaviors that you rated as "excellent" and ask yourself if all your other employees would have received the exact same ratings if they had performed at the exact same level. If you would've rated some of them lower, some bias has slipped into your thinking.

The first step in eliminating bias is recognizing it.

Stopping the stereotypes

When it comes to stereotyping, managers take the supposed characteristics of a group and apply them to all its members. Although some stereotypes are positive, most are unflattering, unfair, and inappropriate. When stereotypes enter any phase of the performance appraisal process, the information is instantly tainted, and the credibility of the appraisal drops to zero.

A quick way to see whether stereotyping is entering your own thinking is to pick any particular group of people, whether based on political affiliation, nationality, weight, age, or any other factor. With that group in mind, ask yourself whether you believe that there are any personality traits that are typical of all its members. If you think such characteristics exist, you're also finding the stereotypes that exist in your mind. Whether these stereotypes are positive or negative, they're sure to interfere with your effectiveness in the appraisal process.

When you're aware of the stereotypes you hold, you'll have taken a gigantic step toward eradicating them.

Rethinking "just like me"

When managers sense that they have a lot in common with certain employees, they tend to be extra lenient when appraising the performance of these employees.

If a manager and an employee share common backgrounds and experiences, the manager is likely to feel significantly greater levels of trust, understanding, and familiarity with this employee — which leads to more positive evaluations. For example, say you grew up on a farm in the Midwest, worked your way through college, and married your high school sweetheart. You're going to feel much closer to an employee who has a similar background than you will to an unmarried employee who grew up in a major city, partied through college, and spent his summers traveling around Europe. When it's time for the performance evaluation, that common bond between you and that first employee will generate higher ratings.

By letting the bonds of commonality overpower the facts of performance, you're overlooking three key and costly points:

- Although you may have an employee whose background is remarkably similar to yours, there is no reason to assume that her performance is going to be equally remarkable.
- Plenty of employees are just like you in many respects, but certainly not in *every* respect. And some of those dissimilar respects just might be their competence, work ethic, loyalty, or honesty.
- If an employee senses that you're somehow swayed by a commonality in your backgrounds, that employee may also sense that she has a wild card that will automatically condone marginal work, self-serving behaviors, and flaunting of company policies and standards.

When a manager has a lot in common with an employee and that sense of commonality leaks into the performance evaluations, the rest of the employees have a different term for this: They call it *favoritism.* And if you're looking for an instant way to undercut teamwork, cooperation, loyalty, and productivity, favoritism is right at the top of the list.

Recognizing the halo effect

If you're looking for one of the most common errors in the performance appraisal process, you'll find it in the *halo effect.* The halo effect is the tendency to allow your employees' excellent performance in one area to impact the way you evaluate their performance in all other areas.

When your employees have performed extremely well in one key part of the job, you need to provide them with a very positive rating in that area. But after you've assigned that rating, you need to approach the next item with a clean slate and no lingering positive predispositions from the last item.

The halo effect comes into play when managers don't make a clean break from the rating on that previous item. Instead, their positive rating on one item leads to equally positive ratings on every other item, regardless of actual performance.

For example, say you're a real stickler for detail, and you just finished giving one of your employees an outstanding rating on his thoroughness, detail-mindedness, and accuracy.

However, instead of moving to the next factor and making a merit-based rating, the halo that you just placed on your employee gets in your way, leading you to conclude that because he performed with distinction in one important area, surely he's deserving of equally high ratings in all other areas.

That one halo leads to halos in every category, and that leads to trouble. Here are some of the problems caused by the halo effect:

- **When employees figure out which category is the key source of all the positive ratings, they focus their behavior only on that category.** For example, if neatness and accuracy are the hot buttons that trigger a vast array of positive ratings, you'll end up with employees who devote all their energy to this area. Of course, this means that they're devoting less energy to other areas, such as productivity, communication, and quality of work, to name just a few.
- **When employees are provided with positive ratings across the board, they know that many of those ratings were undeserved.** Instead of feeling appreciative for such ratings, they're more likely to view the process as meaningless. If they're going to get a barrage of outstanding ratings that have nothing to do with their performance, sure, they'll accept these ratings, but they won't accept the notion that performance appraisal is a valuable process.
- **A collection of equally positive ratings across the board actually sends a less flattering message about the manager's attitude — namely, that the manager didn't devote much time, energy, or effort to the appraisal process.** Instead, the manager simply hooked onto one piece of performance and used it as the litmus test for ratings in all other categories. Employees generally believe that their managers' lack of interest and concern in the appraisal process is indicative of a lack of interest and concern for them as individuals. Although recognition has been consistently found to be linked to motivation, that isn't the case for recognition that's perfunctory or undeserved. A string of undeserved positive ratings is more likely to be perceived as insulting, degrading, and even embarrassing.

Dismissing the horns effect

The halo effect (see the preceding section) has an evil twin known as the *horns effect.* With the horns effect, when employees perform poorly in one key performance area, managers give them lower ratings in all areas.

As you may expect, the horns effect generates even more negative reactions than the halo effect. At least with the halo effect, the employees received positive ratings. But with the widespread negative ratings associated with the horns effect, not only are the ratings inaccurate, but they can reduce possibilities for employees to receive raises, promotions, and other pluses that accompany positive ratings.

The horns effect results in some significant problems:

- **When employees know that they've at least been performing satisfactorily but they're given uniformly low ratings, they see the entire evaluation process as unbalanced and unfair.** When employees believe that a process that's at the heart of their tenure, earnings, and career is somehow inequitable, their attitude toward their job, their manager, and their work takes a major hit. And their performance and productivity soon do likewise.
- **If the employees can figure out which specific behavior contaminated their overall ratings, they'll place undue emphasis in that area, while putting less emphasis in all other areas.** This leads to further gaps in their performance, productivity, and overall satisfaction.
- **Most managers actively *say* they treat employees honestly, fairly, and respectfully, but when they let the horns effect horn in on their evaluations, all these pronouncements go down the drain — along with the managers' credibility.** And when you lose credibility with your employees, your potential effectiveness across the board is severely compromised.
- **When employees see that their evaluations are inexplicably and unacceptably low, they're disappointed and angry — which comes out in full force in the one-on-one sessions with their managers.** The likelihood of having an open discussion about the employees' performance and development is impossible when the horns effect has tainted the ratings.

Getting beyond first impressions

The shelf-life of first impressions is remarkable. If you think back to the first time that you met the significant others in your work life or personal life, you can probably remember, and in many cases picture, that first encounter. Not only does the image of that first encounter stay with you, but so do many of the initial feelings that you had toward that person.

The problem is, when employees make a positive or negative first impression, it often stays with their managers and leads to an equally positive or negative impression of their work.

For example, think of an employee whose first weeks on the job were filled with questions. Every assignment or request was followed by a barrage of questions befitting an investigative reporter. He filled the air with questions about projects, calendars, meetings, dates, deadlines, styles, and standards. And in some cases, he asked the same question more than once or twice or three times.

After a month or two, he finally settled down, learned the lay of the land, and became a contributing member of the team. But that first impression is still there, lurking in the memory bank of everyone who worked with him in that early period. That first impression is the foundation upon which all other impressions are built.

Even as these early impressions are overshadowed by more recent events, they never totally disappear. And one of the times when they typically reveal themselves is during the performance evaluation process. As managers mull over the data that they've gathered, some of that first-impression data can still leak into the evaluative process.

TIP

Instead of ignoring first impressions, try to remember them. By drawing them out, considering them carefully, placing them in the context where they belong, and acknowledging that your employees have come a long way since then, you'll be far less likely to allow them to alter your thinking and ratings.

Countering the contrasts

As part of the performance evaluation process, managers are often tempted to compare employees with each other, instead of comparing them with the standards that have been established for a given position. When this occurs, one employee may have done clearly excellent work, but his work isn't as good as that of an amazing superstar in the department — which can lead to a lower rating for the first employee, who has clearly met all the established criteria for a far better rating.

Making this mistake is particularly easy when you're preparing the evaluation forms. The contrast effect sneaks in when you've just evaluated an absolutely fantastic employee, and now it's time to rate an employee who has performed well, but not quite as well as the previous employee.

A parallel outcome occurs when you complete the evaluation of a marginal employee and then start to work on the evaluation of a very good employee. You're likely to give that latter employee an even higher rating than merited, again just because of her fortuitous placement in the lineup.

Either way, employees feel cheated and angry.

TIP

One of the best ways to prevent the contrast effect from occurring is to take a break between appraisals, especially if you've just completed a great or marginal evaluation. You can stand up and stretch, take care of a quick chore, return a brief phone call, take a quick stroll to the break room and back, or go back and look at several of the evaluations that you've already completed.

By redirecting your thinking to other matters between evaluations, you're better able to clear your head and start each evaluation with an open mind.

Minding your emotions

Your emotions have a major impact on the way you see the world around you. When you're upset, everything looks a little worse; when you're content, everything looks a little better. You're only human, which means your mood fluctuates when you're at work — for reasons related and unrelated

to your job. Maybe you just received some major recognition for the way you managed a particular project, or perhaps you just got some bad news about a family member.

Either way, your emotional state affects your thinking, attitudes, and behavior, and that means it also impacts the way you conduct performance evaluations. This doesn't mean that you must be in a particular emotional state in order to oversee the process fairly. Instead, if you sense that you're feeling particularly upbeat or downtrodden when you're about to evaluate one of your employees, honestly accept this state of mind and remember that it can impact the appraisal that you're completing.

Having accepted the fact that you're in a particularly positive or negative state of mind, one way to calibrate the impact is to take out a couple of appraisals that you already completed and cover up the ratings that you provided on two or three items. Look over the performance categories and your written comments, and then decide what the rating should be. When you have them in mind, uncover the ratings that you provided and see how close you are to them now. If you came up with significantly higher or lower ratings than in the completed evaluations, keep that in mind as you continue the process with the upcoming evaluations.

Veering from the center

Another common mistake in the appraisal process is called the *central tendency* — a predisposition to rate all employees in the center of the rating scale, regardless of the fact that their actual performance merits higher or lower ratings.

Managers who employ this questionable strategy ignore yet another fact: namely, that this approach suffers from inaccuracy, inequity, and a total lack of substantiation.

Some managers contend that this approach treats all employees fairly by giving them essentially the same ratings, while also saving the managers time in carrying out the process. Both of these assumptions are highly problematic:

- **All employees have *not* performed the same, and providing them all with equal ratings isn't going to increase anyone's sense of equity in the workplace.**

To the contrary, employees who believe they deserve better-than-average ratings are going to feel that they haven't been given equitable treatment at all.

- **Although it may indeed take you less time to complete an evaluation where all employees are provided with ratings in the middle of the scale, this approach is actually more time-consuming overall.** Why? Because the one-on-one sessions with employees will be long, drawn out, and confrontational. And, after the sessions, you'll need to spend more time dealing with performance problems generated by employees who are dissatisfied with inaccurate ratings and an apparent lack of concern, interest, and support from you.

In many cases, the actual reasons behind this mistaken approach are a combination of questionable energy, lack of commitment to the performance appraisal process, lack of understanding of the process, and a desire to avoid going out on any kind of limb when evaluating employees.

If you notice that all your evaluations indicate that your employees are average through and through, go through the evaluations again.

Avoiding the skews

There are two common mistakes in the appraisal process that are strikingly similar to the central tendency, and these are called the *positive skew* and *negative skew.* Instead of rating all the employees in the middle of the scale, some managers rate all their employees on the positive end of the scale, while other managers rate all their employees negatively.

Going positively skewed

The positively skewed evaluations suffer from several questionable assumptions:

- **They lead to fewer, if any, confrontations, disagreements, and denials in the one-on-one sessions.** Sure, the one-on-one sessions will be less stressful because employees won't insist that their evaluations should be lower. Unfortunately, the feedback is useless.

- **Positive evaluations are easier and quicker to write.** This too is correct — it's always easier to write praise than it is to craft negative feedback. But again, there is no point in giving positive feedback for behaviors that are less than positive. In fact, such positive reinforcement can encourage employees to continue to engage in counterproductive behaviors that should be avoided.
- **By bestowing heaps of praise, thanks, and adulation upon employees, I'll be well liked.** This is a myth. The reality is that these managers are more likely to be viewed as needy, weak, and easily manipulated.
- **Providing the employees with positive feedback will encourage them to work hard to continue to improve their performance.** This is true, as long as the positive feedback is associated with positive performance. Providing positive feedback for all performance renders all the feedback meaningless. As noted earlier, it also rewards behaviors that should be punished.

  If an employer ever needs to take disciplinary action because of the questionable performance of a given employee, it'll be far more difficult to pursue if the employee's performance evaluations are filled with positive ratings.
- **Positive ratings for employees make managers look good in the eyes of their *own* managers (hence, making them more promotable).** After all, if their department is filled with outstanding people, these managers can be promoted and one of the outstanding employees in their department can move into the open position.

  The problem is, when the actual performance levels of the employees become apparent — and sooner or later this does happen — everybody suffers. If these managers are promoted, they're removed from their zone of competence, while the employees left behind haven't been adequately coached to handle their current responsibilities, let alone increased responsibilities.

Going negatively skewed

An equally problematic set of errors occurs when managers give all their employees' equally low ratings. And the motivations for this approach are equally questionable:

- **For some managers, the idea behind the overly negative ratings is to identify the really tough and driven employees.** The contention is that when employees are burdened with negative ratings, only the strong will survive.

  This type of macho reasoning doesn't belong in the workplace. Nothing about inequitable evaluations will engender improved performance. When employees perform well and still receive wholly unwarranted negative evaluations, they feel resentment, frustration, dissatisfaction, and distrust.

- **These managers may also contend that there simply are no outstanding employees, regardless of the facts.** For such managers, there is a sense of pride in believing that no one is capable of achieving the high standards that they've set for the department. Their stated objective is that their extremely high standards will push employees to work even harder.

  These managers may claim that their high standards will inspire employees to leap for that brass ring, but in truth, the managers won't let anyone grasp it. On a deeper level, they may well believe that granting positive ratings to their employees somehow diminishes their own worth to the company. Besides, in order for goals to be motivational, they must be challenging yet attainable. If they're totally out of reach, there is no reason to think of them as motivational.

The term *attribution* refers to the way in which people draw inferences about the causes of various events or behaviors. People make incorrect attributions quite frequently, and some can be found in the performance appraisal process. Frequently described as *attribution errors* or *attribution bias,* the most common example is the tendency of some managers to regard employees' successes as the result of the efforts of the managers themselves, while regarding the source of the employees' failures as being the employees themselves.

Doing Away with Discussion Stoppers

When you're reviewing your employees' performance during the face-to-face evaluation sessions, you may unwittingly do

something that brings an open discussion to a grinding halt. And when this happens, the remainder of the conversation is strained, uncomfortable, and incapable of reaping the benefits that performance appraisal offers.

Keeping the discussion stoppers in mind is the best way to stop them from interfering with your evaluation sessions.

Labeling

Managers can easily look at their employees' behaviors and affix labels to the employees themselves. For example, employees who turn in their work late could be called "lazy," employees who clown around could be called "immature," and employees who don't have positive working relationships with some of their peers could be called "nasty."

The problem is, when you label an employee, the most common reactions are defensiveness, anger, vociferous denial, and harsh challenges. Employees typically feel insulted when they're labeled, and most won't just roll over and take it.

You're even likely to see your employees respond with various physical reactions, such as sweating, tightness in the neck or jaw, and shallow breathing, all of which are common reactions to stressful situations. In fact, by using language that your employee will likely interpret as a verbal assault, you're likely to see your employees demonstrate the most common reaction to stress: namely, fight or flight — neither of which is exactly at the top of the list for effective performance appraisals.

TIP

The best way to avoid this problem is to avoid labeling employees at any point in the evaluation process. Instead of focusing on a label, focus on the employees' specific behaviors that caused you to come up with a label in the first place.

For example, if you believe that an employee is lazy, focus on specific documented instances in which his behaviors clearly demonstrated laziness. If projects were late, assignments were shabbily completed, or the employee was sleeping on the job, those points are the ones to discuss.

REMEMBER

The best way to provide feedback is to focus on your employees' behaviors and not on their traits, characteristics, or personalities. After all, there isn't much your employees can do

with a label other than deny it. But by providing specific performance data instead of a catchall label, you're setting the stage to work productively with your employees to implement a plan of correction. Plus, they'll be much more receptive to doing so.

The weaknesses that people identify in others are often their own shortcomings. People are quick to see their own weaknesses in others because they're so familiar with them in their own behavior. As part of the appraisal process, look for any common negative themes that you're identifying among your employees. You may be highlighting your *own* weaknesses, rather than theirs.

Mentioning other employees

Another key mistake during the one-on-one performance evaluation sessions is to talk about your employees' co-workers. Even if a given employee is part of the most amazing team in the company, this isn't the time to be discussing the other players.

This session is the individual employee's special time with you, and all the focus and emphasis should be on him, not on anyone else.

Some managers bring up the names of other employees because they believe that these colleagues can serve as role models and examples. For example, when employees have questions about what it takes to do an outstanding job in a particular performance area, some managers respond by suggesting that the employee take a look at a particular co-worker. This type of response is replete with problems:

- The employee who is being evaluated doesn't want to hear praise about some other employee — she wants specific insights from the manager regarding the best steps to take in order to generate measurable improvements in performance and future ratings.

  Some employees feel insulted that their manager would use their evaluation time as an opportunity to praise someone else.

- It is also possible that a manager has an inaccurate impression of a so-called excellent co-worker. Perhaps

the named co-worker is quite skilled at presenting a favorable image to the manager but not much more. Maybe there is less to this employee than meets the manager's eye.

- If employees believe that there are certain favored employees in the department, this perception is likely to be further reinforced if a manager happens to mention these individuals during the evaluation.
- Mentioning other employees during an evaluation session is likely to diminish teamwork and camaraderie within the department. Employees tend to leave this type of session believing that teamwork means very little and that they should take whatever steps they can to step over their co-workers and gain their managers' attention and favor.

Getting defensive

During the course of the appraisal discussion, some employees may make condescending or degrading comments that attack you or the ratings you provided. It's quite normal to react defensively when faced with such comments, but as a manager, you have to remain focused, businesslike, and professional.

If you sense that you're getting upset, take a few deep breaths, let the employee vent, and refrain from instantly responding. When you do say something, use a calm and deliberative style.

TIP

Let the employee know that you're actively listening by summarizing, rephrasing, and asking questions. When doing so, be sure to ask rhetorical questions at the end of your statements, such as, "Isn't it?" or "Don't you think?" The idea is to generate several "yes" responses from your employees because this can help bring them into a more agreeable mindset.

REMEMBER

If you become defensive in these sessions, the credibility of your ratings becomes highly suspect. And this can lead to more provocative questions and comments from your employees.

Arguing

Some managers make the mistake of getting into arguments with their employees during evaluation sessions. If you argue during these sessions, you'll have automatically entered an argument that you can't win.

If you ultimately prevail on every point, you still lose because your employee was able to drag you into unprofessional and unbusinesslike behavior. All your feedback to the employee from this point on will be overshadowed by this questionable behavior.

And if you somehow fail to prevail on every point in the argument, then you lose in two ways:

- You obviously lose the argument and the points that you were trying to emphasize.
- You lose because your employee was able to drag you into this verbal quagmire.

TIP

The best way to avoid an argument is by refusing to engage. If your employee tries to draw you in, tell her that you aren't going to argue over any of this. At the same time, let the employee know that you want to answer all her questions. If the employee expresses concern over ratings in a particular area, calmly respond with facts, figures, dates, and examples.

Creating Problems rather than Solutions

Some managerial behaviors are specifically crafted to avoid problems in the appraisal process, but they end up having the exact opposite impact.

Bargaining

Some managers enter the appraisal sessions with the expectation that they may do some bargaining with the employees

before finalizing their ratings. These managers hope that their willingness to negotiate will avoid confrontations in the evaluation sessions, but the outcome is more problematic:

- **It causes confrontations.** Instead of avoiding confrontations in the evaluation sessions, the bargaining process actually opens the door to a good deal of heated debate and disagreement — and not over one or two points but over every point in the evaluation.
- **It misses the point.** Performance appraisals, by definition, are the managers' assessments of their employees' work. When employees are able to determine their final ratings, the accuracy, consistency, and fairness of the process suffer a serious decline.
- **It rewards one behavior.** Instead of basing ratings on performance across a broad range of work-related categories, bargaining ends up with ratings that are based heavily on the employees' negotiating skills.
- **It undercuts the self-evaluations.** When managers bargain over the evaluations, self-ratings are no longer honest assessments of the employees' own performance. Instead, these assessments are excessively high and resemble the opening offer in a negotiation session.

Talking too much

Another common mistake in the evaluation process occurs when managers spend more time talking than listening. These performance evaluation sessions are a dialogue, a time for you and your employees to openly discuss performance, exchange ideas, review results and goals, and ask and answer questions.

When managers turn these dialogues into monologues, the employees typically stop listening after just a few minutes. At that point, all the managers' comments become background noise, and the performance appraisals fall into the background as well.

TIP

When you hold evaluation sessions with your employees, keep a mental stopwatch focused on the amount of time that you're talking. If you sense that you're talking more than half the time, you need to do a lot more listening. Pay careful

attention to your employees. Their words as well as their body language can tell you whether you're talking too much.

Postponing the sessions

When a manager's workload gets too intense, he may be tempted to postpone a performance evaluation session. But unless there is a real emergency, postponing an appraisal is a major mistake. Here's why:

- **It sends an undermining message.** Postponing an appraisal meeting sends an immediate message that the process isn't particularly significant. If you want your employees to be serious about the performance appraisal process, you have to take it seriously, too. And this means making a firm commitment to hold these sessions as scheduled.
- **It makes it easy for you to postpone the meeting again.** When one performance appraisal session has been postponed, the likelihood of having it postponed in the future increases dramatically. Plus, when you postpone one employee's performance appraisal session, you're more likely to postpone other employees' appraisal sessions.
- **It's demoralizing to the individual.** If you postpone only one performance appraisal session while holding all the others, the employee whose meeting is postponed is given a negative message — whether you intend it or not. The message is that he isn't as important as the other employees.

Surprising Your Employees

When managers surprise their employees in the performance appraisal sessions by providing ratings that are grossly different from what the employees expected, the managers have made one of the most fundamental errors in the entire process.

Throughout the evaluation period, employees should have a clear and accurate understanding of the effectiveness of their performance in every key area. When you practice managing by wandering around, you're doing more than observing the

performance of your employees, documenting what you see, and establishing a log that will be vital when formulating the employees' evaluations at the end of the evaluation period.

Your role when wandering around includes providing ongoing coaching, guidance, and feedback to your employees. You're providing this feedback very close to the employees' behaviors, and you're providing it on a formal, as well as an informal, basis (including sit-down mini-evaluations at several points).

The result is that employees know exactly how they're doing every day, and they have a clear idea of the areas of their performance that are going well, along with those where improvement is needed. As a result of the feedback and guidance that you're regularly providing, your employees are taking regular and continuous steps each day to upgrade their performance and effectiveness on the job.

Chapter 8

Following Up

In This Chapter

- Using goals to motivate your employees
- Building your employees while building their performance
- Coaching your employees toward outstanding results

Some of the most important steps in the performance appraisal process are those that you take *after* you've completed the evaluation sessions with your employees. These follow-up actions are steppingstones to enhance your employees' performance, productivity, and development.

Performance appraisal is no longer an annual stand-alone program. Instead, it's an integral component of the overall process of performance management, functioning as part of a five-step cycle:

1. **Goal setting**

   Managers and employees meet and jointly establish specific performance and developmental goals. These goals are based in part on data and ratings produced in the performance evaluations.

2. **Ongoing coaching**

   Managers provide intermittent formal and informal feedback, guidance, and support to their employees throughout the evaluation period.

3. **Self-evaluations**

   As the time for the annual appraisal approaches, the employees complete their own evaluations, only this time they know exactly how they've performed.

4. **Performance evaluations.**

   Managers review all the performance data and complete the formal evaluations of their employees.

5. **Evaluation sessions.**

   Managers meet with their employees individually to go over the formal performance evaluations, but the tension and apprehension are all but eliminated because there are no surprises.

After these evaluation sessions, the next step is a return to Step 1, goal setting. And the cycle starts anew.

In this chapter, I cover Step 1 of the performance appraisal process — everything that happens *after* you've held your evaluation session and you start all over again.

Setting Goals

There isn't much point in providing your employees with a stack of feedback if nothing is done with it. Simply turning the employees loose and telling them that you expect to see some improvement is tantamount to turning your back on your employees and on the appraisal process itself. When your employees see your lack of involvement and support, they're likely to take that stack of feedback and toss it aside.

If you want to raise an employee's performance to the next level, your most useful and compelling tool is your completed performance appraisal. That completed appraisal opens the door to goal setting, and the goals that you establish with each of your employees are at the heart of their motivation, development, and success.

Looking forward instead of backward

Up to this point in the performance appraisal process, your focus has been on the past. You've gathered reams of data on your employees' successes, failures, strengths, and weaknesses. You've amassed this information by tapping every conceivable source and resource to fill in any blanks from the previous year.

Now it's time to look at the upcoming year, and that's the focus of goal setting. At this point in the process, you're turning around to face the future with your employees. And the notion of turning around is particularly appropriate because these goals can truly help stage a turnaround for any of your employees who may be struggling.

Your employees' futures are filled with opportunities to build their competencies, achieve outstanding results, and take their overall performance to new heights. By working with your employees to help establish their goals, and then providing them with coaching, guidance, and support along the way, you're creating the perfect climate for them to grow, and for their performance and effectiveness to do likewise. And if this happens, it'll be reflected in every aspect of your employees' work, as well as in their appraisals at the end of the next evaluation period.

REMEMBER

Managers who keep focusing on their employees' pasts instead of their futures tend to dwell on problems and failures, which sets the stage for repeat performances in the coming year.

Opting for goals over dreams

Say you have an employee who says that his goal is to do a better job in every area next year. That sounds great, except for one little problem: It's not a goal.

Your employee has actually articulated a dream, essentially a general wish or desire for a particular outcome. Nothing is wrong with dreams, but just having a dream doesn't mean it'll come true. If your employees want to turn their dreams into reality, they need to formulate them as goals.

Real goals have several distinct characteristics in common:

- **Goals are specific.** When your employees have real goals, nothing about them is general. Their goals won't be just to improve performance; instead, their goals will focus directly on the precise aspect or aspects of performance that they're aiming to improve.
- **Goals are realistic.** Your employees' goals need to be appropriate for their position, responsibilities, and training. Real goals don't impose expectations that are

totally unrelated to the employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, or standards.

- **Goals are prioritized.** All goals are not the same. Some are clearly critical and high priority, while others are important but lower in priority. As a result, every goal should have a clear and identifiable priority associated with it. Whether it's a numerical or alphabetical ranking makes no difference. What does make a difference is that the employee understands the priority associated with each goal and takes care of the most important goals first.
- **Goals are measurable.** As an employee pursues her goals, she and you need to know exactly where she is in the process. And, even more important, you both need to know if and when she's met a particular goal. As a result, true goals have a quantitative quality that allows them to be clearly measured at every point along the way. Because goals are measurable, employees and managers know exactly how the employees are performing every step of the way. At the end of the day, or at the end of the evaluation period, neither you nor your employee has any questions about goal attainment.
- **Goals are reachable.** Goals should certainly be challenging, but they should also be attainable. Granted, they should stretch your employees, but people can only stretch so far. If a goal is truly out of an employee's reach, it isn't truly a goal.
- **Goals are supported by action plans.** In order for your employees to reach their goals, the goals need to encompass clear planning. Action plans should include dates and deadlines, along with expected levels of project completion or goal attainment associated with each benchmark date. These plans set the path for employees to follow as they pursue their goals. Without action plans, employees may see where they want to go, but they don't know how to get there.

  As you work with your employees to establish action plans, think of yourself as a reporter and ask lots of questions that start with *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how.*

If even one of the preceding elements is missing, it's back to dreamland.

The preceding characteristics of goals apply whether you're talking about a performance goal or a personal goal. But when it comes to goal-setting in the workplace, performance goals need to meet the following guidelines, too:

- **Performance goals should be aligned with the organization's goals.** Performance goals should support the style, standards, ethics, vision, and mission of your company.
- **Performance goals should be linked to your goals.** The idea is that the employees' goals should support the goals of their manager. As a result, when your employees reach their goals, it should help you meet yours. In turn, the attainment of your goals should help your manager meet her goals. In this way, the employees' goals from level to level are linked together and aligned with the goals of the company's top leadership.
- **Both you and your employees should agree on their performance goals.** When you've finished helping your employees formulate their goals for the coming year, the process should end with total understanding and agreement. If there are questions, doubts, or concerns, you need to address and resolve them before anything is finalized.

Motivating your employees to meet their goals

Just because you and your employees have been working on setting goals doesn't automatically mean that your employees will be motivated to reach them.

When goals are simply dumped on employees, without any employee involvement or input, and without any consideration of the employees' needs, the goals are likely to be rejected and, thus, void of any motivational impact. One of the key steps in establishing goals that are truly motivational is to establish them *with* your employees, rather than *for* your employees.

The presence of goals doesn't necessarily mean that employees will be motivated, but the lack of goals undercuts the likelihood of *any* significant motivation. After all, motivation energizes employees to take action to move toward a particular goal. If

there are no goals to meet down the road, the employees will have no particular drive to get there.

If your employees sense a link between fulfillment of their needs and the goals that you jointly establish with them, the goals are likely to have more of a motivational impact. For example, if the employees' needs are focused on receiving recognition for successful performance, and your policy is to provide recognition for excellent work, your employees are likely to be motivated to do a great job.

Challenging your employees enough but not too much

When establishing goals with your employees, you need to give some extra thought to the level of difficulty of the goals themselves.

Extremely challenging goals

Some managers believe that goals should be as challenging as possible. The hope is that, if goals are extremely difficult or maybe even impossible to reach, employees will be highly motivated to reach them. Such challenging goals will energize employees to push themselves to great lengths, well beyond their normal efforts. And by doing so, they'll have raised their performance and surpassed the milestones and standards associated with less-rigorous goals.

Managers who subscribe to this theory believe that, when faced with impossible goals, some employees will rise to the occasion. Plus, even if employees aren't able to reach these goals, they'll have the satisfaction of truly exerting themselves in the pursuit of goals that would've scared away less-hearty souls.

Here's the reality: When goals are nothing short of impossible, the employees may initially hit the ground running, but as they realize that the goals pose insurmountable barriers, and as their efforts to reach those goals lead to backsliding, the outcome is a motivational meltdown. Most employees reason that if goals absolutely can't be met, there's no point in even trying.

Extremely easy goals

At the other end of the continuum, some managers believe that easily attainable goals are the most motivational. The idea is that, when employees meet their goals, whatever the goals may be, they experience a strong sense of accomplishment, and that's a strong source of motivation.

Plus, when employees reach their goals, they get recognition from their managers, which is yet another motivator. And when employees meet their goals, they experience increases in self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-image, all obviously positive outcomes. Hence, the reasoning goes, because employees are motivated to receive these psychological rewards, it makes sense to provide them with numerous opportunities to do so, and this is just what easy goals will do.

Here's the reality: Easily attained goals don't even register on the motivation scale. When employees can exert little or no effort and reach their goals, the message is that such goals are insignificant and meaningless.

When employees meet too-easy goals, they don't experience feelings of achievement or accomplishment. Instead, the goals are so minor that the employees who reach them believe that they haven't achieved or accomplished much of anything.

When goals can be reached with minimal effort by anyone who strolls into the department, they're void of any of the feelings of success that accompany the attainment of serious and significant goals. In fact, some employees are actually embarrassed when granted recognition for meeting unchallenging goals.

When goals are viewed by the employees as frivolous, simple, insignificant, and meaningless, they contribute more to disinterest and dissatisfaction than they do to motivation. After all, if a basketball hoop is 1 foot high and the size of a swimming pool, there isn't much satisfaction associated with hitting a shot — and there isn't much fun in that either.

Challenging goals

Goals that have a positive motivational impact are challenging, but they must be realistically challenging. They aren't a walk in the park, nor do they call for your employees to walk on Mars. Instead, they require a good deal of work on projects that are demanding, significant, and meaningful.

There is no guarantee that your employees will meet challenging goals, but with serious effort, energy, drive, and focus — along with support, guidance, and feedback from you — there is a chance that your employees will experience a major success. And with that success will come meaningful recognition and a true sense of achievement and accomplishment, which is highly motivational.

Looking at the Types of Goals

When you completed the appraisals of your employees, you gave each individual ratings in a wide range of work-related categories. You can now look back at these evaluations and use each employee's specific ratings as the basis for goal setting.

In fact, these ratings provide the ideal starting point for establishing the two most important types of goals in the workplace: performance goals and developmental goals.

Performance goals

When you create performance goals with your employees, place your emphasis on jointly establishing clear, specific, measurable, and meaningful objectives in three interrelated areas:

- **Output and results goals:** Goals in this area focus on quantitative measures of productivity, yield, and results that the employees are expected to achieve. For example, goals in this area can be targeted at numbers of units produced, hours billed, claims handled, or sales closed.
- **Competency goals:** These goals focus on the way in which your employees carry out their job responsibilities and strive to build their output and productivity. Goals in this arena focus on such measurables as quantity and quality of work, interpersonal skills, leadership effectiveness, job

knowledge and expertise, communication skills, planning and administration, and problem solving.

- **Behavioral goals:** These goals focus on the specific behaviors that your employees demonstrate every day while carrying out their various job responsibilities. Goals in this area deal with targeted improvements in such areas as attitude, friendliness, dedication, energy, handling pressure, and supporting the company's values and mission.

Developmental goals

As you work with your employees to establish their performance goals, you also need to use this opportunity to establish additional goals that focus on your employees' growth, learning, and development.

In order to set developmental goals that actually enhance your employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, and effectiveness on the job, you need to keep in mind some key points all the way through the goal-setting process.

Identifying each employee's needs

Some of your employees will have individual areas in which their performance falls short. When working with them to create developmental goals, the first step is to identify the areas in which further development is actually needed — for example, in terms of leadership, communication, teamwork, or administrative and planning skills.

The best source of this type of information is each individual employee's evaluation. Take a close look at the areas in which you gave relatively low ratings, consider the significance of each area, and then select those that are most critical for effective performance and success on the job.

This is also an excellent time to review any 360-degree feedback (if your company has such a program). Whether you used this feedback as part of the employees' evaluations or not, 360-degree feedback is very helpful for identifying areas in which further development may be warranted.

A good deal of development is focused on areas in which employee performance needs some improvement, but don't forget to also take a look at the areas in which your employees performed particularly well. These areas may be significant strengths already, and with additional development, they can grow into major assets for the company as well as for the employees themselves.

Building your employees' motivation to learn

If you just take the findings from the evaluations and throw your employees into a training program, the outcome is likely to be underwhelming at best. In order for true learning to occur, the participants in any kind of educational program should be motivated to learn. Without motivation, any efforts to build their skills and upgrade their knowledge will be little more than background noise.

One of the best ways to increase your employees' motivation to learn is to make sure that their thoughts, ideas, and opinions are included in designing their developmental program. Have individual meetings and open discussions with each of your employees to make sure that they have input in their developmental program. As part of these discussions, be sure to let your employees see how they can benefit by meeting their developmental goals.

Establishing developmental goals

With your employees' developmental needs clearly identified, and the employees' inputs included in the process, you're ready to jointly establish developmental goals. Developmental goals clearly outline the performance areas where your employees will pursue development, as well as the specific outcomes they'll be seeking in each. Developmental objectives are held to the same standards of specificity, measurement, challenge, and prioritization as the employees' performance goals.

For example, assume that one of your employees is starting to take on some leadership responsibilities, and she clearly shows potential for advancement. However, she hasn't had any formal leadership training. One developmental goal would be focused on building her leadership skills by having her spend a specific number of hours in leadership training and guided leadership experiences. The action plan for this developmental goal would include specific benchmarks regarding classes and seminars to attend, articles and books

to read, predetermined and closely monitored leadership opportunities, and predetermined formal feedback and coaching sessions to review her effectiveness in these leadership roles.

Setting the developmental plan

As soon as you and your employees have agreed on the developmental goals, as in the case of establishing performance goals, the next step is to create a thorough plan to energize and guide the process throughout the evaluation period. This step-by-step plan includes developmental areas to be covered, resources required, programs to attend, training materials needed, commitments from other employees who will help, follow-up meetings, and clearly defined benchmarks and deadlines.

Setting up a developmental training program

As you and your employees review the various developmental options and educational programs, pay attention to seven key factors that are the hallmarks of better programs:

- The program should emphasize learning by experience.
- Your employees should have numerous opportunities to practice their newly acquired knowledge and skills.
- Your employees should receive prompt, accurate, and supportive feedback every step of the way.
- The educational atmosphere should be open, communicative, and highly receptive to questions and discussions.
- The material being covered should be directly applicable to what your employees will be doing on the job.
- There should be varying educational techniques to identify and build on the individual learning styles of your employees.
- The program should be evaluated on the basis of the actual results that are achieved. For example, if the program is designed to help employees deal more effectively with customers, there should be a decrease in customer complaints.

Some educational programs use questionnaires to evaluate their effectiveness, but the questions miss the mark because they either ask the employees if they enjoyed the program or

test the employees on what they learned. The problem is, the employees may enjoy a program but learn absolutely nothing. Or they may learn a laundry list of information but have no idea how to apply any of it.

One of the most effective ways to evaluate the effectiveness of these types of programs is to look at subsequent employee behaviors and performance results.

Employees generate much of their knowledge while on the job, and you're their primary trainer. They're learning not only from the formal sessions that you provide, but also from the example that you're setting every day. You're their central role model, and that makes you their most compelling trainer.

Managing after the Evaluation

As soon as you and your employees have jointly created and agreed upon performance and developmental goals for the current evaluation period, your role as a manager includes ongoing and regular communication, contact, and coaching.

This doesn't mean that you'll be sacrificing any of your core job responsibilities (for example, in terms of planning, organizing, problem solving, or dealing with customers or vendors). Instead, you'll be balancing your more traditional managerial responsibilities with responsibilities that focus on the most important assets in the company — your employees.

Wandering around

Wandering around is one of the best ways to monitor your employees' progress as they strive to reach their goals. If you observe your employees making great strides, you can easily provide some informal feedback that helps them understand how they're doing, while simultaneously encouraging them to continue the same successful behaviors.

At the same time, if you find your employees falling short for any reason, you're literally in an advantageous position to do something about it. Had you not been wandering around, you might have learned about the issue at a later date (when it turned into a crisis), or you might not have learned about it at all.

By wandering around, not only will you be able to quickly spot specific problems early, but you'll also be able to take proactive steps to control and correct them. Plus, your on-site observation will give you much greater insight into the cause or causes of the problems, and that will help you set the stage to prevent recurrences in the future.

While you're wandering around, try also to treat the process as managing by *wondering* around: Do more than observe and gather data. Try to understand the reasons *behind* the behaviors and outcomes that you're observing. With such knowledge, you're even better armed to prevent recurrences.

Coaching your employees toward their goals

When you find your employees engaging in particularly productive behaviors, you can take some powerful steps to keep them on this positive track. Plus, when you find your employees engaging in behaviors and outcomes that aren't helping them advance toward their goals, you can take equally powerful steps to help them get back on track. In both cases, you can generate these positive outcomes by playing one of the most important roles in management today: the role of the coach.

Some managers regard coaching as occasional words of encouragement or casual suggestions. Coaches do engage in these behaviors, but there's more to coaching than this.

Coaching is actually an ongoing managerial function in which you work with your employees to build their strengths and competencies, draw out their most effective and productive behaviors, help them identify and surpass obstacles, provide them with counseling for counterproductive behaviors, and keep them on target as they follow their developmental plans and pursue their goals.

When you see your employees engaging in particularly effective behaviors, give them some words of encouragement. This type of positive feedback increases the likelihood that they'll repeat these behaviors.

At the same time, if your employees are engaging in behaviors that appear to be counterproductive, how you respond depends on how serious the problems are. If the employees' actions aren't particularly serious, a few words to the wise, preferably not in front of others, are probably all that is necessary.

However, if the behaviors are more problematic, meet with the employees to review the issue in more detail. When you do so, keep the following key points in mind:

- Meet with your employee as close to the problematic behavior as possible.
- Hold the meeting in private.
- Be specific in describing the questionable performance and the problems that emerged or can emerge as a result.
- Provide clear and specific guidance and modeling.
- Be sure your employee understands and agrees to change his behavior.
- Tell your employee what will happen if the questionable performance continues.
- Set a follow-up date, preferably within 30 days, to meet with your employee to discuss the status of the situation.
- Document the discussion and place a copy in your employee's file.
- In your wandering around, be sure to follow up on this specific aspect of your employee's performance.

Whether you observe your employees taking actions that are outstanding or unacceptable, be sure to enter them in the log that you use when formulating their performance evaluations.

By acting as a coach, you're providing your employees with regular feedback, guidance, and direction, whether for problematic behaviors or productive behaviors. You're helping to build their performance, competencies, and behaviors, while simultaneously helping them advance toward their goals.

Part III

Phrases and Expressions That Work

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant

"...faster than a speeding bullet...more powerful than a locomotive...these are just a few of your positive attributes."

In this part . . .

These chapters contain more than 3,200 appraisal phrases that deal with the most important performance areas in your employees' jobs. The phrases run the gamut from exceptional all the way to unsatisfactory. There are phrases for every occasion, and, no doubt, occasions for every phrase.

The phrases in the positive categories are designed to encourage and motivate your employees to keep up the good work. At the same time, the phrases in the less-than-satisfactory range are designed to identify areas where your employees need to improve, as well as to open the door to productive discussions on this very matter.

Chapter 9

The Best Phrases for Quality and Quantity of Work

In This Chapter

- Building and reinforcing employee output
- Identifying and enhancing employee thoroughness
- Assessing and rewarding time-management skills

Two primary areas of emphasis in the performance appraisal process are the quality and quantity of each employee's work. Quality and quantity are two central performance measures for which employees need thorough and accurate feedback. Regardless of performance, when such feedback is questionable, productivity is likely to be questionable, too.

Your written comments are a great opportunity to provide employees with complete and long-lasting feedback on the quality and quantity of their work. On the one hand, writing a general statement indicating that an employee needs to produce more or do a neater job is easy; so is simply writing a statement that there are no quality or quantity problems. But these comments have no impact when it comes to sustaining excellent performance or improving marginal performance.

In order for your written feedback to have a long-lasting impact, you need to focus on the individual performance factors that determine the quality and quantity of your employees' work, such as accuracy, detail-mindedness, productivity, multi-tasking, and setting priorities, to name just a few. The best strategy is to include targeted phrases that energize an employee to keep up the good work in key areas, while also encouraging employees to focus more carefully on the quality and quantity of their work where needed. This chapter provides you with the full spectrum of those phrases.

Accuracy

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Sets the gold standard for accuracy
- Produces consistently error-free work
- Produces work that is 100 percent reliable
- Has zero tolerance for mistakes

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Has an ongoing focus on accuracy
- Finds and corrects errors
- Emphasizes accuracy to others
- Checks and rechecks for accuracy

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Keeps accuracy in mind
- Expects accuracy in all aspects of the job
- Maintains detailed and accurate records
- Does not tolerate sloppy work

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Does not spend enough time reviewing
- Produces documentation that is not consistently reliable
- Is too tolerant of errors
- Produces frequently unreliable output
- Tends to overlook specifications

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Produces work that cannot be relied upon
- Needs constant monitoring
- Has made errors that have led to significant problems
- Always falls short of the mark in terms of accuracy

Detail-Mindedness

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Covers every significant detail from A to Z
- Takes thoroughness to a new level
- Energizes others to work carefully
- Catches critical details missed by others
- Meticulously manages every key detail
- Manages the details, and doesn't let the details manage him
- Possesses uncanny insight into the role and relevance of every detail
- Can discuss details with anyone at any level
- Remains unsatisfied until a topic is totally mastered
- Accurately analyzes and prioritizes details

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Has a great eye for detail
- Regards the term *minor detail* as an oxymoron
- Keeps details in perspective
- Can get down to a microscopic level if needed
- Never gets mired in minor details
- Quickly notices when key details are overlooked
- Digs into the details
- Has detailed knowledge that is greatly valued by others
- Supports conclusions with appropriate details
- Is uncomfortable when details are lacking

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Includes all relevant details
- Discerns relevant from irrelevant details
- Sweats the small stuff
- Makes sense of the masses of detail

- Steps up to the challenge of handling details
- Does not miss a major detail
- Stays on top of the details
- Is comfortable with the expected level of detail
- Pushes extra-hard to handle the details

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has little concern for details
- Sees the big picture, but overlooks the small picture
- Leaves the details to others
- Struggles with details
- Leaves out points that should be included
- Randomly omits details
- Lets the details slide
- Regards details as a major challenge
- Regards details as a low priority
- Sees details as an inconvenience
- Procrastinates when handling details
- Gets careless with details

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Does not get down to details
- Overlooks essential details
- Focuses on the fine points and misses the major ones
- Focuses on the major points and misses most others
- Tries to bluff when asked about details
- Omits vital details, but includes insignificant details
- Regards details as fluff
- Is easily distracted when working on details
- Provides details that are sloppy, inaccurate, or incomplete

Meeting Goals

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Sets challenging goals and surpasses them
- Is truly inspirational with her goal attainment
- Establishes increasingly rigorous objectives
- Is passionate about meeting goals
- Gives 110 percent, 100 percent of the time
- Is the ultimate role model for goal setting and attainment
- Encourages and guides others to surpass their goals
- Turns obstacles into challenges and then overcomes them
- Has confidence in his ability to meet challenging goals, and for good reason
- Is highly knowledgeable about the actual process of setting goals
- Is a key source of information about goal setting for employees in many departments
- Shows a high degree of creativity in setting and pursuing goals
- Consistently seeks out larger and more challenging goals
- Has a passion for goal attainment that spreads throughout her team

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Meets or exceeds goals every time
- Has a very strong goal orientation
- Will not stop until all the goals are met
- Gives his all to meet all the objectives
- Helps others meet their objectives
- Is undaunted by unforeseen disruptions or blockages
- Stays with the plan, but maintains wiggle room to handle the unexpected

- Never loses sight of the target
- Keeps the communication lines open regarding all goal-related matters
- Reaches goals that elude others
- Focuses on high-impact goals, without losing sight of lesser goals
- Understands the vision, values, and culture of the company, and develops goals with them in mind
- Realistically adjusts the priorities of goals as work situations change
- Approaches goals with energy, enthusiasm, drive, and focus

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is energized by demanding goals
- Is fully committed to meeting goals
- Meets both short-term and long-term objectives
- Follows the action plan to achieve goals
- Works around or through obstacles
- Keeps goals in mind throughout the day
- Works diligently to accomplish all the established objectives
- Sets challenging yet reachable goals
- Is highly motivated to meet every goal
- Is receptive to new and different goals that help the company realize its mission
- Shows initiative and self-direction in setting goals
- Works diligently to help establish goals and plans
- Clearly communicates objectives to others
- Tackles every goal tenaciously

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Rarely devotes adequate attention to goals
- Rushes through the goal-setting process

- Sets aside the most demanding goals
- Overlooks the action plan
- Expects others to meet their goals, while ignoring her own
- Spends too much time on second-tier objectives
- Seeks advice in setting and pursuing goals, but rarely follows it
- Displays random performance in both establishing and pursuing goals
- Asks questions about goals and plans, but doesn't always listen
- Avoids discussions about goals
- Doesn't pay enough attention to the company's goals
- Thrives on picking the low-hanging fruit
- Displays more talk than action when it comes to meeting goals

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Fails to meet even the most basic objectives
- Loses sight of goals
- Establishes routine goals and fails to meet them
- Is easily distracted from goals, rather than attracted to them
- Has questionable organizational skills, making all his goals far more difficult to reach
- Is overwhelmed by the most basic goals
- Sets goals and ignores them
- Has yet to establish a truly challenging and productive goal
- Avoids goal-setting sessions and discussions
- Fails to fully engage in pursuing her objectives
- Downsizes goals after committing to pursue them as originally designed
- Puts goals on a back burner and leaves them there
- Fails to see the consequences of missing goals

Multi-Tasking

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Deftly juggles several balls at once
- Is energized by additional tasks
- Truly enjoys the challenge of multi-tasking
- Uses strong organizational skills for multi-tasking success
- Has had multiple successes because of his multi-tasking
- Increases attention and focus to successfully complete several tasks simultaneously
- Completes the most important tasks first
- Actively seeks additional tasks
- Switches seamlessly from one project to another
- Takes on and completes a wide range of additional tasks with no loss of quality
- Is able to effectively manage a seemingly unmanageable amount of tasks
- Is the go-to person for additional projects

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Can shift gears on a dime
- Approaches multi-tasking with multiple skills
- Always says “yes” to additional responsibilities
- Maintains excellent focus on all projects
- Prioritizes tasks and gets the jobs done
- Manages time to complete multiple tasks in a timely manner
- Prioritizes projects for maximum productivity
- Allocates time effectively to complete a wide range of tasks
- Is highly regarded and respected for her ability to multi-task

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Readily assumes and completes multiple assignments
- Regards multi-tasking as part of the job
- Accepts additional assignments without hesitation
- Will not stop until the work is done and the deadlines are met
- Realistically adjusts priorities when new work is assigned
- Allocates time effectively on multiple projects
- Maintains efficiency across a broad range of projects
- Regards multi-tasking as a way to add value to the company
- Keeps quality in mind on all tasks

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has missed more deadlines because of his multi-tasking
- Sets sights on the easiest tasks
- Agrees to additional assignments, but lets them slide
- Jumps from task to task, while completing few of them
- Engages in multi-tasking but lacks in quality
- Has produced more errors as the tasks have increased
- Tends to decline additional work

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is overwhelmed by the expectations of multi-tasking
- Inadequately focuses on any single task
- Is unable to distinguish major from minor tasks
- Stresses out with additional responsibilities
- Regards additional tasks as an intrusion
- Complains when asked to handle additional tasks
- Can handle only a small number of basic tasks at one time
- Looks to others to do the work

Performance Levels

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Finds the most effective ways to get the job done
- Creates new strategies to improve performance
- Improves the performance of others
- Focuses abundant energy and effort on the job
- Targets efforts for maximum results, and then achieves them
- Is motivated to perform at a superior level
- Maintains the highest personal performance standards
- Is clearly superior in every measurable area of performance
- Expects and attains outstanding results
- Serves as a highly positive role model in all performance areas
- Took a virtually impossible assignment and turned it into a major winner
- Set a new high-water mark on the XYZ project
- Grabs the brass ring on every project
- Dazzles senior management

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Comes to work ready to excel
- Sets high personal performance expectations
- Relentlessly pursues outstanding outcomes
- Expects more and gets it
- Refuses to settle for status-quo performance
- Does not know the word *average*
- Is energized by the prospect of achieving challenging goals
- Prioritizes work for maximum results
- Has a compelling “can-do” attitude

- Is undaunted by difficult challenges, tough obstacles, or frustrating events
- Plans to succeed and does so
- Bounces back from setbacks
- Is frequently mentioned by name whenever the topic of outstanding performance comes up
- Keeps pushing until the desired outcomes are achieved
- Jump-starts stalled projects
- Takes great pride not only in meeting goals but in surpassing them

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is open to new strategies to improve results
- Has visibly improved her performance levels
- Is steadily upgrading every performance area
- Actively seeks strategies to improve performance
- Can be counted on for solid performance
- Focuses his priorities on maximum effectiveness and success
- Maintains focus on the main event
- Takes feedback to heart and strives to improve
- Focuses on work, not on the clock
- Is a stable and consistent performer
- Is very interested in suggestions to build performance
- Effectively focuses her energy on the job

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is satisfied with his current performance, despite the fact that it isn't satisfactory
- Prefers to slip under the bar instead of leaping over it
- Can be sidetracked by minor obstacles and challenges
- Is tolerant of mediocre performance
- Regards performance measures as unfair

- Has an inflated view of her own work
- Insists that improvements in performance are coming soon
- Feels that others are intentionally trying to make him look bad
- Spends more time as a spectator than as a participant
- Comes up short on long-term projects
- Spends time on low-priority projects
- Is primarily interested in things that have little to do with work
- Is rarely around when it's time for heavy lifting
- Does C-level work on A-level projects
- Misunderstands the priorities of the job

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Attributes performance problems to other people or circumstances
- Fails to take responsibility for her failures
- Has received complaints from customers
- Has received complaints from management
- Has displayed performance levels that have been declining
- Talks the performance talk, but does not walk the walk
- Has fallen into a habit of questionable performance
- Spends more time socializing than working
- Shows little interest or motivation in upgrading performance
- Doesn't pay enough attention to the work that needs to be done
- Expects others to carry the load
- Regards goals as suggestions
- Always seeks the easy way out
- Is unwilling to accept feedback and guidance
- Steps back when it's time to step up

Productivity

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Produces a remarkable amount of high-quality work
- Inspires others with his output
- Sets a new standard for productivity
- Puts the "pro" in *productivity*
- Monitors productivity and implements upgrades as needed
- Always seeks opportunities to be even more productive
- Dazzles everyone with the quality and quantity of her work
- Is productivity minded
- Regards productivity as a top priority
- Generates great productivity from others
- Identifies and implements steps to enhance output
- Is responsible for a major increase in departmental productivity
- Always goes the extra mile(s)
- Fully understands the figures behind productivity
- Works hard and works smart
- Streamlines departmental operations
- Raises the bar for everyone
- Is energized by challenges that would derail others
- Offers outstanding suggestions to increase productivity

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is motivated to be highly productive
- Has steadily increased personal output
- Provides suggestions that enhance productivity
- Serves as an excellent role model of productive behavior
- Focuses on people as well as productivity

- Is productive under less-than-perfect conditions
- Makes others more productive
- Generates and implements creative ideas
- Works directly with others to enhance their productivity
- Is eager to learn about ways to be more productive
- Quickly incorporates new knowledge to build productivity
- Turns challenges into opportunities
- Is a stellar producer
- Is productive beyond standard requirements
- Takes on any task
- Single-handedly led to the success of the XYZ project through his efforts
- Is regarded as a productivity guru

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Produces solid quality and quantity of work
- Helps others work better
- Shares insights to improve productivity
- Works with the team to build output
- Has been improving her productivity
- Understands how to produce more
- Puts in extra hours to get the desired results
- Builds productivity by being well organized
- Fully embraces the need for greater productivity
- Is a storehouse of productivity knowledge
- Does more than talk about productivity

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is sporadic with his output
- Is often uneven with her productivity
- Can work hard, but not consistently
- Could be far more productive

- Tends to set the bar too low
- Does not exert consistent effort
- Can meet the mark in terms of productivity, but frequently falls short
- Blames productivity problems on others
- Bogs down performance and productivity with his misdirected actions
- Spends too much time on low-priority tasks
- Works reactively rather than proactively
- Tries to do just enough to get by
- Is an amateur in the world of productivity
- Sets aside quality
- Talks about working productively, but rarely does so

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is slipping in terms of her personal productivity
- Is distracted by non-work issues
- Doesn't focus enough energy and attention on the work to be done
- Sets low goals and fails to meet them
- Doesn't regard productivity as a priority
- Sees his personal output slipping and does nothing to stop it
- Interferes with the performance of others
- Displays disruptive or distracting behaviors
- Often needs to redo her work
- Rarely gets out of first gear
- Regards productivity as someone else's concern
- Takes inappropriate or reckless shortcuts
- Shows little interest in being more productive
- Fails to fully engage in projects
- Disregards suggestions to build productivity

Setting Priorities

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Understands and resolves A-level matters before B-level and C-level matters
- Uses sound judgment and insights when rank-ordering projects
- Serves as a valuable resource to determine the role and priority of totally different tasks
- Always knows which projects belong at the top of the list and which belong at the bottom
- Easily and quickly singles out low-priority tasks
- Clarifies priorities for employees at any job level
- Prevents others from pursuing minor projects that superficially appear to be important
- Quickly and accurately calibrates project priorities

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is keenly aware of the subtleties that make one project more important than another
- Places work priorities over personal priorities
- Adapts his workload and priorities to meet workplace demands
- Breaks projects into logical pieces to make sure that top priorities are handled first
- Is able to set priorities when under great pressure
- Tackles high-value projects first
- Targets efforts on tasks with the largest payoff
- Uses multi-tasking to handle low-priority items

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Understands priorities and how to establish them
- Discusses priorities when there is confusion

- Is unafraid to ask questions about priorities
- Shifts priorities as needed
- Clarifies and then correctly handles competing priorities
- Is very cognizant of priorities and adjusts focus as necessary
- Reviews priorities before starting tasks

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Confuses priorities with preferences
- Starts working before prioritizing
- Uses inappropriate criteria in determining what to do first
- Leaves major projects until the end
- Argues over priorities
- Decides on priorities and rigidly sticks to them, even when situations call for flexibility
- Sees unessential matters as essential and vice versa
- Lacks insight into her own ability to handle priorities
- Is easily sidetracked by low-value tasks

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Ignores priorities of assigned projects
- Treats all assignments as having essentially the same priorities
- Places no priority on setting priorities
- Randomly prioritizes assignments
- Works on lowest priorities first
- Sees only the small picture
- Spends too much time on low-level priorities and too little time on major priorities
- Wallows in trivial matters

Timeliness

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is a master of time management
- Is on time and on target with his work
- Generates more than an hour's worth of productivity in each hour
- Is excellent at prioritizing work
- Helps others manage their time
- Builds the time-management skills of fellow employees
- Streamlines tasks and processes
- Has a great sense of time and timing
- Never misses a deadline
- Meets deadlines like clockwork
- Creates and implements timesaving strategies
- Consistently makes the best use of her time
- Plans out the work, and then works the plan
- Has a high degree of expertise in time management, and applies it on every project
- Completes most projects early and all projects on time
- Is sensitive to the time demands and constraints of others
- Produces on-time, high-quality work
- Knows when and how to delegate

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Coordinates projects to meet deadlines
- Develops realistic plans and schedules
- Keeps the entire team on time
- Has a keen sense of what to do and when to do it
- Gives top attention to top priorities
- Manages time instead of letting time manage him

- Doesn't procrastinate
- Stays on schedule or ahead of it
- Never loses sight of time constraints
- Is excellent at estimating the time required for projects
- Manages to get more done in less time
- Is punctual in all aspects of the job
- Maintains flexibility to take on additional tasks
- Completes many projects before the due date
- Has yet to miss a deadline
- Delegates work and follows up as needed

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Completes work on time
- Avoids time wasters
- Establishes appropriate priorities
- Develops workable schedules
- Knows what needs to be done and not done
- Effectively assigns work to others
- Keeps commitments to get work done
- Places a premium on planning
- Keeps projects on schedule
- Delivers results on time
- Tracks projects carefully
- Makes productive use of her time
- Follows a proven time-management system
- Lives by the philosophy that time is money
- Makes commitments to deadlines and keeps them
- Watches the time, not the clock

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Treats deadlines as if they are optional
- Devotes too much time to second-tier matters

- Rarely completes the assigned tasks on time
- Constantly feels overwhelmed
- Works on many assignments that should be delegated
- Is easily drawn into secondary tasks
- Is too quick to set aside important projects
- Randomly rank-orders projects
- Blames others when work runs late
- Is intermittent, at best, with planning
- Is late with major projects but on time with minor ones
- Surprises others when work is on time
- Occasionally meets deadlines but with questionable quality
- Is too late with too much work

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Wastes time on low-ticket items
- Places procrastination over performance
- Allows work to stack up
- Constantly falls behind
- Has yet to meet a deadline
- Waits until the last minute
- Ignores coaching
- Doesn't pay enough attention to the needs of those waiting for his work
- Consistently fails to make the best use of time
- Spends too much time crafting excuses
- Regards time management as a waste of time
- Is uninterested in time-management tools or programs
- Feels no sense of urgency
- Manages time like a pinball

Chapter 10

The Best Phrases for Communication and Interpersonal Skills

In This Chapter

- Spotlighting communication strengths and areas for improvement
- Recognizing and enhancing team building
- Rewarding and rebuilding people skills

In order for your employees to effectively carry out their responsibilities and meet their short-term and long-term objectives, they need to know how well they're communicating and dealing with others.

Ironically, some managers have difficulty communicating assessments in these two areas, especially when it comes to written comments. They're concerned that their feedback on communication won't be communicated clearly, and they worry that providing feedback on interpersonal relations will actually strain the working relationships instead of improving them. When written comments focus on vague and general trends and themes, these outcomes are the most likely.

Communication skills and interpersonal skills are actually composed of numerous factors — such as cooperation, teamwork, listening, negotiating, and telephone skills — all of which lend themselves to appraisal. If any one of these factors is overlooked in the appraisal process, opportunities for recognition and personal growth will be diminished. This chapter targets the key factors that determine effectiveness in communications and interpersonal skills and provides the full continuum of performance appraisal phrases for each.

Cooperation

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Sets an example for the entire company with her cooperation
- Builds cooperation within the department
- Builds cooperation among departments
- Creates a climate of cooperation
- Is clearly one of the most cooperative employees

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is always ready to cooperate
- Has a totally cooperative attitude
- Is one of the easiest people to work with

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Can always be counted on to pitch in
- Readily cooperates whenever the opportunity arises
- Is a solid addition to any group
- Has a strong concern for others

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Cooperates, but with strings attached
- Is too self-absorbed to display much cooperation
- Manipulates rather than cooperates
- Does not view cooperation as a priority

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is the last person to offer to help
- Generates conflict rather than cooperation
- Cannot be counted upon to cooperate
- Disrupts even the most cooperative groups

Customer Service

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is very responsive to the customers' needs
- Provides the maximum in customer service
- Has an upbeat and friendly demeanor
- Knows the product from A to Z
- Is the customers' first choice
- Serves as a great customer service role model
- Understands the customers as individuals
- Treats customers as partners
- Is the go-to person for difficult customers or calls
- Builds excellent relationships with customers
- Regards customer service as a top priority
- Is a regular winner of customer service awards
- Is satisfied only if the customers are satisfied

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Puts customers first
- Goes the extra mile for the customers
- Puts customer satisfaction at the top of the list
- Is motivated to meet the customers' needs
- Solves problems and resolves issues
- Is able to satisfy dissatisfied customers
- Makes each customer feel special
- Is highly skilled in handling problem situations

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is always pleasant
- Listens carefully
- Gives first-rate service

- Provides fast service
- Treats every customer with respect
- Makes the customers feel important
- Knows the customers by name
- Builds customer loyalty
- Always projects a positive attitude

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Underestimates the importance of the customers
- Doesn't have adequate product knowledge
- Fails to listen carefully
- Is more interested in ending the conversation than ending a problem
- Shows no interest in building positive relationships with the customers
- Keeps customers waiting

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Puts the customers second rather than first
- Interrupts the customers
- Does not pay attention to what customers are saying or feeling
- Provides incorrect information
- Argues with customers
- Becomes emotional
- Abandons customers
- Embarrasses and humiliates customers
- Has a condescending attitude
- Is rude to the customers
- Makes inappropriate comments
- Gets too personal
- Does nothing to improve his customer service skills
- Doesn't care about losing customers

Listening

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Listens actively to what others are saying
- Restates, repeats, and rephrases
- Cares about what others are saying
- Devotes full attention when speaking with others

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Takes follow-up action on matters that are discussed
- Does not interrupt
- Listens to the full story before drawing conclusions
- Creates a climate that encourages communication
- Practices two-way communication

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Does not make snap judgments
- Uses dialogues, not monologues
- Is a patient listener
- Asks questions if she does not understand

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Rarely pays attention
- Rushes people who try to communicate with him
- Insists on being heard, but does not listen to others
- Ignores what others are saying

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is preoccupied when others are talking
- Does more talking than listening
- Multi-tasks when she should be listening
- Repeatedly asks the same questions

Meetings

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Knows when to meet and when to use other media
- Establishes an agenda and follows it unless there is a true need to cover additional topics
- Keeps discussions open, productive, and robust
- Runs meetings that are known for excellent problem solving and decision making

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is a valued participant in any meeting
- Sets up additional meetings if warranted
- Sends out appropriate pre-meeting information
- Keeps meetings on track and on target

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Conducts meetings that start and end on time
- Generates participation from all attendees
- Listens carefully throughout meetings
- Uses technical media only when necessary

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Usually arrives late
- Constantly asks questions, but ignores the answers
- Holds far too many meetings
- Lets meetings run themselves

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Brings up irrelevant topics
- Attends meetings, but remains uninvolved
- Sends text messages during meetings
- Sleeps during meetings

Negotiating

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Plans thoroughly before entering negotiations
- Sets positive expectations
- Studies the people with whom he is negotiating
- Finds creative solutions
- Actively listens throughout the process
- Keeps attention on interests rather than positions
- Has a great ability to reconcile differences
- Focuses on areas of shared interest
- Has materials ready to make agreement easier for the other side
- Trades concessions instead of giving anything away
- Generates win-win outcomes

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Understands the sources of power in negotiations
- Avoids trickery and deceit
- Is flexible without being flimsy
- Takes a collaborative approach
- Focuses on objective factors, not personal factors
- Keeps relationships intact, regardless of outcomes
- Is very aware of the subtleties of the negotiation process, especially body language
- Tries to create a bigger pie, rather than going for a larger slice of the established pie

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Focuses on the people in the negotiation process
- Carefully considers all alternatives
- Recognizes that there can be more than one acceptable solution

- Generates a wide range of options
- Avoids a win-lose mindset and strategy
- Keeps emotions out of the process
- Uses constructive and confident language
- Uses empathy
- Has a give-and-take attitude
- Keeps an open mind

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Demands rather than negotiates
- Doesn't understand the needs of others
- Focuses too heavily on positions rather than people
- Views every session as win-lose rather than win-win
- Loses sight of the objectives of the negotiation process
- Is more combative than collaborative

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Views negotiation sessions as "take" rather than "give and take"
- Uses unethical negotiation tactics
- Is more bluff than facts
- Is a pushover
- Wins negotiations and loses relationships
- Takes an adversarial position
- Ignores what others have to say
- Displays poor listening skills from start to finish
- Uses wishy-washy language
- Displays a lack of planning and organization
- Is overly emotional
- Locks into a position and causes others to do likewise
- Generates more stalemates than settlements
- Enflames situations instead of defusing them

Persuasiveness

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is a master of language and persuasion
- Always knows the right way to say something
- Persuades others when no one else comes close
- Is highly effective in bringing others to her way of thinking
- Increases persuasive impact by adjusting his communication style
- Has an excellent ability to build trust
- Has a level of expertise that enhances his ability to persuade others
- Uses logic and facts at just the right time
- Uses language, phrasing, and body language that quickly make others feel comfortable and ready to accept her ideas
- Uses his ability to listen as a powerful persuasion tool
- Makes others feel that they have truly been heard
- Uses persuasion but not manipulation
- Shows others how they win by agreeing with her
- Has a great deal of personal charisma

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Draws others to his way of thinking
- Is known as a credible person
- Views others as partners rather than opponents
- Takes the time to truly understand other people and their needs
- Guides others to her way of thinking
- Uses the input of others to draw them over to his way of thinking
- Relies on reason and is totally reasonable when trying to persuade others

- Is well versed when it comes to handling objections or concerns
- Has remarkable diplomatic skills
- Is trusted throughout the company

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Has a solid ability to influence others
- Persuades without arguing
- Uses empathy effectively
- Thinks before responding
- Knows the facts and uses them to bolster her position
- Is always well prepared
- Persuades, but never with high-pressure tactics
- Understands the players and the situation

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is more forceful than tactful
- Is too impatient to be persuasive
- Tries to push her ideas on others
- Ignores the subtleties of persuasion
- Demands more than persuades
- Lets emotions interfere

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Gets upset when others disagree
- Gives up when he's unable to persuade others
- Resorts to name calling
- Resorts to bullying when all else fails
- Is primarily interested in taking advantage of others
- Is hampered by being distrusted
- Persuades by flexing her power
- Is not regarded as honest or credible

Sales Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is regarded by all as a sales superstar
- Prepares thoroughly before any presentation
- Practices and rehearses before presentations
- Identifies possibly difficult questions and scripts the best answers
- Is a master of sales presentations
- Helps build the sales skills of others on the team
- Is a true sales professional
- Provides customers with more service and support than they ever dreamed of
- Uses a collaborative selling style
- Treats customers as partners
- Builds trust rapidly
- Is a major asset at trade shows
- Handles objections skillfully
- Knows when and how to close
- Has an excellent sales closing rate
- Has an excellent close ratio
- Finds creative solutions to customers' problems
- Is regarded by customers as a great problem-solver
- Consistently surpasses sales quotas
- Is the customers' favorite
- Is a great prospector who often finds sales gold

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Has a great understanding of customers' needs
- Is regarded as highly credible and trustworthy
- Focuses on meeting customers' needs and not his own
- Treats customers respectfully

- Is a highly effective listener
- Is honest, fair, above-board, and ethical
- Is always striving to build her sales skills
- Works with other sales reps and develops several "best practices" sales techniques
- Is unshaken by rejections
- Knows when to stop talking
- Knows the precise moment to ask for the order
- Has a great ability to turn prospects into customers
- Stays current with the latest customer relationship management systems
- Asks the most effective closing questions

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Establishes and reaches challenging sales goals
- Easily deals with difficult customers
- Creates and keeps long-term relationships with customers
- Generates solid results when cold calling
- Knows how and when to sell add-ons
- Meets sales quotas
- Makes great use of sales questions
- Builds rapport
- Follows up regularly
- Regularly analyzes his sales performance and makes continual improvements
- Keeps her commitments
- Actively seeks sales leads
- Is persistent without being a pest

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is more interested in meeting her own needs than the needs of the customers
- Talks more than listens

- Arrives at sales calls without necessary materials
- Assumes that all customers are alike
- Has a know-it-all strategy
- Is poorly prepared for presentations
- Pushes products that the customer may not need or want
- Makes promises that can't be kept
- Makes negative comments about the competition
- Sees selling as a confrontation, not a collaboration
- Uses a hard sell that pushes customers away
- Has an inflated view of his own sales abilities
- Is overwhelmed by even the most basic objections
- Doesn't pay enough attention to the XYZ account
- Ignores customers after a sale
- Gets minimal repeat business
- Rarely meets the sales quota

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Doesn't pay attention to customers
- Takes an adversarial position
- Has lost several valuable customers
- Has an unacceptable sales closing rate
- Rarely lets the customers get a word in
- Misses appointments
- Shows up late for sales calls
- Misses sales quotas
- Has used the same sales presentation for years
- Isn't prepared for sales presentations
- Is overly aggressive
- Isn't persistent enough
- Overlooks opportunities to close sales
- Exercises questionable ethics and judgment

Teamwork

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Generates remarkable results through teamwork
- Turns a group into a team
- Applies in-depth knowledge of team building
- Puts "we" before "me"
- Creates teams when there were none
- Is an ideal team member
- Strengthens the bonds of teamwork among all her fellow employees
- Is an essential member of the team
- Is critical to the team's success
- Is vital to the team
- Exemplifies the essence of teamwork
- Recognizes and builds the unique abilities of each member of the team
- Has superb conflict management skills

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Builds teamwork within and between departments
- Creates excellence through teamwork
- Makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts
- Creates a climate of teamwork
- Makes every member of the team feel important
- Is a great team player
- Is an asset to any team
- Is a model member of any team
- Holds the team together through tough projects
- Has an infectious cooperative attitude
- Is a true team builder
- Takes any team up a notch

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Builds a sense of teamwork
- Energizes the team
- Is a key contributor to the team's success
- Makes the most of the talents of all team members
- Sets high expectations for everyone on the team
- Resolves problems and conflicts within the team
- Works well with all team members
- Keeps team members well informed

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Focuses more on himself than on the team
- Has personal interests that conflict with team interests
- Places personal goals above team goals
- Cooperates only sporadically
- Won't help unless there is something in return
- Cooperates begrudgingly
- Agrees to cooperate, but rarely does
- Devotes minimal time and energy to helping others

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is a disruptive influence on team operations
- Undercuts the cooperative efforts of others
- Has an uncooperative attitude
- Constantly pushes her own agenda
- Is always ready to say "no"
- Is insensitive to the needs of others
- Puts "me" before "we"
- Ignores requests for help
- Is more likely to clash than cooperate
- Needs constant reminding to be more cooperative

Telephone Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has remarkable patience
- Is specifically requested by many callers
- Is always professional
- Is customer-centric 24-7
- Has superb telephone etiquette
- Makes every caller feel special
- Follows up with callers until all matters are resolved
- Receives numerous written and verbal compliments
- Is frequently sought to handle problem calls
- Is highly skilled in dealing with outbound as well as inbound calls
- Finishes calls on a positive note
- Enjoys taking the most difficult and problematic calls
- Has a smile that is apparent to all callers
- Has a file filled with compliments from callers
- Serves as an excellent role model for "best practices" telephone techniques

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Makes all callers feel welcome
- Has a smile in her voice
- Has a positive and upbeat style
- Maintains a calm demeanor on all calls
- Has an uncanny ability to quickly and easily build trust
- Has a warm and friendly attitude that comes through
- Is polite throughout every call
- Handles the most difficult calls with great skill
- Tirelessly handles tremendous call volume

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Develops great relationships with callers
- Handles complaints promptly and effectively
- Is always prompt and courteous
- Listens carefully
- Goes out of his way to help every caller
- Continues to upgrade her telephone skills
- Provides every caller with VIP service
- Trains others in telephone skills

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Rushes calls
- Talks too quickly
- Strands callers on hold
- Doesn't provide adequate follow-up to callers
- Has insufficient product knowledge
- Doesn't always speak clearly
- Takes too long to answer the phone
- Is quick to say "no," instead of doing some checking

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is discourteous to callers
- Makes callers feel unwelcome
- Can be rude to callers
- Is prone to arguing
- Treats callers disrespectfully
- Has been named in formal complaints from callers
- Gives any answer, even if it's incorrect
- Enflames problem situations
- Regards calls as a nuisance
- Has a complete lack of product knowledge

Written and Verbal Communication

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is a master of written communication
- Is the go-to person when others need help with writing
- Has the most readable writing in the company
- Keeps e-mail messages on target and to the point
- Has clear, direct, and concise writing
- Writes without grammatical errors
- Creates reports and documentation that are consistently outstanding
- Is a compelling speaker
- Says more by saying less
- Actively listens to others
- Thinks before he talks
- Uses captivating language
- Gives highly organized presentations
- Is a superb public speaker
- Is totally comfortable in front of a group
- Is known as the company wordsmith
- Is a great debater
- Is a great communicator
- Is an enthralling speaker who easily holds the attention of others
- Reads other people well
- Senses when others are on data overload and when they need more information

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Has very readable writing
- Hits the perfect level of detail

- Writes to the point, rather than around it
- Is a gifted writer
- Has raised the writing in her department to a new level
- Sets the standard for excellent business writing
- Proofreads carefully
- Carefully crafts all his writing
- Is always well organized with her written work
- Selects the appropriate writing style for different readers and situations
- Holds the interest of others in his writing
- Is a clear and articulate communicator
- Has an outstanding vocabulary, but never overdoes it
- Generates a great deal of interest whenever she speaks
- Communicates easily with everyone
- Is an excellent writing coach
- Effectively reads subtle cues and body language
- Is smooth without being slick

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is confident and comfortable with writing projects
- Is at ease and effective in front of a group
- Prepares thoroughly before making presentations
- Communicates easily with employees at all levels
- Is not inclined to talk for the sake of talking
- Is a good listener
- Uses words effectively and economically
- Is clear and informative when speaking or writing
- Avoids excessive use of jargon
- Writes with very few grammatical errors

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Uses a writing style that can be difficult to understand
- Hasn't shown interest in becoming a better writer
- Procrastinates on projects that involve writing
- Sends e-mail messages that are unclear
- Writes too much on every project
- Has writing that lacks adequate detail and specificity
- Doesn't listen carefully enough, and communication suffers as a result
- Speaks without organizing his thoughts
- Provides too much detail
- Doesn't provide enough detail
- Uses e-mail style for formal written business communications
- Needs to listen more and talk less

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Writes with numerous grammatical errors and typos
- Takes a long time to get to the point
- Ignores punctuation
- Is a grammatical nightmare
- Tends to ramble
- Tends to mumble
- Uses inappropriate terms and expressions
- Is insensitive to others in her comments
- Is unaware of messages that his body language is sending
- Produces work that always needs significant editing
- Often uses the wrong words
- Rushes when writing, and it shows
- Doesn't pay attention to the cues and body language of others
- Doesn't listen

Chapter 11

The Best Phrases for Planning, Administration, and Organization

In This Chapter

- Recognizing and enhancing managerial behaviors
- Highlighting organizational skills and filling the gaps
- Identifying and reinforcing goal attainment

As employees pursue challenging goals, they may be bursting with energy and enthusiasm, but their performance can fall terribly short because of issues related to planning, administration, and organization. Such matters are often regarded solely as managerial functions, but the truth is that, every day, employees at every job level are taking specific actions in these arenas, along with numerous related actions to keep their work on track, on target, and on time.

In addition to feedback that is targeted on the employees' planning and organizing skills, there is a real need for feedback in such related areas as managing, meeting deadlines, sticking to schedules, watching costs, establishing goals, and adjusting to change. Feedback in each of these areas provides employees with recognition where due, as well as with direction and encouragement where needed.

Because much of the information that employees receive on matters of planning and organizing is in written form, it's particularly important for written feedback in this area to be clear, focused, and functional. Employees have a wide range of planning and organizational responsibilities, and this chapter provides an equally wide range of performance appraisal phrases to cover employees' performance in each.

Adjusting to Change

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Not only adjusts to change, but is a key source of change
- Is a positive change agent
- Is a quick study when it comes to adapting to change
- Works with employees to help them understand changes and adjust to them
- Regards the change process as a source of creativity and innovation
- Holds brainstorming sessions for the sole purpose of generating needed changes
- Sees change playing a major role in employee growth and development
- Regards adaptation to change as a survival skill
- Doesn't view any of the traditional systems, policies, or procedures as being sacred
- Creates a climate that encourages and supports change

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Helps other employees adapt to changes
- Reduces resistance to change by openly communicating about it
- Has a high degree of intellectual curiosity, and uses it to understand and manage change
- Has made changes that led to creative solutions to departmental problems
- Adjusts to changes by studying and understanding them
- Takes one change and uses it as a springboard for further changes
- Is an active advocate for change
- Always seeks better ways to do things

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Recognizes the rapid pace of change in the workplace and readily adapts to it
- Is receptive to new ideas
- Continues to build his personal knowledge base to be ready for change
- Digs in and understands changes and the reasons for them
- Serves as a role model for others in her ability to adjust to change
- Has an open mind when it comes to new ways of doing things

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Reacts first by finding fault with any change
- Looks for ways to avoid change
- Makes disparaging remarks about changes
- Shows resistance to change whenever the opportunity arises
- Tries to influence others to resist change
- Keeps talking about how things worked in the past

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Refuses to give change a chance
- Makes disparaging remarks about individuals who suggest or implement changes
- Will not give up his old way of doing things
- Sabotages new programs, processes, or procedures
- Makes false claims about specific changes
- Taunts co-workers who accept changes
- Becomes visibly upset when changes are discussed
- Is highly vocal in expressing disdain for changes
- Refuses to use new methods, strategies, systems, or technologies

Bottom-Line Orientation

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Generates excellent ideas for increasing revenue as well as cutting costs
- Has made suggestions that have clearly had a positive impact on the bottom line
- Makes direct contributions to the company's profit
- Is fully dedicated to the company's success
- Builds a strong bottom-line orientation among her employees
- Creates and implements strategies to enhance the bottom line
- Has taken a wide range of actions to cut wasteful expenditures
- Takes specific actions to improve earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization
- Establishes goals that are directly linked to the bottom line

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Builds an increased bottom-line understanding and focus among his employees
- Is profit-minded
- Understands and implements solid financial planning
- Takes a wide range of steps to improve profit
- Is very comfortable reading and analyzing financial data
- Has a solid understanding of balance sheets and income statements
- Has turned her area into a profit center
- Has implemented changes in production, design, systems, or strategies that have helped the bottom line
- Implements employee incentives and motivational programs that help increase productivity

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Never loses sight of the bottom line
- Works with employees to streamline operations and save money
- Discusses bottom-line issues with employees
- Works with his employees to develop "best practices" strategies
- Helps employees understand the link between their performance and the company's financial success
- Is always on the lookout for steps, strategies, and programs to improve profit
- Helps all employees understand the ways in which they can contribute to the bottom line
- Stays current with financial news that impacts the company and the industry at large

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Takes few steps that actually contribute to the company's profits
- Talks about her contribution to the bottom line, but the numbers don't show it
- Does little to build employees' financial knowledge and skills
- Shows little interest in the company's financial condition
- Does nothing with financial data when presented with it

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Makes unnecessary costly purchases
- Engages in behaviors that hurt the bottom line
- Regards the bottom line as someone else's concern
- Implements new programs without considering their impact on the bottom line
- Doesn't look at any lines, including the bottom line
- Is not interested in the bottom line

Controlling Costs

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is highly cost conscious in every decision
- Is excellent at projecting costs
- Creates highly effective systems and processes to monitor and control costs
- Is financially astute
- Has developed a high degree of cost consciousness among his employees
- Keeps the company's financial goals clearly in mind
- Generates significant savings by implementing sustainability programs
- Encourages and rewards cost-saving suggestions from her employees
- Creates and implements highly productive cost-saving practices, policies, and programs

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Develops financial management skills in others
- Places a high priority on cost-benefit analysis in his thinking and decision-making
- Maintains excellent financial control
- Is budget-minded
- Negotiates fees effectively and professionally
- Has an excellent ability to focus on the big financial picture as well as the details
- Digs deeply into the numbers and finds additional ways to control costs
- Is fiscally conservative, but not cheap
- Accurately analyzes costs
- Avoids wasting money, materials, or resources

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Monitors department expenses daily
- Has a demonstrated ability to control departmental costs
- Carefully monitors and controls costs, and encourages her employees to do the same
- Effectively manages the financial side of the job
- Operates within the budget
- Clearly communicates cost-related issues to his employees

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Rarely considers cost when making decisions
- Lets costs slip out of control
- Approves invoices without reading them carefully
- Rarely pays attention to costs
- Is too liberal with company money
- Is too quick to cut expenses
- Cuts expenses without adequate consideration of consequences
- Is overly aggressive when cutting costs

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Lets costs run totally out of control
- Makes purchases without approval
- Overlooks the budget
- Is unable to develop a workable budget
- Ignores the expense reimbursement policy
- Ignores per-diem travel allowance guidelines
- Approves any expense
- Regards the company credit card as a gift card
- Puts a budgetary stranglehold on the department
- Starts cutting costs and doesn't know when to stop
- Cuts expenses to the point that customers suffer

Establishing Goals

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Sets rigorous goals for herself
- Builds the employees' goal-setting skills
- Works with employees to set challenging and motivational goals
- Establishes a goal-oriented mindset among his employees
- Jointly creates goals that bring out the best performance in others
- Works with employees to tailor developmental goals to their needs
- Has raised the standards for goal setting throughout the department
- Establishes goals that are aligned with her manager's goals
- Is an expert in setting goals
- Develops user-friendly strategies to help employees meet their goals
- Generates enthusiasm around the goal-setting process

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Approaches goal-setting with positive expectations
- Establishes checkpoints and deadlines for every goal
- Has insight into employees as individuals that contributes to their buy-in and commitment
- Serves as a model for others with his goal-setting strategy
- Includes well-crafted action plans and strategies in her goal setting

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Establishes challenging goals
- Sets specific and measurable goals

- Sets goals for performance and development
- Works with employees to set goals
- Attaches priorities to every goal
- Regards goal setting as a major priority
- Sets goals based on facts
- Helps employees write and refine their goals
- Creates action plans that are clear and functional

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Establishes vague goals
- Creates easily attainable goals
- Sets reasonable goals, but fails to aggressively pursue them
- Primarily establishes low-priority goals
- Sets goals at the last minute
- Sets goals for employees without their input
- Devotes very little time to establishing goals
- Regards goal setting as a process for others to carry out
- Focuses on goals that have little to do with the company's goals

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Creates goals off the top of his head
- Creates goals that pose no significant challenge
- Comes up with the same goals every year
- Sets goals without any provision for follow-up
- Sets goals that lack action plans
- Fails to establish clear and measurable goals
- Provides employees with no guidance or support in goal setting
- Treats goal setting as a cut-and-paste activity
- Establishes impossible goals

Management Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Builds the managerial skills of her peers
- Develops high-performing teams
- Selects and hires outstanding individuals
- Has A-level coaching skills
- Values the employees' ideas and suggestions
- Treats all employees with respect and trust
- Is up-to-date on the latest management practices
- Is the resident expert on management
- Maintains ongoing two-way communication with his team
- Remains calm and steady under pressure
- Manages by wandering around
- Has totally transformed a formerly chaotic department

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Stays current on new developments in the field of management
- Is continuously developing her employees
- Treats employees as valued resources
- Has very low turnover in his department
- Creates highly effective motivational and incentive programs
- Understands her employees as individuals
- Encourages and supports employee learning and growth
- Keeps the employees well informed
- Has the highest standards of fairness

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Listens to his employees
- Identifies with management

- Is responsive to all employees
- Adheres to company standards and policies
- Reads management books and magazines
- Is more proactive than reactive
- Is team oriented

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is rarely accessible
- Relies on antiquated programs and strategies
- Micromanages in every situation
- Hoards responsibilities that should be delegated
- Ignores employees
- Keeps employees uninformed and out of the loop
- Demands respect instead of earning it
- Provides minimal thanks, credit, and recognition

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Plays favorites
- Demands that everything be done her way
- Takes no steps to train or develop employees
- Is inaccessible
- Blames employees for failures
- Takes credit for the employees' success
- Treats employees as expendable
- Yells at employees
- Has a high rate of turnover
- Has a high rate of accidents
- Has a high rate of absenteeism
- Shows minimal concern for employee health and welfare
- Is overly controlling
- Bullies employees

Meeting Deadlines

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Plans and organizes to beat deadlines, rather than meet them
- Never misses a deadline
- Completes work ahead of deadlines
- Is energized by tight deadlines
- Remains unshaken by demanding deadlines
- Keeps his employees highly focused on the deadlines
- Approaches demanding deadlines with a calm and steady resolve
- Would miss just about anything before missing a deadline

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Regards deadlines as a top priority
- Does whatever has to be done to meet deadlines
- Plans work to avoid last-minute crunches
- Meets deadlines without sacrificing quality
- Never loses sight of the deadlines
- Establishes realistic deadlines and meets them
- Plans and organizes work to consistently meet deadlines
- Treats deadlines as goal lines

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Prioritizes work to meet high-priority deadlines
- Meets every major deadline
- Carefully monitors the progress of her employees to be sure that deadlines are met
- Is deadline oriented
- Communicates openly about deadlines
- Has contingency plans if unexpected obstacles get in the way

- Meets deadlines that he commits to
- Takes deadlines very seriously
- Is highly committed to meeting deadlines

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Meets many deadlines, but with questionable quality of work
- Meets lower-priority deadlines, while neglecting major deadlines
- Waits until the last minute and then notices deadlines
- Makes promises about deadlines but doesn't take them seriously
- Turns most deadline situations into crises
- Gets sidetracked and misses deadlines
- Misses deadlines because of her inadequate planning
- Occasionally panics under the pressure of deadlines
- Is far too lax when it comes to meeting deadlines

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has missed every major deadline
- Misses more deadlines than he meets
- Gets close to many deadlines, but meets few
- Makes excuses rather than deadlines
- Regards deadlines as suggestions
- Loses sight of the deadlines
- Misses deadlines and blames others
- Causes delays, instead of planning for them
- Runs late and tells no one
- Sets impossible deadlines
- Sets extremely lax deadlines
- Shows minimal concern when deadlines are missed
- Has no sense of urgency

Organizing

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Runs a highly organized department
- Organized a totally chaotic department
- Organizes for the short term and the long term
- Brings outstanding organization to all projects

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is highly regarded for her organizational skills
- Organizes projects to prevent overlaps or gaps in responsibilities
- Is always able to access needed items or information
- Logically organizes his work and work area

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Helps co-workers get organized and stay organized
- Sets aside time regularly to organize work
- Has her own system for organizing, and it works
- Uses a highly effective organizing system

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is more concerned with being organized than getting the job done
- Has an organizing system that is so personalized that it's incomprehensible
- Has a work area that is a giant mess

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Suffers from a lack of organization in every aspect of his work
- Can spend hours looking for items that should take seconds to find
- Is the least organized person in the company

Planning

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is highly skilled at generating employee buy-in on plans she establishes
- Is truly a master planner
- Helps others to develop and implement plans
- Is well regarded for his planning skills
- Is systems minded
- Establishes plans, policies, and practices that improve performance and productivity
- Establishes contingencies when situations require the plans to be altered or refined
- Establishes realistic plans
- Is typically well ahead of plan when it comes to progress and performance
- Sets plans for success and then effectively implements them
- Is equally skilled at long-term and short-term planning
- Involves employees in the planning process

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Sets realistic plans
- Establishes plans that are down to earth and workable
- Sets a standard for planning that others are inclined to follow
- Effectively communicates plans to all who need to know
- Makes plans, but is never overwhelmed by them
- Makes the best use of technology to establish and communicate plans

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Stays on plan and helps others to do the same
- Monitors plans and progress every day

- Creates plans that are thorough without being cumbersome
- Develops strategies, but never loses sight of the goal
- Lets others know when plans need to be changed or adjusted
- Supports plans with all the necessary documentation
- Leaves very little to chance

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Creates plans that are so detailed that they stifle the employees
- Tends to make plans at the last minute
- Establishes unrealistic plans
- Plans for the expected outcome, instead of planning for the unexpected
- Makes derogatory comments about the planning process
- Waits for problems, instead of anticipating them
- Waits until the last minute to determine the necessary resources, which by then are often unavailable
- Shows minimal interest in planning

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Leaves everything to chance
- Does not believe in planning
- Establishes unworkable plans
- Creates plans that are skimpy and unusable
- Regards planning as a waste of time
- Takes a wait-and-see approach on every project
- Fails to plan, leading to failure
- Relies on yesterday's plans
- Believes that she doesn't need to plan
- Ignores the established plans
- Commits to formulate plans, but then does nothing

Setting and Adhering to Schedules

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Maintains the perfect level of detail when scheduling
- Has a clear understanding of the projects and the players, which leads to highly effective scheduling
- Uses state-of-the-art scheduling systems and technology
- Stays ahead of schedule
- Works with his team to stay ahead of schedule
- Creates schedules that include contingency plans to deal with the unexpected
- Solicits employee inputs when establishing schedules
- Regularly communicates on scheduling updates, adjustments, and realignments
- Carefully balances the needs of the employees with the needs of the company
- Is meticulous in establishing schedules

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Regularly follows up to be sure that work is being performed on schedule
- Sets schedules that lead to timely delivery of high-quality work
- Establishes schedules that are clear, logical, and reasonable
- Builds employee motivation and commitment to stay on schedule
- Helps employees to get back on schedule
- Creates outstanding scheduling based on outstanding planning
- Operates on schedule or ahead of schedule

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Consistently upgrades her scheduling skills
- Creates realistic schedules
- Keeps his team on schedule
- Develops the scheduling skills of her employees
- Gives regular status updates
- Pays attention to requests for schedule changes

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Waits for others to do the scheduling
- Sets unworkable schedules
- Schedules at the last minute
- Sets schedules, but fails to track progress along the way
- Frequently changes the schedule
- Changes schedules without communicating with others
- Uses antiquated scheduling practices
- Confines his scheduling to scraps of paper
- Has taken no steps to upgrade her scheduling skills
- Regards schedules as loose guidelines
- Has difficulties staying on schedule
- Has overly rigid scheduling practices

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is inflexible with scheduling
- Sets schedules at the last minute, if at all
- Establishes schedules, and then disregards them
- Is regularly behind schedule
- Has yet to complete a project ahead of schedule
- Ignores all schedules
- Creates schedules that are too vague to be useful
- Sets schedules that appear to be random

Chapter 12

The Best Phrases for Leadership

In This Chapter

- Identifying and enhancing leadership skills
- Strengthening the capacity to energize others
- Spotlighting skills that build individuals as well as teams

Leadership is about influencing others to reach established goals. As such, it's one of the most critical roles in any company. Leadership maintains the vision, values, culture, objectives, and standards for the company, and when leadership is in doubt, the company is in trouble.

As a result, accurately appraising the leadership skills of anyone who plays a leadership role is critical. This stretches from upper management all the way to employees who have no formal leadership titles but carry out occasional leadership functions, such as chairing a committee or running an event. If you look at all your employees, you'll see that many of them have leadership responsibilities, regardless of their titles.

Leadership isn't a one-dimensional behavior that's either present or not. Instead, it's an amalgam of many functions — including such leadership-related responsibilities as motivating employees, building employees' skills, providing feedback, screening and hiring, managing conflict, coaching, making decisions, delegating, and more — all of which need to be reviewed as part of a thorough performance appraisal.

In light of the critical role that leadership plays in any organization, choosing the right words in the appraisal process is important — not only for the success of your employees, but for the success of your company as well.

Building a Team

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has outstanding team-building skills
- Builds a team-oriented attitude among all her employees
- Has taken a marginally functional department and converted it into a highly productive team
- Uses specific exercises to further strengthen his team
- Manages a department that is well known for its high level of teamwork
- Has an extraordinary ability to turn a group into a team
- Pulls employees together into a cooperative, supportive, and highly successful team
- Creates a team-oriented environment

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Possesses a strong goal orientation, which contributes to the solidarity and focus of her employees
- Develops a winning attitude among his employees
- Structures projects and assignments to further strengthen teamwork among her employees
- Makes all employees feel that they're valued members of the team
- Implements a broad range of special activities that further strengthen his team
- Uses a team approach to develop and utilize the unique talents of each employee

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Recognizes and rewards team-oriented behaviors and actions
- Consistently emphasizes the importance of teamwork in the department and company at large
- Is highly effective in bonding employees together

- Is a solid team player
- Builds highly productive teams
- Generates positive measurable outcomes as a result of teamwork
- Sets consistently high expectations regarding teamwork among her employees

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has minimal concern for teamwork, which is sensed by his employees and evident in their behavior
- Makes public comments that place employees in conflict with each other
- Doesn't differentiate between healthy competition and conflict
- Undercuts teambuilding by providing preferential treatment to certain employees
- Rarely takes action to deal with conflicts or disagreements among her employees
- Makes overlapping assignments that create conflict
- Takes no action to deal with disruptive employees
- Needs to focus less on team activities and more on team productivity

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Engaged in behaviors that turned a successful team into several splintered factions
- Provides no recognition or rewards for teamwork
- Stays physically removed from his employees
- Never works with the group as a whole
- Communicates to the group primarily through reprimands
- Makes no effort to be part of the team
- Focuses on her own needs, rather than on the needs of the team
- Interrupts team meetings with comments and behaviors that are far off topic

Coaching

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Works with employees on an individual and group basis to build skills and performance
- Provides ongoing guidance and training
- Recognizes outstanding performance
- Is more inclined to coach than to discipline
- Is widely regarded as a source of excellent advice
- Develops formal coaching plans for individual employees as needed
- Uses a variety of highly productive coaching techniques

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Tailors coaching techniques to best fit his employees
- Uses coaching techniques that build motivation and enthusiasm
- Uses a coaching style that bonds employees together
- Knows when and how to coach in public as well as in private
- Provides excellent follow-up to monitor the results of her coaching
- Accurately tracks and measures the effectiveness of his coaching
- Utilizes a coaching style that involves and energizes her employees

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Truly enjoys the coaching side of the job
- Regards coaching as a key part of his job
- Has helped employees meet their performance objectives as well as their developmental objectives through coaching
- Helps employees learn to coach themselves in many areas

- Uses innovative coaching strategies to generate measurable improvements in employee performance
- Is regarded by employees as a first-rate coach
- Creates a winning atmosphere with her coaching style
- Is genuinely committed to working with employees to build skills and solve problems
- Provides employees with the tools and guidance they need to succeed

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is more inclined to discipline than coach
- Frequently reprimands and rarely recognizes employees
- Has a sink-or-swim mentality in practically every situation
- Provides employees with far more information than they can absorb
- Acts more like a critic than a coach
- Regards coaching as a one-way process, and rarely listens to employees
- Provides minimal follow-up after coaching
- Quickly becomes impatient when trying to coach
- Uses a one-size-fits-all style of coaching

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Ignores the coaching side of the job
- Believes that ridicule is part of coaching
- Equates coaching with lecturing
- Focuses coaching on areas that are of secondary interest and importance
- Bases coaching on inadequate data
- Lets favoritism influence his coaching practices and techniques
- Turns coaching into nagging
- Coaches employees as if they were children

Delegating

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Uses delegating as a means to enhance employee skills
- Effectively manages her time by delegating work
- Uses delegation as a method to build employee performance and confidence
- Provides employees with the tools, resources, and support to successfully complete the projects he delegates
- Has successfully increased productivity through her delegating practices
- Builds a stronger team through his delegation strategies
- Delegates in a way that sends a message of trust and respect to employees

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Carefully reviews projects and personnel prior to delegating
- Appropriately delegates work to individuals and teams
- Monitors employee performance without stifling it
- Has excellent insight into the kinds of projects that should and should not be delegated
- Understands how much independence and autonomy can be granted to each employee
- Is able to put faltering delegated projects back on track
- Includes delegation as part of the employee development program
- Provides employees with a clear understanding of the standards, expectations, and goals on projects that she delegates

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Delegates and follows up
- Has had considerable success with projects that he has delegated

- Knows when and how to delegate
- Delegates and then provides coaching, guidance, and feedback as needed
- Monitors employee performance after delegating work
- Grants employees authority to get the job done
- Accurately monitors and measures the status of the projects that she delegates
- Understands employees' strengths and weaknesses, and keeps them in mind when delegating

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Needs to review delegated projects more frequently, instead of waiting until such projects are completed
- Delegates, but then intervenes
- Totally redoes work that he delegates
- Provides inadequate information regarding standards and expectations on work she delegates
- Delegates work, but provides employees with minimal freedom to carry it out
- Delegates projects, but can't really let go of them
- Only delegates the most trivial work

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Delegates work that he should do himself
- Delegates too much work
- Fails to follow up on delegated work
- Delegates work and essentially never looks at it again
- Refuses to delegate anything
- Is afraid to delegate
- Keeps changing her mind about expectations and objectives after projects have been delegated
- Insists on controlling projects that he delegates

Inspiring Enthusiasm and Commitment

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has a genuinely positive attitude that spreads across her department
- Energizes others with his upbeat outlook
- Serves as a model for her fellow employees with her energy and expectations
- Consistently makes extraordinary efforts to achieve extraordinary results
- Makes major sacrifices to help the company
- Frequently expresses his appreciation of the opportunities provided by the company
- Consistently surpasses expectations and standards, leading to similar behaviors from her fellow employees
- Creates a culture of positive energy and loyalty

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Maintains an upbeat and positive attitude, and draws the same out of others
- Is bursting with contagious enthusiasm
- Helps turn around negative situations with his enthusiasm and optimism
- Is genuinely excited about her work
- Never misses an opportunity to build goodwill for the company, both internally and externally
- Is willing to go the extra mile and encourages others to follow his lead

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is able to make any project more interesting and rewarding
- Makes it difficult for others to slack off because of her sheer enthusiasm, energy, and drive

- Puts in long hours and works hard, inspiring many of his employees to do the same
- Seizes every opportunity to make positive comments about the company
- Generates suggestions rather than complaints
- Is always looking for ways to improve performance, productivity, and the company itself

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Enflames problematic situations
- Encourages fellow employees to rock the boat
- Regards the company as the opposition
- Does the minimum amount of work
- Frequently talks about how much better things are at other companies
- Is always looking for a reason to miss work
- Frequently says "no," and encourages others to do the same

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Places job responsibilities a distant second behind other interests and pursuits
- Speaks negatively about the company
- Is indifferent to developments in the company
- Ridicules employees who show energy and enthusiasm
- Looks for problems rather than solutions
- Is a constant source of complaints
- Puts a negative spin on company policies, programs, and developments
- Is always looking for ways to do less for the company
- Fabricates malicious stories about her co-workers and/or the company at large
- Shows the most excitement when the workday is drawing to a close

Making Decisions

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Uses participative decision making when appropriate
- Bases decisions on facts
- Gathers the facts and relies on them
- Is sensitive to time constraints when making decisions
- Approaches decision making with an open mind
- Is well regarded as a first-rate decision maker
- Clearly understands the costs and benefits of his decisions
- Is receptive to innovative ideas and suggestions
- Conducts thorough research prior to making major decisions

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Truly values the input of other employees
- Makes difficult decisions that measurably improve operations
- Deliberates on decisions, but never overlooks the time and timing
- Involves employees in many decisions that affect them and their work
- Acts decisively, but not impulsively
- Makes unilateral decisions when needed
- Shares the credit when decisions generate excellent outcomes
- Accepts responsibility if decisions don't yield desired outcomes

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Separates significant data from insignificant data
- Makes timely decisions
- Is trusted by her employees when it comes to decision making

- Takes decision-making responsibilities seriously
- Is able to clearly explain the rationale behind his decisions
- Relies on facts rather than emotions
- Keeps the good of the company in mind
- Reaches decisions that are fair, ethical, and trusted

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Turns every decision into a group decision
- Takes too much time to make a decision
- Is overly influenced by insignificant details
- Lets corporate politics play too great a role
- Tends to waver back and forth
- Ignores most input from others
- Makes snap decisions
- Relies on questionable sources
- Is overly influenced by emotions
- Is easily swayed by others
- Procrastinates on important decisions

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has difficulty making decisions
- Has made a string of questionable decisions
- Ignores the facts
- Acts impulsively on major decisions
- Labors excessively long on minor decisions
- Asks for input from others, and then ignores it
- Insists that everything be done her way
- Lets bias and stereotypes influence decision making
- Enters decision making with a closed mind
- Ignores ideas that differ from his
- Abandons her decisions at the first sign of a challenge

Managing Conflict

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Creatively resolves conflicts
- Productively guides conflicts to generate innovative ideas
- Understands conflicts and manages them effectively
- Uses team-building strategies to resolve conflicts
- Manages conflict, instead of letting conflict manage him
- Recognizes the inevitability of conflict and applies the most effective strategies to manage it
- Is truly gifted in getting to the heart of the matter and resolving it
- Is known for being fair, level-headed, and honest when dealing with conflicts

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Defuses conflict situations before they erupt
- Prevents conflicts from escalating
- Builds conflict management skills among her employees
- Varies his conflict management strategies to best fit the situation
- Has solid mediation and arbitration skills
- Successfully mediates interpersonal conflicts
- Identifies potential conflict situations and takes proactive steps to deal with them
- Is frequently sought to resolve conflicts

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Remains calm and focused in conflict situations
- Is sensitive to conflict situations and acts promptly to deal with them

- Separates causes from symptoms in resolving conflicts
- Listens carefully to all disputants
- Takes a fair and level-headed approach
- Isn't afraid to get involved when conflicts arise
- Continuously works to improve her conflict management skills
- Has sought out and obtained training in conflict management
- Is skilled in preventing, as well as dealing with, conflict

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Creates more conflicts than he solves
- Sweeps conflicts under the rug
- Insists on having her way in all situations
- Tries to impose his will in every conflict situation
- Is uncommunicative in conflict situations
- Fails to actively address conflict situations
- Creates win-lose situations rather than win-win situations
- Lets conflicts fester for too long

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is a source of conflict wherever she goes
- Puts employees into conflicts with each other
- Implements policies and practices that cause conflicts between departments
- Shows favoritism in dealing with conflict situations
- Fails to listen carefully to all sides
- Argues more than he listens
- Develops projects and assignments that create conflicts
- Has a management style that generates conflicts
- Creates conflicts in situations where there haven't been any

Motivating Employees

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Successfully implements a broad range of motivational programs
- Treats employees as individuals and focuses on their unique motivations
- Establishes programs in which employees meet their needs while pursuing departmental goals
- Provides employees with opportunities to fulfill their needs for achievement and accomplishment
- Inspires others with her motivation and drive
- Relies on different motivators for different employees
- Is a truly motivational speaker
- Has outstanding observational skills, which contribute to strong motivational strategies

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Implements creative recognition programs
- Energizes seemingly unmotivated employees
- Eliminates key sources of employee dissatisfaction
- Successfully motivates employees by enriching their jobs
- Knows when and how to use money as a motivator
- Builds employee motivation by building the employees' skills
- Has a great deal of insight and understanding when it comes to employee motivation
- Has raised employee motivation to new heights

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Links meaningful rewards to desired behaviors
- Energizes others with his enthusiasm
- Continues to develop her motivational skills

- Offers a variety of programs to tap employees' individual motivations
- Has creative ideas regarding new ways to motivate employees
- Uses positive feedback as a powerful motivator
- Creates an energizing and uplifting work atmosphere
- Builds self-motivation in his employees

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Treats employees as if they all have the same motivations
- Asks for employee ideas and suggestions on motivational programs, and then ignores them
- Establishes motivational programs that fit her needs rather than the employees' needs
- Uses outdated motivational practices
- Provides employees with random rewards
- Uses overly competitive motivational programs that undermine unity and teamwork
- Has only a minimal understanding of what truly motivates his employees

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Uses fear as a motivator
- Creates an aura of fear that dissatisfies her employees
- Has caused highly motivated employees to shut down
- Has a lack of self-motivation, which interferes with the motivation of his employees
- Undermines employee motivation with arbitrary treatment
- Provides employees with feedback on their performance only after long delays
- Has no interest in learning about motivation or being a better motivator
- Has a motivational style based primarily on bullying

Proactive Behaviors

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Anticipates problems and takes steps to prevent them
- Is always thinking two steps ahead
- Made the XYZ project successful because of her proactive thinking

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Prepares for the unexpected
- Has an eye for potential barriers and blockages
- Creates strategies today that prevent problems tomorrow
- Builds a proactive mindset among his employees

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Establishes contingency plans
- Has a proactive mindset
- Acts on situations before they turn into problems
- Works with associates to prevent future problems

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Only plans for expected outcomes
- Takes a wait-and-see approach
- Is frequently caught off-guard by unexpected outcomes
- Acts more like a spectator than a participant

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is reactive instead of proactive
- Waits until tomorrow to plan for tomorrow
- Moves from one preventable crisis to another
- Contributed to the failure of the XYZ project because she wasn't proactive

Providing Feedback

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Provides feedback as close as possible to the behavior in question
- Makes excellent use of positive feedback
- Is always constructive when providing negative feedback
- Includes specific examples in his feedback
- Provides a great deal of recognition when merited
- Provides positive feedback in public, and negative feedback in private
- Uses feedback as a powerful tool to educate her employees
- Makes employees feel coached rather than disciplined
- Always concludes negative feedback with positive expectations

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Doesn't create a lengthy delay between performance and feedback
- Teaches others how to provide effective feedback
- Provides performance-based negative feedback without destroying the employees or his working relationship with them
- Takes extra steps to be sure that her employees understand the feedback
- Provides constructive feedback that helps employees learn, grow, and improve their performance
- Consistently gives feedback that is fair and factual
- Displays a great deal of empathy when designing and delivering feedback

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Provides appropriate feedback based on employee performance

- Is sensitive to employees and situations when providing feedback
- Gives feedback that is clear and specific
- Picks the right venues for providing feedback
- Includes corrective actions when providing negative feedback
- Is becoming increasingly effective in providing feedback
- Listens to employees while providing them with feedback
- Goes to great lengths to provide constructive feedback

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Waits too long to provide feedback
- Rarely provides thanks, credit, or recognition
- Misses too many opportunities to provide feedback
- Gives feedback that is too general to be useful
- Tends to be more destructive than constructive in the feedback he gives
- Is reluctant to provide negative feedback
- Tends to label employees during feedback sessions
- Is long on negative feedback and short on positive feedback

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Gives feedback that is unnecessarily harsh
- Gives feedback based more on impressions than facts
- Reprimands employees in public
- Ignores employees' comments or explanations
- Never recognizes her employees' successes
- Is quick to provide negative feedback
- Is overly harsh with certain employees
- Gives feedback that has a degrading and insulting tone
- Avoids providing negative feedback

Screening and Hiring

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Identifies, screens, and selects outstanding employees
- Always adheres to all pre-employment rulings, guidelines, and laws
- Attracts outstanding job candidates
- Bases decisions on thorough and complete job-related information
- Only asks job-related pre-employment questions
- Treats all job applicants extremely well
- Listens and observes carefully during the interview process
- Spends more time listening than talking during job interviews
- Bases job requirements on skills and abilities that are truly required to perform the job well

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Makes every applicant feel welcome
- Treats all applicants fairly
- Knows when to talk and when to listen
- Bases decisions on the applicant's work history
- Is fully committed to maintaining diversity
- Has full knowledge of equal employment opportunity guidelines
- Uses a structured interview format
- Takes time to prepare before every interview
- Never loses outstanding applicants

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Treats all applicants fairly and equally
- Takes notes during the interview process

- Gathers thorough and complete information
- Clearly explains job responsibilities to each applicant
- Effectively answers all questions about the company
- Delves into every gap in the applicants' work histories
- Avoids interruptions during job interviews
- Takes job-related references prior to offering employment

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Asks "pet questions" that are unrelated to the job
- Conducts totally unstructured interviews that generate questionable information
- Makes snap decisions
- Bases hiring decisions more on feelings than facts
- Ignores appointments and keeps applicants waiting
- Rushes applicants through the interviews
- Fails to fully prepare before interviews
- Settles for superficial answers, instead of probing deeper
- Takes no notes during job interviews

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Asks personal questions
- Lets personal bias and stereotypes influence his thinking
- Has no understanding of equal employment opportunity rulings or guidelines
- Has exhibited behaviors in the hiring process that have led to complaints against the company
- Tries to upset applicants to see how they react
- Makes offers of employment prior to completing all the steps in the screening process
- Loses excellent candidates
- Argues with applicants
- Makes promises that cannot be kept

Chapter 13

The Best Phrases for Job Knowledge and Expertise

In This Chapter

- Encouraging the accumulation and application of knowledge
- Reinforcing technical skills that contribute to success
- Fostering the spread of productive information

Your employees' knowledge, expertise, and skills are central to success on the job, and they require specific attention in the performance appraisal process. But there's more to these factors than meets the eye.

When appraising your employees in this area, you may be tempted to focus on the amount of information they've amassed, and then appraise them solely on this factor. However, such appraisals are more appropriate for computer chips than for human beings.

In addition to appraising your employees' overall levels of knowledge, you need to appraise the degree to which they are able to productively *apply* this knowledge to the job. After all, an employee may be a storehouse of wisdom, but if he keeps the storehouse locked, there isn't much value to it.

The most powerful phrases in this area focus not only on employees' knowledge, expertise, and technical skills, but also on the ways in which employees apply these factors to their work. With this in mind, phrases focus on such behaviors as sharing knowledge, building employees' skills, mentoring, researching, serving as a positive role model, and more.

In light of the key role played by job knowledge, you want to make sure to use knowledgeable phrases when providing feedback in this area.

Ability to Apply Expertise to the Job

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Handles every technical challenge skillfully, thoroughly, and effectively
- Has applied her expertise to save the company a substantial amount of money
- Has used his technical knowledge to generate numerous improvements in processes, procedures, and operations
- Applied her expertise to the XYZ project and contributed directly to the project's success
- Transformed the XYZ project from a failure to a success by applying his expertise
- Makes highly technical information interesting and understandable
- Enhances the effectiveness of group meetings by sharing her expertise on issues or questions that arise

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Presents complicated information in understandable chunks
- Uses expertise appropriate to the situation or problem
- Creatively applies her expertise
- Enhances the expertise of her fellow employees
- Is able to take theoretical information and make practical use of it on the job
- Has helped find solutions to several problems through his technological insights
- Provides technical information in user-friendly language

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Shows a high degree of intellectual effectiveness
- Easily absorbs and applies new information

- Communicates effectively with technical and nontechnical employees
- Uses her expertise to raise the quality and quantity of work
- Shows tenacity in solving technical problems
- Always seeks ways to use his knowledge to make improvements on the job
- Focuses on causes rather than symptoms

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Relies on outdated knowledge
- Is impatient with nontechnical employees
- Is more interested in quick answers than the right answer
- Goes into far too much detail when asked a question
- Uses so much technical jargon that she is difficult to understand
- Provides information that is not regarded as credible
- Starts providing an answer before hearing the entire question
- Provides too many answers that are either fluff or bluff

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Pushes out-of-date solutions on employees, and then becomes defensive if employees raise questions
- Provides inaccurate technical information
- Responds to technical questions with an arrogant, degrading, and demeaning style
- Ignores requests for help
- Is more interested in his field than in getting the job done
- Lacks expertise in areas in which it is most needed on the job
- Provides solutions that have created larger problems

Acting as a Mentor

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Always makes time to mentor others
- Genuinely enjoys helping others learn
- Takes great pride in seeing employees build their skills, productivity, and personal effectiveness
- Has generated major improvements in employee performance through his mentoring
- Is comfortable and effective working side-by-side with employees to help them learn
- Targets her mentoring efforts on areas in which critical skills need upgrading
- Provides mentoring on a scheduled basis, as well as spontaneously when needed

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Organizes his time to allow mentoring
- Conducts two-way communication that serves as a powerful mentoring tool
- Shows employees what to do and how to do it, and then provides opportunities for hands-on practice
- Serves as a mentor without being asked to do so
- Mentors new employees and brings them up to speed quickly
- Regards mentoring as an ongoing process rather than an intermittent task
- Consistently receives great praise and appreciation from employees whom she mentors

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Readily volunteers to mentor others
- Is undergoing training to improve his mentoring skills
- Is able to complete all her work while still providing first-rate mentoring to others

- Provides information that adheres to all company standards and guidelines when he mentors
- Develops employees to the point that they can help in the mentoring process
- Includes a high degree of support and positive feedback in her mentoring
- Approaches mentoring with positive expectations every step of the way
- Has an excellent base of knowledge and shares it effectively in the mentoring process

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has outdated knowledge in various areas in which he is mentoring
- Provides brief answers to questions that require more thorough responses
- Mentors employees at inconvenient or inopportune times
- Doesn't consistently follow up
- Ends mentoring sessions abruptly, even when employees have additional questions
- Is uninterested in mentoring, and it shows
- Rushes through mentoring from start to finish

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Provides information on shortcuts and workarounds that violate standards and compromise quality
- Focuses on employee mistakes, and then provides inadequate corrective information
- Makes far more negative comments than positive ones
- Has a threatening undercurrent in her mentoring
- Places unrealistic expectations on employees, and then reprimands employees who fall short
- Focuses more on discipline than on development
- Has no patience with employees who are struggling
- Is more of a tormentor than a mentor

Acting as a Positive Role Model

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Models the most effective behaviors
- Is a highly respected and productive individual whose behaviors are emulated by his employees
- Is highly conscious of the impact that her behaviors have on the actions of other employees
- Consistently aligns her behavior with the company's standards, ethics, values, and objectives
- Recognizes that one of the most powerful training tools is the example that he sets
- Has built a high level of respect and trust with employees, causing them to model her behaviors
- Has developed his employees to the point that they, too, exhibit model behaviors
- Is a true example of what it means to "walk the walk"

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Takes specific steps to model the behaviors that she expects from employees
- Has a positive impact on employee performance through his enthusiasm, upbeat attitude, and energy
- Sets an example that has helped improve the productivity of all her employees
- Never asks employees to adhere to standards that he doesn't demand of himself
- Sets an example that has contributed to an atmosphere of excellence within the department
- Maintains and demonstrates excellence in all aspects of her work

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Sets a clear example of behaviors for his employees to follow

- Is always aware of the impact that her behaviors are having on the performance of others
- Provides appropriate positive reinforcement when he sees employees emulating his behavior
- Is comfortable and successful as a role model
- Shows employees what to do and how to do it, and does so without showing off
- Is genuinely committed to demonstrating model behavior

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Doesn't always remember that her behaviors serve as a model for other employees
- Occasionally overlooks the impact that his actions are having on other employees
- Inconsistently adheres to company policies, sending a mixed message to employees
- Has engaged in some questionable behaviors that are now being displayed by her employees
- Tries to serve as a positive role model, but frequently falls short of the mark
- Underestimates the impact of his behaviors on the performance others

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Demonstrates questionable behaviors that negatively influence the actions of her employees
- Ignores standards that he imposes on others
- Gets upset with employees when they emulate her questionable behaviors
- Cuts corners while expecting perfection from his employees
- Is uncomfortable with the notion that she is a role model
- Advises employees to look to other individuals as role models
- Lives by the adage "Do as I say, not as I do"

Applying Analytical Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has a problem-solving style that is both analytical and creative
- Conducts credible, thorough, and reliable analyses
- Has come up with new problem-solving strategies and solutions in his department by thinking analytically
- Quickly sees through specious arguments
- Has successfully used her analytical skills to solve several long-term problems
- Effectively uses analytical skills to solve technical as well as nontechnical problems
- Has raised the standards of analytical thinking among his peers
- Makes high-quality decisions that measurably contribute to the bottom line

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Bases conclusions on thorough analyses of all relevant data
- Supports conclusions with solid reasoning
- Identifies and focuses on relevant details
- Is a highly analytical problem solver
- Breaks problems into their individual parts and solves them piece by piece
- Is a clear and logical thinker
- Includes listening as a key part of her analytical approach
- Has business sense and analytical skills that are a powerful combination

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Uses a logical and orderly problem-solving approach
- Relies on specifics, not generalizations

- Has a deliberative problem-solving style, but never loses sight of deadlines
- Discerns relevant data from irrelevant data
- Is able to separate hype from facts
- Helps fellow employees build their analytical skills
- Asks the right questions at the right time
- Is receptive to ideas that differ from his own
- Is a tenacious investigator

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Bases decisions more on opinions than analyses
- Uses analytical skills, but relies on limited data
- Is more interested in a quick solution than a thorough analysis
- Quickly becomes defensive when asked about the reasoning behind her decisions
- Relies on less-than-credible sources
- Has a disorganized strategy that has led to lost documentation
- Is overly involved in the analysis process and loses sight of the objectives

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Manipulates facts to reach conclusions that he prefers
- Produces results that lack credibility
- Draws conclusions based on inadequate analysis
- Uses antiquated data to support her conclusions
- Lets personal bias influence his analyses
- Is consistently superficial in her analyses
- Overlooks critical data and developments
- Focuses on one idea and refuses to consider others
- Criticizes rather than analyzes

Building Employees' Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Varies training styles to meet employees' learning styles
- Is highly successful in developing employees' expertise and skills
- Provides training that is readily applicable to work that needs to be done on the job
- Has measurably improved performance and productivity by training others
- Has had a positive impact on the bottom line through her efforts to build employees' skills
- Creates a true learning environment
- Creates and implements outstanding on-the-job and off-the-job employee development programs
- Has provided training and guidance to prepare several of her employees for promotions

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Provides timely feedback to reinforce learning
- Gives employees plenty of opportunities to practice
- Automatically gravitates toward training roles
- Is approached by many employees who want to learn about "best practices"
- Ensures that employees in her department are always well trained
- Regards employee development as a key part of his job
- Follows up regularly on all training
- Quickly identifies and addresses areas in which employees need further training and development

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Gladly helps and guides her fellow employees
- Takes no shortcuts when training

- Builds employee skills through two-way communication rather than one-way communication
- Is always looking for ways to improve his own training skills
- Is open and communicative when teaching
- Never turns down an opportunity to train
- Takes great pride in the growth and development of her employees
- Conducts highly successful training programs

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Does little more than lecture his employees
- Plays favorites in selecting employees for training
- Has employees who emerge from her department with no additional skills
- Provides no follow-up after training
- Waits for employees to fail before taking any steps to train them
- Builds his employees' skills in areas that have little to do with successful performance
- Expects employees to train themselves

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Shows no interest in building her employees' knowledge, skills, or abilities
- Never has time to train his employees
- Retaliates against employees who complain about the quality of training that she provides
- Typically provides training that is out-of-date
- Is unresponsive to employee questions
- Has taken no recent steps to upgrade his own skills
- Fails to build employees' skills, but reprimands employees for questionable performance in areas that require such skills

Computer Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has expert-level knowledge regarding a wide range of computer programs, databases, and languages
- Has finely tuned technical troubleshooting skills
- Helps fellow employees build their computer skills
- Is directly responsible for changes in company computer systems that have led to measurable improvements across several performance areas
- Has in-depth knowledge of several operating systems
- Sets the standard for outstanding Web and Internet skills and usage
- Is able to create upgrades, patches, and functionality improvements

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is continuously upgrading her computer knowledge and skills
- Quickly learns and applies new programs
- Has a wide range of knowledge regarding hardware and software
- Creates tailor-made training programs to help employees learn new systems
- Has an outstanding intuitive sense of computer operations
- Helps keep company computers at state-of-the-art levels
- Is always on the lookout for new cost-effective systems and applications

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is highly receptive to new computer programs and software upgrades
- Helps fellow employees with computer problems

- Follows company policies regarding computer usage
- Is familiar with a broad range of computer hardware and software
- Has well-developed word processing skills
- Uses graphics effectively
- Has made several successful slide-show presentations
- Makes excellent use of e-mail
- Stays current on computer technologies relevant to his work
- Is comfortable with spreadsheets and databases

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is slow to adjust to new or upgraded computer programs
- Is unmotivated to increase her computer knowledge
- Doesn't take advantage of many features available on company computers
- Tends to copy too many employees on e-mail messages
- Frequently interrupts others with basic computer questions
- Relies on manual processes that should be managed on his computer
- Uses e-mail for personal messages
- Flags routine e-mail messages as urgent

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Downloads programs in violation of company policy
- Is resistant to computer upgrades
- Forwards inappropriate e-mail messages
- Wastes time visiting Web sites unrelated to her job
- Doesn't always read his e-mail
- Doesn't respond to e-mail that requires a response
- Contacts the IT department for technical support on matters that she should be able to handle herself

Researching Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has cutting-edge online research skills
- Generates excellent data from the best sources and resources
- Has state-of-the-art skills in designing, administering, and interpreting surveys
- Produces high-quality and reliable research projects
- Uses a broad range of appropriate statistical measurements and tests
- Has an outstanding ability to differentiate relevant data from less significant data
- Produces research reports that are well reasoned, well written, and well received

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is thorough and well organized in his research methods
- Builds the research skills of her employees
- Develops a solid research plan while remaining open to further data gathering and analyses if the findings warrant such actions
- Differentiates between trustworthy and untrustworthy sources
- Digs through and analyzes a vast array of data before reaching any conclusions
- Has a solid understanding of statistical analyses, and is able to see through questionable statistical methodologies
- Takes full advantage of the most appropriate technologies when conducting research
- Continuously conducts relevant research in his field, independent of assignments to do so

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Has expertise in the field that provides her with a jump-start on research projects

- Doesn't waste time with questionable sources
- Uses a variety of search engines to check and cross-check sources and gather additional useful information
- Is comfortable and effective in handling research-oriented projects
- Begins research projects with an open mind
- Completes research projects on time
- Continues to build his research skills

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Conducts research randomly and jumps from one resource to another
- Spends too much time with marginal sources of data and too little time with valuable sources of data
- Can get sidetracked during the research process
- Rushes through research projects
- Is more focused on gathering data than analyzing it
- Uses outmoded data analysis techniques and technologies
- Asks for advice when conducting research, but rarely follows it
- Relies on summaries and overviews, rather than facts and figures

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Actively avoids projects that require research
- Reacts first by trying to delegate research assignments
- Is easily influenced by small amounts of data
- Tends to rely on questionable resources
- Is more influenced by the appearance of Web sites than by their content
- Is unfamiliar and uncomfortable with most search engines
- Relies on outdated materials and sources
- Produces research reports that lack clarity and credibility

Sharing Knowledge

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Genuinely enjoys sharing her expertise to help build employee productivity, performance, and confidence
- Is approached by many employees with questions, and always makes time to answer them
- Manages to complete his work with distinction while always making time to share knowledge

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is generous with her time and ideas
- Holds informal discussion sessions with interested employees on numerous workplace questions
- Lives by the philosophy that "anything worth knowing is worth sharing"

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Seeks opportunities to share insights and information with other employees
- Has raised employee performance and satisfaction by sharing his knowledge
- Runs training sessions that are regarded as valuable perks

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Doesn't have much up-to-date knowledge to share
- Regards questions as an intrusion on her time
- Spends a minimal amount of time sharing his knowledge

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Refuses to make time to share insights and information
- Makes employees feel unwelcome if they come to her with questions
- Uses an arrogant and condescending tone when responding to inquiries

Technical Knowledge

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Keeps his technical skills on the cutting edge
- Is the go-to person for technical questions
- Offers comments, suggestions, and answers that are widely respected and carry a great deal of weight
- Has made important technical contributions to her field
- Is passionate about continuing to learn
- Can discuss technical issues with anyone at any level
- Reads for pleasure in his field
- Has technical expertise that has contributed directly to the success of the company
- Is regarded as an expert's expert

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Has a high degree of intellectual curiosity
- Is on top of new developments in her field
- Is truly an expert in his field
- Maintains state-of-the-art knowledge
- Is one of the resident experts in the company
- Knows it all without being a know-it-all
- Is highly regarded as a technically savvy individual
- Has great knowledge, but never shows off

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Digs in and finds the right answers to complex technical questions
- Has a solid grasp of the entire field
- Has thorough knowledge from A to Z
- Asks questions when stumped
- Listens carefully instead of jumping in with an answer

- Takes active steps to build her expertise both on and off the job
- Is continuously upgrading his knowledge base
- Always takes advantage of learning situations, whether on or off the job
- Keeps all licenses and certifications current

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has let her expertise fall behind
- Gives superficial answers to detailed questions
- Has no interest in continuing education
- Builds technical expertise in areas that have little to do with the needs of the company
- Has in-depth knowledge in too narrow of an area
- Has impressive credentials, but spends too much time talking about them
- Relies on information that has since been updated
- Shows declining interest in his area of expertise
- Focuses more on yesterday's knowledge than tomorrow's challenges

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Bases decisions on knowledge that is out of date
- Shows no interest in upgrading her technical knowledge
- Turns away from opportunities to build his expertise
- Lets licenses and certifications lapse
- Is unfamiliar with the latest developments in her field
- Gets caught up in the technical details and fails to see the larger issues
- Becomes argumentative when his facts are questioned
- Hasn't taken a class or attended a seminar in years

Chapter 14

The Best Phrases for Attitude

In This Chapter

- Recognizing and encouraging enthusiasm toward the job
- Identifying and rewarding steady and consistent performance
- Targeting and fortifying behaviors that demonstrate loyalty

One of the most common themes in performance appraisals is focused on employee attitude. Unfortunately, much of the feedback concerning attitude is marginally useful at best. The problem is that *attitude* is a term that has many components, and simply advising an employee that she has a great attitude or a poor attitude is not particularly helpful.

Overarching positive comments about super attitudes provide no information regarding behaviors for an employee to continue, while overarching negative comments about terrible attitudes provide no information regarding behaviors for the employee to eliminate. Plus, vague or general feedback in this area can actually chip away at the employees' attitudes.

As a result, the most effective way to provide meaningful feedback in this area is to use descriptive phrases that focus directly on the most compelling behaviors that reflect employee attitudes at work, such as attendance, dedication, commitment, reliability, initiative, energy, handling of pressure and stress, and more.

When providing feedback in this area, keep in mind that, as an employee improves his performance, his attitude improves as well.

Accepting Assignments

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Reaches out for additional assignments
- Has increased departmental productivity as a result of her willingness to assume additional assignments
- Enjoys the challenge and learning opportunities that accompany his assignments

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Accepts assignments without hesitation
- Reorganizes her work to carry out all assignments as needed
- Completes every assignment thoroughly and on time

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is always willing to do extra work
- Approaches all assignments seriously and energetically
- Discusses assignments and clarifies expectations and priorities in advance
- Effectively prioritizes and completes assignments

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Begrudgingly accepts assignments
- Frequently claims that he's too busy to handle assignments
- Regards assignments as punishments
- Asks for assignments, and then ignores them

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Continuously looks for reasons to refuse an assignment
- Becomes exasperated when offered an assignment
- Instantly looks for other people to do the work
- Fails to complete her assigned work

Attendance

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has had perfect attendance since day one
- Schedules personal appointments during non-work hours
- Has not used any sick leave
- Attends all work-related sessions, including those held after hours, during the evening, and on the weekend
- Is a model of excellent attendance

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Always arrives on time or a few minutes early
- Has only had *x* days of absence during the year
- Has significantly improved attendance in her department
- Is absent only when he's truly unable to work

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Gets right to work as soon as she arrives
- Follows the company's policies on breaks
- Promptly advises management if he's unable to work

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Regularly makes personal appointments in the middle of the workday
- Spends the last hour of work preparing to leave
- Is frequently late to work
- Looks for ways to miss work and still get paid

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has used up all her sick time in the first *x* weeks
- Takes sick days when he isn't sick
- Abuses the company's break policy
- Stays home and doesn't notify anyone

Can-Do Attitude

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has a can-do attitude, plus a will-do attitude
- Actively seeks opportunities to take on the most demanding and difficult tasks
- Focuses on what can be done, rather than on what can't be done

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Has had a positive impact on the attitudes and performance of his fellow employees through his can-do approach to work
- Is certain of her ability to get any job done and done right
- Has yet to encounter a project that he can't handle

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is always ready to jump in and get the job done
- Seeks opportunities to show what she can do
- Actively seeks the more challenging tasks
- Rarely if ever says "I can't"

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has a can-do attitude, but falls short with his performance
- Focuses more on what can't be done rather than on what can be done
- Talks about having a can-do attitude, but her behavior rarely reflects it

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Initially responds to any request by saying that it can't be done
- Has a "can't-do" attitude
- Is more likely to undo a project than do it
- Says "no" before hearing all the facts

Dedication and Commitment

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Put in astounding hours on the XYZ project to help make it a major success
- Foregoes personal opportunities to keep work commitments
- Shows unwavering dedication to the company and its mission

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Puts in extra hours without being asked to do so
- Works nights and weekends whenever needed
- Fully immerses himself in the job

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is always willing to accept extra assignments
- Takes pride in demonstrating her dedication to the company
- Has a strong personal commitment to the company's goals

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is dedicated to the company whenever it's convenient
- Gives his work intermittent attention, rather than concentrated attention
- Claims she is dedicated to the company, but takes no significant steps to show it

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Speaks negatively about the company but positively about the competition
- Is critical of the company's vision, values, and goals
- Uses time at work to advance his personal agenda rather than the company's agenda

Emphasizing Safety

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Keeps the issue of safety on her employees' minds at all times
- Has taken highly effective actions in his department to maintain the lowest accident rate in the company
- Regards safety as one of her top priorities
- Regards personal and group safety as a major concern
- Has dramatically reduced accidents in his area
- Has received awards for her steps and suggestions to improve safety in the workplace
- Always takes the safest approach in carrying out all responsibilities

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Continuously building his employees' awareness of safety issues
- Has measurably improved safety ratings in her department
- Recognizes and rewards employees for safe actions and safety-related suggestions
- Has brought in experts to discuss safety with employees
- Adheres to high personal standards of safety
- Leads classes on workplace safety
- Has implemented several programs to improve safety
- Has played an active role in designing and implementing the company's emergency preparedness programs
- Is an active member of the company's safety committee
- Has not had one accident in his years with the company

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Follows all company policies on safety
- Keeps safety in mind in all her work and non-work activities each day

- Serves as a model of safe behavior
- Never puts himself or other employees in risky or dangerous situations
- Promptly and thoroughly investigates all accidents
- Is decreasing the accident rate in her area
- Participated in the company's programs on safety training, CPR, and first aid
- Participated in additional training in emergency preparedness

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Spends a minimal amount of time talking about safety
- Produces vague and general write-ups of employee accidents and safety incidents
- When accidents occur, is primarily interested in blaming someone
- Shows little concern for the increasing rate of accidents in his area
- Has been involved in *x* accidents during the year
- Provides no significant training on safety

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Overlooks the fact that her area has the highest accident rate in the company
- Pushes production at the expense of safety
- Engages in risky behaviors on the job
- Ignores the company's policies on safety
- Places the issue of safety toward the bottom of his list of priorities on the job
- Ridicules employees who insist on working safely
- Covers up accidents when they occur

Energy

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has remarkable energy throughout the day
- Has a boundless energy level
- Brings an unending supply of energy to the job

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is still energized when most others are exhausted
- Energizes those who work with her
- Maintains a high degree of energy during extended business travel
- Is never at a loss for energy

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is always ready to do more work
- Productively channels his energy to the job
- Is highly productive all day long
- Actively seeks challenging and demanding projects

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Consistently focuses on less rigorous projects
- Frequently diverts her energy to nonproductive pursuits
- Becomes less productive as the day progresses
- Starts projects with a good deal of energy, but runs out of gas quickly

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Falls asleep during the workday
- Waits for others to do the heavy lifting
- Never exerts extra effort
- Devotes more energy to non-work activities than to his job

Flexibility

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has an open mind and carefully considers all new ideas, strategies, and approaches
- Has generated creative solutions to complicated problems by maintaining an open mind
- Encourages and actively listens to new ideas

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Has contributed to an open and communicative climate in the department by demonstrating flexibility
- Regards employees as valued resources, and carefully considers all their ideas
- Is genuinely interested in ideas that differ from the established way of doing things

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is receptive to change, but only if it makes sense
- Is flexible without being wishy-washy
- Increases her employees' receptiveness to new ideas

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Hardly considers ideas that differ from his current thinking and understanding
- Regards ideas that differ from hers to be marginally valuable at best
- Is too flexible and easily influenced by others

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is totally resistant to ideas that differ from his
- Insists on doing things the way she has done them before
- Regards employees who offer alternatives to his way of doing things as troublemakers

Focus

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Directs laser-like attention on every project
- Has amazing powers of concentration
- Focuses equally well on big-picture items and details
- Keeps her team focused on the work to be done

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Productively focuses energy and effort on major projects
- Has an unbending focus on his work
- Never loses sight of the objectives
- Locks her attention on the goals to be met, and then tenaciously pursues them

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is a persistent problem solver who keeps digging until he finds the answer
- Stays focused on her projects from start to finish
- Directs his full attention to work-related matters throughout the day

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Directs too much attention to issues of secondary importance
- Drifts from one project to another, without closure on any
- Is easily distracted

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Fails to fully direct her attention and efforts on the work to be done
- Focuses attention on lower-level projects
- Focuses attention on non-work projects
- Takes an excessive number of breaks

Following Company Policies and Procedures

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Clearly understands and adheres to the company's policies, procedures, standards, and expectations
- Understands policies and procedures, along with the spirit and intent behind them
- Offers valuable and viable suggestions if he disagrees with specific policies or procedures

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Keeps employees up-to-date regarding changes in policies and procedures that impact their work
- Explains and clarifies policies and procedures
- Applies polices fairly

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Understands most policies and procedures and is able to quickly find answers when in doubt
- Takes policies and procedures seriously
- Follows company policies and sets an expectation for her employees to do likewise

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is always looking for ways to work around the policies
- Regards the policies and procedures as loose suggestions
- Can apply company policies inequitably

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Follows his own procedures rather than company procedures
- Picks and chooses the policies and procedures that she will follow
- Demands that others follow policies that he ignores

Going the Extra Mile

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Puts in extra time, energy, and effort to produce the highest-quality work
- Is always ready to do more for the company, regardless of the time, place, or demands
- Seeks out the most demanding and challenging projects
- Won't settle for average performance, whether from herself or from anyone else

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Strives to deliver more than whatever is expected
- Puts in extra energy, effort, and time to generate excellent results
- Willingly takes on the most demanding tasks at any time

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Works extra hours when extra work is needed
- Never complains when projects require additional time and effort
- Is always ready to step up and do more work

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is unwilling to go the extra mile for anyone but himself
- Begrudgingly goes the extra mile, and then complains at every step
- Typically comes up with excuses for why she can't help out

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is never available when extra help is needed
- Frequently responds by saying, "That's not my job"
- Is unwilling to do anything beyond the bare minimum

Handling Pressure and Stress

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Maintains composure and focus in high-pressure situations
- Is a calming influence during stressful periods
- Has truly remarkable stress management skills and abilities
- Helps build his employees' stress management skills
- Improves her performance as the pressure increases
- Is extra-energized in high-pressure situations
- Helps others remain calm and focused by continuing his own excellent performance in stressful situations
- Remains unfazed by the pressures of a heavy workload and highly demanding deadlines

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Remains positive and confident when under severe pressure
- Adjusts schedules, priorities, and strategies to effectively handle increased job pressures
- Tolerates high levels of pressure with no slippage in her performance
- Prevents or reduces the severity of pressure situations through his planning skills
- Remains calm, steady, and focused as pressure increases
- Never falters when under pressure
- Takes steps to remove unnecessary sources of stress on the job
- Manages stress, rather than letting stress manage her

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Goes into high gear when the pressure is on
- Puts in extra energy and hours when job pressures increase

- Is building his stress management skills
- Keeps up her productivity under stressful circumstances
- Copes with stress by working even harder
- Maintains wide-open communication in high-pressure periods
- When stress levels increase, uses stress management techniques to help calm himself as well as fellow employees

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Tends to lose focus during periods of high pressure
- Experiences high levels of stress in situations that are not particularly stressful
- Creates even more pressure and stress for herself by falling behind on projects
- Is outwardly nervous and jumpy when under pressure
- Lets productivity slide as pressure increases
- Becomes overly emotional when under pressure
- Loses patience in direct proportion to increases in pressure

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Displays significant declines in performance with the slightest increases in pressure
- Misses work when the pressure increases
- Constantly complains about the pressures of the job
- Is unable to perform effectively when under pressure
- Tends to shut down when stressed
- Becomes short-tempered when pressure increases
- Starts to panic at the first sign of pressure
- Increases stress instead of managing it

Initiative

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is a true self-starter
- Appropriately identifies work that needs to be done, and then takes action
- Takes action on projects, issues, or concerns whenever and wherever needed

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Shows consistently high levels of initiative, self-reliance, and independence
- Needs the absolute minimum amount of supervision
- Seeks assignments instead of waiting for them

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Steps up when there is work to be done
- Once given an assignment, works autonomously and effectively
- Helps foster a spirit of initiative among his employees

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Waits for work to come her way
- Shows initiative primarily on minor tasks and assignments
- Is slow to take action on projects that truly need his attention
- Takes initiative, but fails to provide adequate communication regarding the steps that she's taking

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Needs constant prodding to get the job done
- Does very little unless given a specific directive
- Actively avoids assignments that require initiative and drive

Level of Supervision Required

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has surpassed goals on numerous projects that included virtually no direct supervision
- Works without supervision and delivers consistently outstanding work
- Is highly effective in managing his own projects from start to finish

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Can be trusted to deliver outstanding work with an absolute minimum of supervision
- Displays excellent judgment, decision making, and problem solving when working on her own
- Independently handled the XYZ project from inception to its highly successful conclusion

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Knows when to ask for additional guidance and direction
- Is steadily earning increased levels of independence
- Actively seeks opportunities to work autonomously

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Only devotes full effort when closely monitored
- Doesn't know when to ask for help
- Tends to focus on questionable priorities when turned loose

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Without ongoing supervision, slips to unacceptable performance levels
- Needs regular reminders to stay on track
- Becomes nervous and stressed out when working independently

Reliability and Dependability

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Displays exceptional performance day after day
- Keeps his word under all circumstances
- Regardless of the situation, will do everything possible to make sure that her performance is steady and strong
- Is unstopped by obstacles, pressures, and demands that would justifiably derail others

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Can be counted on to give 110 percent under all circumstances
- Keeps his commitments and works with fellow employees to help them keep theirs
- Automatically works extra hours if that's what it takes to get the job done right

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Can be counted upon for steady performance
- Demonstrates consistently solid performance in all aspects of her work
- Handles projects conscientiously from start to finish

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Demands reliability from others, but not from himself
- Has energy, drive, and performance levels that are inconsistent and unpredictable
- Talks about deliverables, but does not consistently deliver

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Disappoints employees who depend on her
- Makes promises that he doesn't keep
- Guarantees that deadlines will be met, but consistently misses them

Understanding and Supporting Company Values and Mission

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Represents the best in company values with her actions
- Takes a wide range of actions that help support and fulfill the company's mission
- Frequently articulates and reinforces company values for other employees
- Consistently demonstrates a full and unwavering commitment to the company's mission
- Establishes and pursues goals that help the company advance toward its mission
- Believes that the company is pursuing a worthy mission
- Takes a wide range of actions that encourage other employees to focus more clearly on the company's mission

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Helps other employees understand and act in accordance with the company's values and mission
- Has values that are in direct alignment with the company's values
- Establishes and follows specific plans and strategies to help the company realize its vision and fulfill its mission
- Regards the company's mission as his mission
- Takes immediate action to deal with behaviors that contradict company values
- Recognizes and rewards employees whose outstanding behaviors help move the company closer to its mission

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Fully understands and accepts the company's values and mission
- Consistently performs in line with company's vision and values

- Clearly reflects the company's values in his actions
- Keeps company values in mind at all times
- Has great faith in the company's mission and ability to fulfill it
- Demonstrates a high degree of respect for the company's values
- Takes pride in the company's mission

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Occasionally engages in behaviors that ignore the values of the company
- Hasn't taken the time to understand the company's mission
- Ignores all communications and meetings that present information on the company's values and mission
- Doesn't regard the mission of the company as being particularly significant
- Provides other employees with misinformation regarding the company's mission and values
- Doesn't believe that issues related to the company's values or mission are her concern

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Often behaves in ways that are in direct conflict with the company's values
- Has personal values that are significantly different from those of the company
- Actively disagrees with the company's mission
- Speaks negatively about the company's mission
- Has turned his employees against the company's mission
- Places her mission above the mission of the company
- Acts as if company values don't apply to him
- Manipulates company values to justify questionable behaviors

Volunteering

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Always the first one to volunteer for committees, task forces, and extra responsibilities
- Not only volunteers, but plays an active role as a volunteer
- Doesn't turn down opportunities to volunteer

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Senses a high degree of personal satisfaction by assuming voluntary responsibilities at work
- Has made many valuable contributions to the company through her various roles as a volunteer
- Has taken actions that directly led to increased interest in volunteering in several areas of the company

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Regards volunteering as part of his job
- Devotes serious time and energy to voluntary roles
- Has personally recruited several volunteers

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Joins voluntary committees, but then shows very little involvement or support
- Volunteers to help, but complains about doing so
- Spends too much time on voluntary functions at the expense of her other responsibilities

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Hasn't volunteered for anything
- Signs up to volunteer, but doesn't show up
- Always has a reason to avoid volunteering
- Volunteers opinions rather than time

Chapter 15

The Best Phrases for Ethics

In This Chapter

- Identifying and filling ethical gaps
- Highlighting and energizing equitable behaviors
- Aligning employee actions with company values

Ethical issues in the workplace have always been important. They bring down individuals as well as companies. Most people are aware of the damages that ethical shortcomings can wreak on a company, but many people don't realize that a strong performance appraisal system can play a critical preventive role.

Performance appraisals, accompanied by ongoing coaching and feedback, have the potential to identify and arrest unethical behaviors before they lead to a different kind of arrest. With feedback and guidance from solid performance appraisal systems, unethical behaviors are likely to be identified and stopped in their earliest stages.

In order to stop these breaches of ethics, appraisals need to do more than merely advise an employee that he's been acting unethically. In order for feedback regarding unethical behavior to have a lasting impact, it needs to target specific unethical acts.

This chapter focuses on the broad range of written comments that deal with the broad range of unethical behaviors. These phrases focus on employee behaviors in such areas as equal employment opportunity, diversity, sustainability, honesty, integrity, fairness, and more.

With strong feedback in each of these specific areas, you can prevent unethical behaviors from expanding and contaminating your company.

Diversity

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Truly values diversity
- Shows great respect for individual differences
- Approaches programs, policies, and decisions with a highly inclusive mindset
- Works with a diverse team to generate highly creative ideas, suggestions, and outcomes
- Transformed a group of diverse employees into a highly creative, cohesive, and productive team
- Conducts diversity training programs
- Encourages, supports, and utilizes the unique talents of each of her employees
- Achieves consistently outstanding results by building diverse work groups and task forces

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Highly effective in leading diverse teams
- Encourages and supports diverse problem-solving strategies
- Always looking for ways to include all his employees in tasks, projects, and programs
- Maintains a high degree of two-way communication with all employees
- Identifies and breaks down barriers that separate her employees
- Creates, implements, and supports diversity policies and programs
- Continuously monitors the level of diversity

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- A strong supporter of diversity in the workplace
- Develops and maintains diverse teams
- Treats all employees with a high degree of respect and trust

- Continues to attend training sessions on diversity
- Understands how to prevent and deal with discrimination
- Supports company actions and practices to increase diversity
- Has a great deal of interest in the ideas, inputs, and suggestions from all his employees
- A strong advocate of diversity training and diversity programs

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Tends to exclude rather than include
- Allows stereotypes and bias to influence her dealings with others
- Has a diverse team, but plays favorites
- Takes minimal steps to draw upon the individual talents of his employees
- Is demonstrating decreased willingness to abide by the company's diversity policies
- Is slow to adjust to diversity
- Is increasingly resistant to the company's diversity efforts
- Shows passive resistance to all efforts to increase diversity

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is unsupportive of any efforts to increase diversity
- Has sidestepped every opportunity for diversity training
- Takes actions that undermine the company's diversity efforts and programs
- Avoids taking any steps that support diversity
- Makes derogatory and divisive comments
- Has made discriminatory comments that have led to complaints from co-workers
- Is uncommunicative and untrusting when dealing with a diverse group of employees

Equal Employment Opportunity

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Understands and follows all Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) rulings, laws, and guidelines
- Keeps employees current on EEO rulings, laws, and guidelines
- Has helped strengthen her fellow employees' commitment and awareness of EEO
- Takes swift and appropriate corrective actions when employees deviate from established EEO standards
- Regards EEO as a top priority
- Plays a leading role in developing the company's EEO programs
- Is continuously upgrading his EEO knowledge and expertise
- Is the company's resident expert on EEO matters

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Leads formal and informal training sessions on EEO
- Makes all decisions independent of race, color, religion, gender, national order, disability, age, or sexual orientation
- Actively and vocally supports EEO guidelines and expectations
- Keeps EEO in mind when creating and implementing new programs
- Monitors company compliance with EEO guidelines and regulations
- Has developed a climate in which there have been no claims of discrimination filed against the company
- Plays an ongoing role in upgrading the company's EEO policies and programs

Fully competent; Meets expectations

- Is genuinely committed to EEO
- Is fully aligned with the company's standards, values, and expectations regarding EEO
- Demonstrates a high degree of insight and sensitivity on EEO issues
- Has upgraded her fellow employees' knowledge and understanding of EEO issues
- Adheres to all the company's policies on EEO
- Has made suggestions to improve or clarify the company's EEO policies
- Actively solicits employees' ideas and suggestions regarding the company's EEO policies and programs

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Shows minimal interest in EEO policies, practices, and programs
- Only attends required EEO training sessions
- Has a basic understanding of EEO guidelines, but often overlooks them
- Ignores most communication regarding EEO
- Has an inadequate understanding of EEO guidelines
- Provides inaccurate information on EEO matters
- Looks for ways to get around EEO policies

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Ignores EEO laws and rulings
- Engages in sexually harassing behaviors
- Makes offensive comments based on race, color, religion, gender, national order, disability, age, or sexual orientation
- Lets bias and stereotyping enter his decision making
- Creates artificial barriers to exclude or hold back individuals whose backgrounds are different from hers
- Has engaged in behaviors that led to formal complaints against the company

Fairness

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Places major importance on fair treatment of all employees
- Has a solid reputation as a fair and equitable leader
- Has helped others truly understand fairness and how to implement it
- Has made significant changes in polices and programs to eliminate unfair elements
- Has a strong sense of fairness that is apparent in all decisions that he makes
- Keeps fairness at the core of her decision making
- Takes immediate action to remedy inequitable situations

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Treats all of his employees in a fair and just manner
- Regards fairness as one of the most important criteria in all of her decision making
- Leads a department that is widely regarded as a bastion of fairness
- Listens carefully to employees' concerns about fairness, and takes corrective actions where warranted
- Clearly communicates standards and expectations regarding equitable treatment of all employees
- Has a great deal of expertise on legal guidelines regarding equitable treatment of employees

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Ascertains that all employees are treated fairly
- Takes prompt action to counsel employees who engage in unfair behaviors
- Has obtained training that specifically focused on equity in the workplace

- Provides employees with ongoing coaching to increase their understanding of the role and importance of fairness at work
- Keeps employees fully aware of company standards, expectations, and values regarding fair treatment
- Has widened the reach of many programs to provide fair access for all employees

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has been advised of his unfair behaviors, but continues to repeat them
- Implements activities and programs without adequate consideration of their fairness
- Provides inadequate attention to inequities in the workplace
- Treats workplace inequities as minor matters that do not require prompt attention
- Treats the symptoms of unfair treatment, instead of treating the causes
- Makes pronouncements about fairness on the job, but does not take action when issues arise

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Plays favorites
- Rationalizes that unfair treatment will make employees stronger
- Treats employees unfairly, which has led to formal complaints
- Is unresponsive to employees' concerns regarding unfair treatment
- Reprimands employees who voice concern about inequities at work
- Makes decisions without considering how fair or unfair they may be
- Is unconcerned about the unfair impact of her actions

Giving Back to the Community

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Truly values the opportunity to help those in need
- Is actively involved in volunteer activities in the community
- Plays a leadership role in various community organizations
- Helps raise substantial contributions for nonprofit organizations
- Has taken actions that increased volunteerism among her fellow employees
- Serves as a model of the company's values, focusing on helping and serving the community
- Has been singled out for awards from community organizations that she serves
- Has led various drives to help disaster victims

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Always makes time to help community organizations
- Consistently supports causes, events, and organizations that help those in need
- Is truly committed to helping those who are less fortunate
- Has generated increased company-wide support for important causes and organizations
- Has a genuine sense of compassion toward the less fortunate
- Has built goodwill for the company through his civic-minded actions

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Has strong personal values focused on voluntarism
- Takes actions to increase employee awareness of the value of community service
- Encourages employee involvement in community activities, but never pressures anyone

- Is able to effectively balance community service with the demands of her job
- Is highly regarded in the company for his work in the community
- Serves as an excellent role model for other employees when it comes to volunteerism
- Actively supports company policy regarding community service

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Is slow to support company-wide efforts to help those in need
- Makes comments that discourage employees from participating in volunteer activities in the community
- Ignores company policy on community service
- Keeps pushing the company to do more for his favorite charity and less for other charities
- Uses many company resources and materials for charity work, and does so without permission
- Solicits contributions for her favorite charity during work hours rather than during breaks

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is quick to disparage the volunteer activities of others
- Provides no scheduling flexibility for employees who engage in community service
- Resists aligning his behavior with company values and policies regarding community service
- Is overly involved in community activities and lets her job responsibilities falter
- Provides favorable treatment for employees who participate in his favorite volunteer activities
- Misses too much work as a result of volunteer activities
- Pressures employees to give time or money for her favorite charities

Honesty

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is 100 percent trustworthy
- Is widely respected for his honesty
- Is regarded as totally credible by all who work with her
- Completes projects that are based on honest data gathering and analysis
- Is above-board, straightforward, and candid
- Displays intellectual honesty in all aspects of his work
- Is the go-to person for honest answers and opinions
- Signs off on projects only when the work is 100 percent reliable

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Digs in and finds the right answers to difficult questions, instead of trying to bluff her way through
- Has established a high degree of personal trust
- Keeps her word on all matters
- Is fully trusted in all she says and does
- Regards honesty as a top priority in dealings with his fellow employees
- Has fostered a climate of honesty within her department

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Doesn't stray from the truth
- Is a person of his word
- Gives credit where credit is due
- Is willing to make serious sacrifices in order to keep her commitments
- Successfully establishes honest and open two-way communication with his employees
- Provides honest feedback in order to help employees learn, grow, and develop

- Uses honest facts, figures, and data to support her conclusions

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Believes that there is no problem in having a "fudge factor" in every project
- Holds back highly pertinent data
- Rarely gives the full story
- Is inclined to bend the truth
- Provides misleading updates on his projects
- Excessively embellishes her accomplishments
- Makes promises that he knows cannot be kept
- Will say anything to get her way
- Is widely regarded as being less than credible

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Makes comments that always must be taken with a grain of salt
- Gives different people different stories regarding the same situation
- Caused the XYZ project to fail because of her lack of forthright behavior
- Has a basic lack of honesty that has garnered numerous complaints
- Produces projects and reports that always need extra scrutiny and fact checking because of questionable analyses and misleading conclusions
- Takes credit for work done by others
- Generates questionable results by manipulating the numbers
- Is held in questionable regard by his employees because of issues regarding honesty and trust
- Is frequently caught in lies
- Makes up facts to support her position

Integrity

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Maintains the highest standards of personal integrity
- Displays exemplary behavior in every aspect of his work
- Is highly regarded for her integrity both within and outside the company
- Is a true embodiment of the company's values regarding integrity
- Sets the high-water mark for integrity
- Identifies the most worthy steps and then takes them
- When given a choice, always opts for the reputable route
- Finds and implements the sterling way to handle any ethically challenging situation

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Sets very high personal standards of integrity, which his employees emulate
- Will not consider less-than-honorable plans, strategies, or behaviors
- Consistently engages in meritorious behavior
- Can be counted upon to act honorably in all situations
- Builds a climate of integrity in her department
- Demonstrates the highest levels of integrity in all dealings with employees
- Handles all dealings with his customers with the highest levels of integrity
- Has a strong sense of integrity that underlies dealings with vendors

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is well-intentioned in all her workplace behaviors
- Consistently takes the high road

- Appropriately counsels employees who engage in disingenuous behaviors
- Has a strong sense of right and wrong, and consistently strives to do what's right
- Maintains high standards of integrity across his department
- Makes decisions that consistently reflect her strong commitment to acting reputably
- Quickly dismisses less-than-exemplary options

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Lets expedience trump integrity
- Sets integrity aside when pursuing his goals
- Rationalizes her less-than-meritorious behaviors
- Does not rank integrity particularly high on his list of priorities
- Always expects integrity from others, but doesn't always display it herself
- Intermittently demonstrates acceptable levels of integrity
- Has had several recent lapses in integrity

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Violates company standards and expectations regarding employee integrity
- Has put the company at risk with his untoward actions
- Engages in underhanded behaviors
- Has taken actions that have caused his employees to question his integrity
- Has generated complaints from customers because of issues with his integrity
- Has been the cause of concern from vendors because of her integrity
- Has cost the company customers and money because of his disingenuous behavior
- Has engaged in questionable behaviors that have led to corporate embarrassment

Judgment

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is highly regarded for her judgmental ability
- Keeps company values, standards, and ethics in mind in any situation requiring his judgment
- Is comfortable with transparency in any stage of the judgmental process

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Makes decisions when fully informed with reliable data
- Includes significant others in significant decisions
- Has nothing to hide when making decisions

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Has a commitment to ethics that underlies his judgments
- Immediately counsels employees who display questionable judgment
- Has conducted formal sessions with employees to further educate them on business ethics

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Occasionally displays questionable judgment and engages in arguably unethical business practices
- Shrouds much of his decision making in secrecy
- Shows a disconnect between her personal ethics and the company's ethical standards

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Makes decisions without consideration of company ethics and values
- Brags about business conquests that clearly contradict the company's ethical standards
- Has damaged the company's image, goodwill, and reputation through his ethical lapses

Maintaining Professionalism

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is passionate about using her professional skills and expertise to help others
- Has a strong commitment to his field
- Is continuously building her skills and knowledge base
- Is regarded by other professionals in the field as a true expert
- Stays at the cutting edge of knowledge in his field
- Is highly effective in applying her professional expertise to the job
- Adheres to a strong code of ethics regarding professional behavior
- Gives advice, analyses, and recommendations that are 100 percent trustworthy

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Places a great deal of emphasis on providing valuable professional services to others
- Is known for sound decision making
- Attends numerous formal training programs and classes to continue to augment his professional expertise
- Gravitates into formal and informal leadership roles based on her expertise
- Takes time to educate others in his field
- Generates a wide range of new and creative ideas that contribute to her field and the company at large

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Maintains ties to his field, professional association, and professional peers
- Demonstrates a high degree of pride in all of his work

- Actively seeks opportunities to enhance her professional training
- Is able to effectively apply his professional skills to the job
- Continues to expand her professional expertise
- Is truly passionate about his field

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has let her professional expertise slide
- Appears to be burning out
- Has stopped reading professional journals and magazines
- Has lost his enthusiasm and passion for the field
- Is becoming increasingly involved in peripheral interests instead of focusing on her areas of expertise
- Takes no time to help his employees learn about the field
- Is uninterested in discussing new trends and developments in her field
- Has lost contact with most of his professional peers

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Ignores her professional code of ethics
- Has caused serious productivity problems because of his out-of-date knowledge
- Uses outmoded problem-solving techniques and strategies
- Has let her professional designations, certifications, and licensing expire
- Has been expelled from his professional association
- Has had her license revoked by a regulatory agency

Sustainability

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is truly committed to sustainability and doing what is best for the environment
- Is the prime force behind the company's award-winning sustainability program
- Has saved the company thousands of dollars through his sustainability efforts
- Has built companywide awareness about sustainability
- Has inspired her employees to take a wide range of sustainable steps
- Has devised systems and measurements to track the company's sustainability programs and practices
- Has an expert level of knowledge of sustainable practices

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Encourages and supports employee suggestions regarding sustainability
- Has fostered a department-wide climate of sustainability
- Played a key role in saving the company *x* gallons of water per year
- Is the driving force behind an *x* percent reduction in the use of paper
- Is directly responsible for an *x* percent increase in the amount of recycled trash
- Is responsible for an *x* percent reduction in the use of electricity
- Led the company's effort to buy environmentally friendly products
- Established and runs the sustainability committee

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Provides employees with appropriate recognition for actions that help sustainability

- Is steadily building his knowledge of sustainability
- Supports the company's sustainable policies and practices
- Monitors her employees' performance to be sure that sustainability guidelines are being followed and standards are being met
- Works with vendors and customers to help them with sustainability efforts
- Focuses efforts on recycling, using less, buying recycled goods, and reusing products where possible
- Is a member of the sustainability committee
- Circulates important articles on sustainability and the actions employees can take to help reduce waste
- Is a source of outstanding ideas for sustainability

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Pays passing attention to sustainability, but does not demonstrate serious commitment in this area
- Asks employees for their suggestions on sustainability, but then does nothing with them
- Has made no effort to understand the company's sustainability programs, policies, and objectives
- Ignores requests to attend company sessions that deal with sustainability
- Takes minimal sustainability steps, but believes that he is already doing enough

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is unconcerned with issues of sustainability
- Makes no effort to reuse or recycle
- Ignores company polices and guidelines on sustainability
- Refuses to take even the most basic sustainability steps
- Regards sustainability as a fad
- Continues to engage in behaviors that contradict the company's sustainability programs and policies
- Shows a lack of concern for the amount of paper, electricity, and water that she wastes every day

Chapter 16

The Best Phrases for Creative Thinking

In This Chapter

- Sharpening the tools that build creative thinking
- Creating a climate that supports innovative ideas
- Overcoming the barriers that prevent creative problem solving

One of the hallmarks of successful employees is their ability to think creatively and develop innovative solutions to the vast number of problems they encounter on the job. Companies that support this type of thinking are not only better able to cope with today's myriad challenges, but also to predict and prepare for tomorrow's challenges.

Identifying, enhancing, and reinforcing your employees' efforts to engage in creative thinking is critical. You should be doing this informally throughout the evaluation period, and you should specifically target this area during the formal reviews.

Your appraisal will do more than provide your employees with specific and accurate feedback regarding their efforts to apply and support creativity on the job. It will also provide them with tools to build their skills in this area, along with guidance and support to help them do so.

You need to appraise key behaviors that relate to creative thinking on the job, such as generating new ideas, being receptive to new ideas, thinking outside the box, encouraging and supporting innovation from others, and more.

The phrases in this chapter are designed to reflect and encourage creative thinking.

Brainstorming

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Uses brainstorming sessions to generate a large number of creative ideas, many of which have been implemented
- Encourages employees to present as many ideas as possible
- Takes appropriate follow-up action on all ideas generated in brainstorming sessions

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Lets employees know that there is no such a thing as a bad idea in brainstorming sessions, and she means it
- Conducts brainstorming sessions that are both playful and productive
- Sets positive expectations ahead of these sessions, which helps lead to consistently positive results

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Picks interdepartmental topics and includes employees from other departments
- Leads discussions that are free of criticism and reprisals
- Has motivated other managers to implement brainstorming because of the success of his sessions

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Provides no follow-up after brainstorming sessions
- Does most of the talking during brainstorming
- Cuts discussions short during brainstorming sessions

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Refuses to hold brainstorming sessions
- Criticizes employees for their suggestions
- Takes reprisals against employees if he does not agree with their suggestions and new ideas

Embracing Change

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Creates a dynamic environment in which productive change is sought, implemented, and embraced
- Sees herself as a change agent, and regards this role as a key component of her position
- Utilizes a high degree of two-way communication when implementing change
- Includes employees in the change process
- Keeps employees involved at every step of the change process
- Solicits and incorporates employee input in the change process
- Identifies areas in which changes are needed, and then generates enthusiasm for these changes
- Uses excellent business insight and judgment in determining which changes to implement
- Introduces many changes to keep the company at the forefront of new strategies, technologies, and programs

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Builds employees' abilities to adjust to change
- Avoids change for the sake of change
- Excels at analyzing proposed changes and implementing the changes that are most likely to be effective
- Regards change as a key force behind learning, growth, and development
- Helps employees see how they'll benefit from changes that are being implemented
- Keeps employees involved in the change process and treats them with trust and respect at every step
- Introduces changes that contribute to measurable improvement in employee performance
- Has created an atmosphere that is highly supportive of change

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Adjusts to most changes quickly and easily
- Works directly with his employees to help them adjust to change
- Is a highly effective change agent
- Maintains a receptive attitude to proposed changes
- Reacts to change initially by learning more about it
- Reacts to most change in a positive, upbeat, and supportive manner
- Maintains positive expectations toward changes that are being implemented
- Uses ongoing formal and informal communication with her employees to reduce resistance to change
- Enjoys playing an active role in the change process
- Carefully considers the potential impact of the changes that he proposes
- Focuses on the gains associated with changes that are being implemented

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Becomes nervous and anxious at the first sign of change
- Accepts change in a half-hearted manner that is emulated by other employees
- Avoids discussions to determine changes, but then complains about the changes that are made
- Pushes for changes that are likely to create confusion and dissention
- Only embraces self-serving changes
- Doesn't provide adequate analysis, reasoning, or documentation behind the changes that she proposes
- Pushes for changes without adequately considering their potential outcomes
- Frequently introduces changes that are neither necessary nor productive

- Has caused widespread productivity problems among his employees because he introduces one change after another, many of which are questionable at best
- Places more attention on making changes than making products

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Campaigns against proposed changes without fully understanding them
- Regards most changes as personal threats
- Only embraces changes that she suggests
- Introduces major changes without prior discussion or approval
- Indicates that he operates in accord with recent changes, but then ignores them
- Is unwilling to even discuss the prospect of various changes
- Offers her ideas for changes in other areas, but never for her own area
- Is unwilling to listen to his employees' suggestions for changes
- Excludes her employees from discussions regarding change in her area
- Makes his decisions about proposed changes without hearing any of the facts
- Generates a climate of resistance to change among her employees
- Initially reacts to change by rejecting it
- Initially reacts to change by fighting it
- Becomes upset with his employees who support proposed changes
- Continuously brings up changes that have failed in the past
- Approaches proposed changes with negative expectations
- Takes actions to undermine newly introduced changes

Encouraging and Supporting Innovation from Others

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is widely regarded as an someone who seriously encourages innovative thinking
- Provides significant tangible and intangible rewards to employees who try to create new ideas, solutions, or suggestions
- Helps encourage innovative thinking by practicing it
- Holds frequent discussions on innovative problem-solving techniques to enhance employee awareness and effectiveness in this area
- Works directly with her employees to help build their skills in generating innovative ideas
- Shares his creative thinking expertise with his employees
- Provides her employees with coaching and encouragement when their efforts at innovative thinking fall short

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Provides employees with significant recognition for their efforts as well as their successes at innovation
- Works with employees to analyze and improve their innovative ideas
- Maintains an open mind regarding employee attempts at innovation
- Initially reacts to employees' innovative ideas by listening rather than judging
- Provides employees with feedback and follow-up on the innovative ideas that they've discussed with him

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Provides employees with constructive criticism of the their innovative ideas and suggestions

- Provides employees with ongoing feedback and encourages them to continue to develop their innovative ideas
- Supports educational programs to build her employees' skills in this area
- Holds frequent brainstorming sessions with employees
- Regularly communicates with his employees to discuss their new ideas

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Lets employees present new ideas, but only on relatively unimportant matters
- Rarely has time to discuss new ideas
- Expects minimal innovation from her employees, which is exactly what she receives
- Expresses interest in meeting with his employees to brainstorm, but never does so
- Speaks of her interest in hearing innovative ideas from employees, but provides a lackluster response to all of them

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Convinces employees that they aren't creative
- Ignores employees' innovative comments, ideas, or suggestions
- Only provides negative feedback on employees' innovative ideas
- Is quick to reprimand employees if their efforts at innovative problem-solving strategies fall short
- Regards innovative thinking and problem solving as playing and fooling around
- Frequently advises employees that they aren't paid to be creative
- Ridicules employees' attempts at innovation
- Doesn't fully understand his employees' new ideas, but reacts negatively nonetheless

Generating New Ideas

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is a constant source of outstanding new ideas
- Takes good ideas and turns them into outstanding ideas
- Finds new and better ways to get things done in her department and in many other areas as well
- Continuously generates ideas that improve performance and productivity
- Generates numerous creative approaches to problems that appear to be unapproachable
- Looks at old problems in new ways and solves many of them
- Is highly regarded as a major source of new ideas and creative thinking
- Demonstrates remarkable creativity on any assignment that he takes on

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Generates ideas that are innovative and practical
- Comes up with ideas that consistently show insight and foresight
- Keeps chipping away at problems until she finds a new pathway to solve them
- Is a source of creative ideas for employees in many different areas
- Consistently finds ways to work smarter
- Doesn't merely generate new ideas, but generates new ideas that are practical, functional, and productive
- Revisits old ideas in new ways and gets excellent outcomes

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is always on the lookout for new and better ways to handle job responsibilities

- Enjoys working on projects that call for new ideas
- Has used innovative thinking to solve several complicated problems
- Pushes himself to come up with new ideas
- Regards creative thinking as an important part of her job
- Seeks challenging problems that call for innovative solutions
- Strives to apply innovative thinking to all of his projects

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Comes up with new ideas that have little applicability to work
- Is more interested in the quantity than the quality of ideas that she generates
- Generates new ideas but does nothing with them
- Focuses on generating new ideas to solve insignificant problems
- Takes his old ideas, slightly rewraps them, and then insists that they're entirely new
- Becomes overly upset if her new ideas are questioned

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Hasn't taken any steps to generate new ideas
- Is uninterested in seeking new ways to handle responsibilities or solve problems
- Isn't inclined to push himself to come up new ideas
- Insists on implementing her new ideas without adequate analysis or planning
- Has implemented new ideas that led to serious productivity problems
- Doesn't regard innovative thinking as part of his job
- Insists on pushing her old ideas
- Takes credit for new ideas that aren't his

Presenting New Ideas for Company Policies and Procedures

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has created several new policies that have had a measurably positive impact on employee performance
- Is always looking for ways to improve departmental operations
- Has taken several highly productive steps to streamline numerous procedures
- Stays aware of best-practices approaches to a wide range of policies and procedures, and consistently makes solid suggestions for improvement
- Has implemented new cost-saving procedures
- Reviewed current policies and removed language that was either out of date or out of compliance with current regulations
- Has designed and implemented new policies in several important emerging areas
- Generates ideas to improve policies or procedures that are always appropriate, well researched, and a clear improvement over current practices

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Listens to her employees for recommendations regarding policies and procedures
- Has reduced the company's legal exposure through his recommended policy changes
- Is always looking for ways to upgrade operations that directly impact the bottom line
- Carefully studies the flow of work before presenting her ideas for improved procedures
- Finds conflicting and overlapping policies and procedures and recommends specific steps to correct them

- Includes an appropriate level of detail when presenting his ideas for changes in policies and procedures
- Is systems-minded and consistently presents state-of-the-art methods to upgrade a wide range of company systems
- Has outstanding systems expertise and is frequently sought for advice when it comes to writing or revising policies and procedures

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Recommends improvements to company policies or procedures, instead of complaining about them
- Always provides clear and well written documentation to support his recommended changes in company policies or procedures
- Continues to study and take classes to build her expertise in this area
- Keeps an open mind when presenting his ideas to upgrade policies and procedures
- Takes a creative look at company policies and procedures and focuses on changes and upgrades that will last well into the future
- Provides a broad range of viable options when making suggestions to improve policies or procedures
- Is directly responsible for new policies that have led to improvements in employee morale and satisfaction

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Recommends new procedures without fully understanding current procedures
- Recommends policy or procedural changes without adequate analysis or understanding of their potential impact
- Makes suggestions for new policies or procedures that are often out of date
- Has ideas for changes in policies and procedures that tend to be too general
- Makes recommendations for new policies and procedures that lack adequate documentation

- Gives presentations on new policies and procedures that are filled with far too much detail
- Disregards concerns about potential problems associated with her suggested changes in policy
- Ignores questions regarding his suggested improvements to polices and procedures
- Rarely considers costs when recommending changes in policies or procedures
- Suggests changes in policies and procedures that tend to focus only on the short term
- Refuses to consider input from others regarding her proposed changes to policies and procedures
- Tends to complain about policies and procedures rather than recommend specific improvements
- Believes that policies and procedures being used in other companies will automatically work here

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Continues to fixate on changing one particular policy because it directly impacts his work
- Recommends changes in policies or procedures that are far too costly to implement
- Becomes defensive when asked to provide more detail on the rationale behind her recommended changes
- Insists on having his recommendations implemented, regardless of their value
- Pressures her employees to support her recommended policy changes
- Continues to recommend implementation of policies that have failed in the past
- Takes it personally when his suggested changes in policies or procedures are not implemented
- Hasn't offered one suggestion to improve policies or procedures
- Shows no interest in improving company policies or procedures

Problem Solving

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Uses an arsenal of creative strategies to productively solve a wide range of problems
- Consistently generates outstanding solutions to the most demanding problems
- Focuses on solving problems, not on symptoms
- Has powerful analytical skills that she applies to every stage of the problem-solving process
- Establishes workable, prioritized, and highly effective problem-solving plans for each problem, instead of instantly jumping in and trying to solve them all
- Varies his problem-solving style to meet the nature and demands of the problem itself
- Approaches all problems with confidence and the expectation that she will generate solid and innovative solutions
- Actively seeks out problems that require the most creative thinking

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is a highly effective problem solver from start to finish
- Comes up with creative strategies when other employees are stuck
- Is frequently sought for a second look at problems that have stumped other employees
- Takes a fresh look at problems and identifies new inroads to solve them
- Creatively uses state-of-the-art technology to help in the problem-solving process
- Finds solutions that have eluded many others

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Defines and understands problems before attempting to solve them

- Is a tenacious problem solver
- Has a broad range of problem-solving skills that he applies effectively to all problems and problem situations
- Is confident in her creative methods and unafraid to take a stand
- Creatively works his way around, over, under, or through obstacles in the problem-solving process
- Solves problems before they become crises

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Gets stumped on the more challenging problems and quickly moves on to others that are easier to solve
- Generates average solutions to problems that could yield far more positive results if approached more creatively
- Is uninterested in new problem-solving strategies
- Focuses excessively on superficial issues, while often overlooking the deeper cause of the problem
- Identifies problems, but takes inadequate steps to resolve them
- Rushes through problems that require more thorough analysis
- Is reluctant to make recommendations based on her findings

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Employs problem-solving techniques that end up generating even more problems
- Creates more problems than he solves
- Overlooks or underestimates problems until they've become major issues
- Analyzes minor issues and lets larger problems fester and grow
- Decides on the solution to a problem before starting her analysis
- Comes up with solutions that are incorrect, insufficient, and invalid

Receptiveness to New Ideas

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Consistently demonstrates a high degree of interest in ideas and suggestions from his employees
- Has a totally open mind when it comes to hearing new ideas
- Encourages innovative thinking from others
- Regards new ideas as an essential component of personal growth
- Is not only receptive to new ideas, but also works with employees to further shape and refine them
- Emphasizes that great individual and corporate success emanate from new ideas
- Truly believes that excellent ideas can come from anyone at any level of the organization

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Always makes time to listen to the employees' new ideas
- Is seen by employees as being truly interested in their innovative thinking
- Follows up with employees after discussing their creative ideas with them
- Takes appropriate action on employees' ideas
- Actively solicits new ideas from her employees
- Always provides thanks, credit, and recognition for new ideas, regardless of whether the ideas can be used

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is open to ideas and suggestions that differ from his thinking or way of doing things
- Rewards employees for suggestions that are implemented
- Implements employee ideas and suggestions whenever possible
- Lets the employees know that she has high expectations regarding their innovative thinking

- Never misses an opportunity to ask for new ideas and suggestions from the employees
- Is seen by employees as being interested in their ideas
- Has created an atmosphere in which all employees are totally comfortable presenting their ideas to him

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Talks about her ideas when employees want to discuss their ideas
- Goes through the motions of listening to employees' new ideas, but doesn't really pay attention
- Rarely takes steps to do anything with the employees' new ideas
- Believes that employees lack the expertise and insight to come up with useful suggestions on significant matters
- Is satisfied with current operations and doesn't see the need for suggestions
- Believes that the employees' innovative ideas highlight his own lack of such ideas

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is uninterested in hearing ideas from employees
- Advises employees to do their work and stop bringing their ideas to her
- Tells employees that all their ideas have been tried, and they don't work
- Regards employees' ideas as an interruption
- Is brief and abrupt when employees try to present their ideas to him
- Doesn't listen when employees present new ideas to her
- Repeatedly cancels meetings with employees to discuss their ideas
- Chastises employees whose ideas differ from his
- Lives by the philosophy that employees should "stop thinking and start doing"

Seeking Improvements

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Pushes for improvements on a wide range of issues, ranging from the most detailed matters all the way to global developments that offer major opportunities for the company
- Has presented several outstanding ideas to reduce costs
- Comes up with excellent ideas to build revenues
- Is responsible for operational improvements that are having a positive impact on the bottom line
- Carefully scans the marketplace for new opportunities
- Uses her solid knowledge of business operations to help streamline operations company-wide

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Continuously seeks specific steps, strategies, and programs that will make the company more effective
- Is highly observant of all company operations and works with key employees to discuss and implement improvements
- Meets formally and informally with his employees to openly discuss ways to make improvements to the company
- Is able to find creative applications for ideas that others may have overlooked
- Reads a great deal about customer service and provides viable suggestions to build the company's effectiveness in this area

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Interprets her responsibilities broadly and looks beyond her assigned tasks for ways to improve the company
- Is always on the lookout for ways to build the company's success

- Provides his employees with support and recognition for their efforts to make improvements to the company
- Is never satisfied with the status quo

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Occasionally comes up with new ideas for improvement, but does nothing with them
- Rarely devotes serious attention to seeking and creating improvements
- Shows minimal interest in hearing about planned improvements for the company
- Continuously focuses on the need for improvements in areas that are of minimal importance to the success of the company
- Attends strategy sessions, but doesn't participate in the discussions
- Encourages her employees to make suggestions for improvements, and then ignores them
- Doesn't focus on improvements beyond his department

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has an "it's not my job" attitude when it comes to seeking improvements for the company
- Hardly focuses on her own job, let alone looking for larger improvements
- Suggests strategies that contradict the company's values and ethics
- Solicits improvement ideas from his employees and then presents them as his own
- Discourages her employees from seeking any improvements
- Changes the subject when employees start talking about the ways to make improvements to the company
- Shows complete disinterest in trying to find ways to make any significant improvements

Thinking outside the Box

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Approaches problems with an open mind and without preconceived notions
- Questions assumptions regarding the significance of each piece of data and reassesses the value of each
- Looks at issues, questions, and dilemmas from every angle and generates entirely new ways to resolve them
- Is unrestrained by traditional problem-solving approaches, strategies, or expectations
- Generates productive outcomes by including unlikely people or resources in the problem-solving process
- Is unconcerned with others' opinions regarding the approach or style that he's using
- Keeps an ongoing log of her creative ideas in order to continuously enhance them
- Thinks outside the box by moving out of his workstation or office in order to literally look at a problem in a different light

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Productively integrates people, processes, and systems that seemingly don't go together at all
- Takes concepts that are cast in stone and then shatters, reshapes, or redefines them to generate more productive ideas and solutions
- Excludes seemingly essential components to open the door to a wider range of creative solutions
- Is open to totally different ideas, assumptions, and strategies
- Isn't afraid to make mistakes
- Doesn't give up in the face of doubtful comments by others who observe her unorthodox style

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Avoids yesterday's problem-solving strategies
- Enjoys working on projects that require creative thinking and solutions
- Has attended training sessions that focus on creative thinking and problem solving
- Uses his excellent observational skills to find overlooked pieces of data that can open up entirely new ways to solve problems
- Has an unconventional problem-solving style that yields better-than-conventional results
- Is always looking for new and productive ways to use everyday items

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Overly satisfied with the status quo
- Is afraid of making a wrong decision
- Regards unconventional thinking as too risky
- Has negative feelings and expectations when engaged in thinking that is slightly different from her traditional approach
- At the first sign of a problem, immediately reverts from creative thinking to overly structured thinking
- Believes that he is already thinking outside the box, but his actions indicate otherwise

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Is far more comfortable thinking inside the box
- Rarely challenges assumptions
- Is unwilling to change her thinking style, regardless of recent questionable decisions
- Refuses to attend programs that focus on creative thinking
- Only takes on projects that can be handled with very conventional thinking
- Avoids projects that call for creative thinking
- Regards the concept of thinking outside the box as a fad

Chapter 17

The Best Phrases for Self-Development and Growth

In This Chapter

- Identifying and widening each employee's knowledge base and skills
- Reviewing and revitalizing self-development plans and goals
- Increasing the value of each employee

One of the major objectives of performance appraisals is to provide employees with targeted feedback and guidance to help them learn, grow, and develop. Without a developmental component, performance appraisals would be relegated to the role of a mirror, showing employees how their performance looks but providing no help, support, or guidance to do anything about it.

The developmental comments that you include in your performance appraisals will ultimately help your employees experience the satisfaction associated with increased personal growth and increased personal productivity. Plus, as employees become more effective and productive, the effectiveness and productivity of the company will be enhanced.

Employee self-development is not a one-dimensional concept. Instead, in order for feedback in this area to have its intended positive impact, it needs to focus on the key components of development and growth. You need to include instructive phrases on such topics as training, personal goals, career planning, seeking learning opportunities, building problem-solving skills, widening one's knowledge base, and more.

Employees and employers alike seek growth and development, and your phrases in this area will help both of them meet this goal.

Becoming a Value-Added Employee

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Makes measurable contributions far beyond expectations
- Has stepped far beyond his performance expectations and taken actions that have generated major opportunities for the company
- Provides guidance that raises the competence, performance, and output of her fellow employees
- Has held costs constant while measurably improving his output as well as the output of his employees
- Has played a central role in generating additional revenue for the company because of her broad base of knowledge and experience
- Is able to integrate information and draw highly profitable conclusions
- Is clearly one of the company's best investments
- Continues to keep his base of knowledge at expert levels
- Is widely regarded as one of the company's most valuable resources

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is sought out by employees in many departments outside of her own because of her knowledge and expertise
- Is a major asset to the department and the company at large because of his skills mix
- Builds the skills and productivity of her employees
- Is one of the company's major assets
- Has skills that are unique to the department and central to its success
- Has built his expertise in areas that directly impact the bottom line
- Takes a wide range of actions that enhance the reputation of the company

- Has played a key role in attracting several outstanding individuals to this company because of her expertise and stature in the industry
- Has made efforts that have contributed to a significant drop in the unit cost of each item
- Generates maximum productivity from company resources
- Is always willing and able to take on additional projects
- Raises the quality of the decisions that are made in meetings just by being there

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Has a direct and positive impact on the quantity and quality of his fellow employees' work because of the quality and quantity of his own work
- Continues to make increasingly valuable suggestions
- Continues to develop specific skills that increase her productivity
- Takes steps to build knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly lead to increases in the quality and quantity of work
- Brings a continuously expanding set of unique skills that enhance performance and productivity in his department
- Continues to expand her technology skills in areas that are valued by the company
- Has a proactive mindset
- Uses his solid planning skills to complete work on time and prevent crises and crunches along the way
- Strives to exceed expectations on all of her projects

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Does his job and nothing more
- Contributes to the company in ways that tend to be minimal and of slight value at best
- Has allowed her value to the company to decrease over the years

- Sets goals to increase his value to the company but then sets them aside
- Rarely challenges herself to pursue rigorous work that would truly increase her value to the company
- Doesn't exert enough energy or effort to truly increase his value to the company
- Believes that she adds more value than is actually the case
- Focuses his energy in areas of minimal importance

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has taken no steps to enhance her skills and value to the company
- Has taken actions that actually decrease his value to the company
- Takes actions without considering the value that they add to or subtract from the company
- Demonstrates no significant value-added behaviors due in great part to her lack of interest in self-development
- Acts in ways that discourage or diminish value-added behaviors from his employees
- Does the minimum amount of work, leading to the minimum amount of added value
- Makes negative comments about the company
- Shows a complete disregard over the impact that her actions can have on the company's reputation and goodwill
- Rejects all opportunities to assume additional responsibilities
- Fails to seize opportunities to develop skills that would increase his value to the company

Building Problem-Solving Skills

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has established and surpassed goals that focus on improving her problem-solving skills
- Does a great deal of independent reading to continue to strengthen his problem-solving skills
- Further enhances her problem-solving skills by helping other employees build theirs
- Seeks and seizes opportunities to strengthen his problem-solving skills
- Models her problem-solving skills on those of the best problem-solvers in the company
- Has outstanding problem-solving skills and continues to take steps to make them even stronger
- Has actively pursued training programs to enhance his problem-solving skills

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Devotes extra time, energy, and effort to building her problem-solving skills
- Is open to new ideas and suggestions to further build his problem-solving skills
- Clearly demonstrated her improved problem-solving skills in handling the XYZ project
- Has made and kept commitments to upgrade his problem-solving skills
- Has transformed her previously weak problem-solving skills into strong problem-solving skills
- Continues to attend educational programs and seminars that focus on problem-solving skills

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Is steadily improving his ability to solve problems
- Has solid problem-solving skills that she continues to develop

- Is highly interested in feedback from others to help build his ability to solve problems
- Applies suggestions and strategies from others to help strengthen her problem-solving abilities
- Has demonstrated a marked improvement in his problem-solving skills since his last performance appraisal
- Seeks and accepts feedback on her problem-solving skills

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Agrees to take steps to improve his problem-solving ability, but fails to do so
- Is satisfied with her problem-solving skills, even though they have consistently fallen short
- Uses problem-solving strategies that no longer apply to workplace issues
- Doesn't take advantage of company-sponsored programs to build his problem-solving abilities
- Is unresponsive to offers of help from fellow employees who have excellent mentoring skills in several areas, including problem-solving

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has taken no steps to upgrade her problem-solving skills
- Is unwilling to listen to feedback to upgrade his problem-solving abilities
- Has shown no improvement in her problem-solving skills since her last performance appraisal
- Has shown a decline in his ability to solve problems
- Actively avoids opportunities to bolster her problem-solving ability
- Has caused smaller issues to turn into major problems as a result of his refusal to build his problem-solving skills
- Refuses to acknowledge the problems that have been caused by her current problem-solving skills

Career Planning

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is taking all the right steps to meet his career goals
- Applies her strong goal orientation to the career planning process
- Monitors his career plans and makes appropriate adjustments and upgrades
- Continues to set increasingly higher career goals for herself
- Accompanies all career goals with solid career planning
- Has set planning and goals that allow him to be on a fast track in his career
- Combines her career goals with the energy, drive, and focus to meet them
- Has built a strong team under him as part of his plan to continue to advance
- Adapts career plans appropriately to capitalize on unforeseen career opportunities

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Is receptive to career guidance
- Builds on the career advice that she receives
- Monitors his career plans and progress and takes active steps to stay on course
- Obtains appropriate training required for short-term and long-term career goals
- Treats career goals as seriously as performance goals and works equally diligently to meet them
- Has serious career goals but never loses sight of the performance goals that she has also established
- Takes courses and attends seminars to help him guide and manage his career
- Does a good deal of reading in the area of career planning
- Is serious, thorough, and committed in planning her career

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Has established clear career plans and goals for himself
- Continues to meet her near-term career goals
- Establishes career plans but does not over-plan
- Sets career plans and sticks with them
- Sets challenging yet realistic career goals and the plans that are needed to meet them
- Is undeterred by career setbacks or disappointments
- Takes advantage of the career-building opportunities available within the company
- Utilizes the company's resources to continue to advance his career
- Has learned a great deal by formulating her own career goals and has used this experience to establish solid expertise to help other employees set their career goals and plans
- Attends career planning seminars and applies what he learns

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Has done no serious career planning
- Takes a reactive mode when it comes to career planning
- Sets career goals but lacks career plans
- Is so locked into her career plans that she instantly rejects other career options
- Has career plans, but they lack specificity
- Has set career goals without adequate consideration of the planning required to meet them
- Puts career plans ahead of performance plans
- Fails to track the progress that he is making in pursuing his career goals
- Focuses more on the format than the content of her career plan
- Has established a career direction but no career goals

- Talks a great deal about the importance of career planning but has done very little for his own career
- Has set career goals but ignores opportunities to move closer to them
- Takes advantage of none of the company's resources to help develop and solidify her career plan
- Attends career planning sessions but doesn't apply any of the training

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Ignores the career plans that he establishes
- Devotes no time to career planning
- Assumes that she has no responsibility for setting career plans or goals
- Takes no steps to build knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the next step in his career
- Has unrealistic career goals and equally unrealistic career plans
- Has not engaged in career planning in the past and demonstrates no interest in doing so now
- Has set career goals but takes steps that directly contradict them
- Has intentionally missed individual and group meetings to discuss career goals and planning
- Waits for others to tell her where her career should go from this point
- Instantly rejects any advice or coaching that deals with his career
- Takes no initiative in seeking the training that she needs in order to reach her personal goals
- Expresses regret about his career options but takes no action to do anything about them
- Has landed in her present position without any career planning and has no interest in starting now

Personal Goals

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Has a clear vision of his future and works diligently to make it a reality
- Has a strong personal goal orientation, which has inspired fellow employees to follow suit
- Strives to attain personal goals that easily elude others
- Takes responsibility for her personal growth and development
- Consistently meets his personal objectives and then sets new ones that are even more challenging
- Establishes clear and challenging short-term and long-term personal goals
- Demonstrates great initiative and energy in pursuing her personal goals

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Establishes clear, specific, and measurable personal goals
- Has attained his personal goals, which has led to markedly improved performance
- Sets goals that are all accompanied by well-designed action plans
- Devotes major effort to reaching her personal goals
- Is able to meet his personal goals while also meeting his performance goals
- Continues to set increasingly challenging personal goals
- Shows great confidence regarding her ability to meet personal goals

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Takes his personal goals seriously
- Listens to counsel from others regarding her personal goals and the best strategies to meet them

- Sets challenging yet realistic goals regarding his skills, education, and career
- Has established personal goals and a path to meet them
- Obtains the training that is needed to achieve her personal goals
- Helps other employees determine their personal goals
- Shows a high degree of tenacity in pursuing his personal goals

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Sets personal goals, but none that would enhance her performance on the job
- Takes no serious steps to meet his personal goals
- Sets very general personal goals
- Sets unchallenging personal goals
- Hasn't made a serious commitment to meeting her personal goals
- Sets lofty personal goals but has no plans or strategies to meet them
- Demonstrates very little persistence in the pursuit of personal goals

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has established no goals to further develop his skills, abilities, or expertise
- Accepts no responsibility for setting her own personal goals
- Has had the same personal goals for an extended period of time and has failed to meet any of them
- Gives up easily in the pursuit of his personal goals
- Jumps from one personal goal to another but reaches none
- Pursues personal goals at the expense of performance goals

Responding to Performance Appraisals and Coaching

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Fully commits herself to following specific action plans to make improvements noted in her performance appraisal
- Accepts constructive feedback positively and is highly oriented toward making improvements in areas discussed with him
- Makes immediate corrective action based on the coaching that she receives
- Actively seeks coaching and uses it wisely
- Carefully considers every point in his performance appraisal and takes specific steps to deal with each

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Appreciates coaching and acts on the feedback that she receives
- Uses the feedback from his performance appraisal and coaching to fine-tune his skills
- Has been taking highly effective steps to upgrade her performance in areas that were noted in her last performance appraisal
- Accepts feedback in his performance appraisal with an open mind and readiness to take action
- Has taken her skills to an entirely new level by focusing on the coaching that she has received

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Takes performance appraisal feedback seriously and has made many improvements based on it
- Pays careful attention to the coaching that he receives and has upgraded his performance as a result
- Takes appropriate steps to follow the action plan and improve her performance in areas noted in her performance appraisal

- Has taken actions as a result of his most recent performance appraisal, which have led to marked improvements in performance
- Is highly receptive to coaching and managerial feedback

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Reacts defensively to feedback on her performance
- Appears to listen to coaching but then makes no changes in his behavior
- Needs frequent prodding before taking any action on feedback in her performance appraisal
- Makes a few quick and easy changes after being coached but ignores the larger issues
- Asks no questions during the coaching sessions and then heads off in the wrong direction
- Immediately reacts to any constructive feedback with denial
- Commits to taking corrective action after his performance appraisal but then fails to do so
- Takes some corrective actions immediately after her performance appraisal but then slides back to her old ways

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Doesn't listen to the coaching provided to him
- Ignores feedback that she receives in her performance appraisal
- Has taken no action based on the feedback and guidance that he received in his last performance appraisal
- Has received coaching on the same issue several times and has yet to show any signs of improvement
- Spends more time arguing than listening in performance appraisals
- Ignores her appointments for coaching sessions
- Is unreceptive to constructive feedback or coaching

Seeking Learning Opportunities

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Seeks out and attends seminars and training programs in his specialty
- Is an avid reader of magazines and journals in her field
- Has outstanding observation skills that allow him to learn details that others are likely to miss
- Is consistently acquiring new skills and building existing skills
- Regards the acquisition of knowledge as one of her highest priorities
- Quickly reaches a high level of expertise in new areas
- Brings a high degree of intellectual curiosity to the job
- Genuinely enjoys working in challenging situations that require major amounts of learning
- Is highly motivated to maintain cutting-edge expertise

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Puts in extra hours for the sole purpose of building his skills and abilities
- Frequently engages in informal discussions to upgrade her knowledge base
- Seeks feedback from others in order to build and enrich his knowledge base
- Recognizes gaps in her knowledge base and takes active steps to fill them
- Turns most work situations into learning opportunities
- Is always in a learning mode
- Has continued to expand his expertise across a broad range of areas
- Enjoys work situations in which successful performance requires additional learning and new skills

- Has positively influenced many of her fellow employees through her enthusiasm toward learning
- Consistently has a fast start-up on highly difficult projects because of his active pursuit of knowledge

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Regards performance appraisals as a learning opportunity
- Takes advantage of the company's mentoring program
- Truly learns from her mistakes
- Is always taking steps to gain more than a superficial understanding of new information that is relevant to his work
- Is currently attending a formal educational program
- Has completed all courses in a formal educational program and received her certification
- Asks questions if he doesn't understand
- Makes good use of the company's educational benefits
- Actively participates in the company's educational programs

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Rarely takes advantage of the company's educational benefits
- Begrudgingly attends required educational programs and sessions
- Rarely attends in-house educational programs
- Shows no interest in accessing the learning resources available at the company
- Attends educational programs but doesn't actively engage in them
- Is a vocal critic of company training programs, even though she rarely attends any
- Doesn't take the time to read written information that is provided prior to major projects

- Hasn't applied any of the information, techniques, or strategies that were emphasized in the training programs that he attended
- Rarely devotes enough time to fully mastering new skills that are required for her projects
- Enters learning programs with the expectation that he will learn nothing — and that is typically what he learns
- Rarely shows enough interest to ask questions
- Fails to take advantage of widespread learning opportunities offered by her associates

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Takes no active steps to enhance his expertise
- Is invited to many training programs but refuses to attend
- Rejects educational opportunities offered to her
- Regards additional education as unnecessary
- Doesn't believe that seeking additional educational opportunities is his responsibility
- Never seeks out educational opportunities and rejects those that are offered to her
- Takes no action on his own to pursue learning opportunities
- Immediately dismisses information on new techniques, strategies, or approaches, instead of listening to any of it
- Continues to rely on outmoded skills and outdated information, even after receiving specific coaching on newer approaches
- Avoids assignments and projects that require the acquisition of new knowledge or skills
- Prefers to do her work the old way rather than learn new technologies, processes, or procedures

Training

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Regards training as one of his highest personal priorities
- Devotes a high degree of energy and effort to getting the most out of all training programs and sessions
- Offers insightful comments that help herself and others learn during training sessions
- Is a positive influence in all training programs
- Builds a great deal of interest in training across his department
- Attends training sessions and then informally trains others
- Actively participates in training programs

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Takes all training seriously
- Shows immediate interest in new topics for training
- Asks excellent questions
- Adjusts easily and quickly to new training technologies
- Is a valuable participant in all training programs and sessions
- Quickly applies new knowledge to the job
- Continues to review training materials after the sessions have ended

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Genuinely enjoys the learning process
- Is an active and eager learner

- Is never late to training sessions
- Completes all required preparation prior to training sessions
- Pays careful attention throughout the training process
- Is highly appreciative of the training that she receives
- Strives to apply whatever he has learned in training

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Comes up with numerous excuses to avoid training
- Rarely participates in discussions during training sessions
- Is late to most training sessions
- Attends training sessions but fails to pay attention
- Claims that she doesn't need training, even though her performance contradicts this assertion
- Believes that his skills and knowledge are greater than they really are
- Signs up for training programs but rarely attends

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Shows no interest in additional training
- Is quick to criticize the training that is provided
- Misses training sessions
- Engages in disruptive behaviors during training sessions
- Fails to apply new information to the job
- Insists on using her former practices, instead of applying new practices in which she has been trained
- Makes no effort to educate himself
- Believes her current training is sufficient, even though it is not
- Makes derogatory comments during training sessions
- Fails to attend required classes

Widening One's Knowledge Base

Exceptional: Consistently exceeds expectations

- Is consistently among the first to learn new strategies or technologies
- Makes an ongoing effort to remain at the cutting edge of his field
- Actively pursues a broad range of opportunities to enhance her knowledge base
- Consistently seeks opportunities — both on and off the job — to build his knowledge base
- Anticipates new business trends and takes steps to widen her knowledge base to capitalize on them
- Sets challenging goals regarding the breadth of his knowledge base and then takes serious steps to surpass them
- Reads a vast array of books, journals, and magazines to further widen her range of knowledge

Excellent: Frequently exceeds expectations

- Places a great deal of emphasis on building his knowledge base in areas that directly and indirectly impact his ability to do the job
- Takes ongoing steps to build her knowledge base as well as the knowledge bases of her employees
- Maintains a continuously widening knowledge base
- Serves as an excellent model for other employees because of the steps he has taken to widen his knowledge base
- Maintains an open mind when dealing with information that challenges her current state of knowledge
- Continues to expand his already broad base of knowledge
- Has significantly widened her base of knowledge since her last performance appraisal

Fully competent: Meets expectations

- Made and kept a commitment to widen his knowledge base
- Frequently attends programs, classes, and seminars to build her knowledge base
- Uses a wide range of online and offline resources to widen his knowledge base
- Takes proactive steps to build her knowledge base
- Wisely uses company resources to continue to expand his knowledge base
- Has continued to widen her knowledge base since her last performance appraisal

Marginal: Occasionally fails to meet expectations

- Sets personal goals to widen his knowledge base but fails to meet them
- Has allowed her base of knowledge to fall increasingly out of date with the passage of time
- Continually uses outmoded strategies, highlighting his lack of interest in widening his knowledge base
- Waits for others to present her with opportunities to widen her knowledge base
- Demonstrates little initiative when it comes to widening his knowledge base
- Is uninterested in learning about new strategies and technologies that differ from what she is doing today

Unsatisfactory: Consistently fails to meet expectations

- Has taken no productive steps to widen his knowledge base
- Actively resists new information that contradicts what she already knows
- Ignores company-sponsored opportunities to build and widen his knowledge base
- Ignores suggestions to take specific classes that would help build her knowledge base
- Has established neither goals nor plans to widen his knowledge base

Part IV
The Part of Tens

In this part . . .

In the well-established tradition of *For Dummies* books, the chapters in this part provide you with the ten most powerful, persuasive, and motivational words that you can use in the performance appraisal process, along with ten outstanding employee behaviors that merit special recognition. Communication plays a compelling role throughout the appraisal process, and these chapters provide you with extra communication tools that generate and sustain highly positive and productive performance from your employees.

That's a powerful punch for such a pithy part!

Chapter 18

The Top Ten Words to Include in a Performance Appraisal

In This Chapter

- Choosing words that energize your employees
- Interspersing words that establish positive expectations
- Including words that inspire feelings of confidence and self-worth

One of the most effective ways to enhance the impact of the appraisals you provide is to select words that have a strong positive emotional charge. You may think that as long as you somehow get your message across, your word choice isn't all that important. After all, the message is what counts, right? The truth is, some words hit home far more quickly and compellingly than others.

In this chapter, I fill you in on ten positively charged words that pack a punch. By including them in your feedback, you greatly increase the likelihood that your comments will actually be heard and that your employees' performance will actually improve.

The Employee's Name

A person's name is one of the most powerfully charged words that she knows. If it wasn't the first word she ever heard, it's certainly among the very earliest.

When someone hears her own name, she reacts. She may turn, jump, flinch, or smile, but regardless of the specific action, she's not likely to ignore it, nor is she likely to ignore what happens after her name is called. By saying your employee's name before providing her with feedback, you're improving her readiness to listen carefully to your next words — and to act on them.

Achievement

Numerous studies have found the word *achievement* to be one of the premier sources of employee motivation. When employees hear the word *achievement* in your feedback, they're better able to sense the significance of their accomplishments.

Your employees can certainly experience feelings of achievement as they carry out their work, and they can give themselves any number of positive messages. However, when they hear you use the word *achievement,* its true motivational impact is released. After all, you can tell yourself that you achieved an important landmark, but this feedback is far more compelling when voiced by your manager.

Providing your employees with feedback that incorporates the word *achievement* has another benefit: When your employees encounter future opportunities that offer the possibility of achievement-oriented feedback, they're more likely to push themselves to go for the gold.

Build

The word *build* is literally and figuratively one of the most constructive words to use in the performance appraisal process. It has a strong positive connotation — the word *build* inherently assumes that something positive is going to be designed, created, and brought to life. In this way, the word *build* sets off positive emotions as soon as it's heard or seen.

The word *build* also has a strong visual component. In fact, when most people see or hear the word *build,* it isn't simply filed away with most other words. The more common

tendency is to mentally envision completed structures, such as buildings and bridges. Because your employees are automatically linking *build* with the successful completion of major projects, the word has a positive emotional charge.

The word *build* also implies an orderly, structured, and well-planned process with a real foundation. As a result, it connotes organized growth and development, and not a quick or superficial set of steps. Plus, most building projects are carried out by teams, which means that the word sends a subtle message that you'll be teaming up with your employees to help them along their paths of development.

In light of the compelling and memorable impact associated with the word *build,* you should include it across the broad spectrum of employee performance — for example, when you're talking about building productivity, output, relationships, knowledge, skills, strengths, teamwork, performance, and profits.

Can

By using the word *can* when appraising your employees, you're sending a subtle message — not only in terms of positive expectations but also in terms of your confidence in the employees' abilities to perform successfully. The more your employees hear what they *can* do, the more likely they are to do it. When you lace your comments with *can,* you're literally reinforcing your employees' can-do attitude.

As important as it is to emphasize what your employees' can do, it's equally important to avoid the word *can't.* The word *can't* sends a negative message about your employees' potential and can easily undermine their expectations and efforts.

Growth

There is no question that employees aspire to experience growth at work. However, growth is such a slow process that many employees aren't sure whether it's happening at all. In fact, because growth occurs in such minuscule snippets, some employees can miss it altogether.

By working with your employees each day, you can see growth when it occurs. In fact, you probably see more of your employees' growth than anyone they know. That fact, in combination with the role that you play as their manager, provides you with extra insight and credibility when it comes to recognizing their growth.

However, if you don't mention the word *growth,* your employees can still miss it, even if you glowingly describe their accomplishments. Employees want to know whether and how they've been growing, and by including the word *growth* in your comments, you can provide them with an answer that is clear, meaningful, and energizing. Plus, the use of this word continues to encourage your employees to repeat the behaviors that have helped them grow to this point.

Profit

The word *profit* has a strong emotional impact for employees at all levels of a company. As a result, it's a very important word to use in the appraisal process. In fact, when profit is minimized in performance appraisals, it's likely to be minimized in other ways as well.

There are actually two key reasons to use the word *profit:*

- **Employees at all levels should be thinking about it.** By keeping profit in mind, any employee becomes far more likely to take small or large steps to help the company be more successful.
- **When employees hear your feedback and consider changing their behavior, they need to understand how they'll benefit personally by making such changes.** Many employees make decisions about changing their behavior as a result of performance appraisal feedback by asking themselves, "What's in it for me?" One of the most effective ways to answer this question is to clearly show your employees how they will "profit" by taking the actions that you're suggesting.

Promotion

Every employee remembers his first promotion with pride, and simply hearing the word *promotion* brings back at least a

hint of those positive feelings. Plus, promotions have long been found to be a strong source of employee motivation. The result is that both of these factors contribute to the long-lasting positive emotional charge associated with the word *promotion*.

In light of these two factors, plus the role that performance appraisal plays in the promotion process, using the word *promotion* is particularly important when appraising your employees' performance.

The best time to use this word is when you're discussing performance in areas that directly relate to advancement, such as your employees' leadership abilities, technical knowledge, and communication skills. By specifically using *promotion* in this context, your employees are given a clearer understanding of the link between outstanding work in specific performance areas and advancement in the company.

Although using the word *promotion* is important, it's equally important to avoid making any promises or commitments about promotions. Managers who make such promises to their employees may soon find that they've walked right into a contract.

Success

When providing positive feedback, you may be tempted to focus on numbers, dates, facts, and figures. However, the best way to make this type of information memorable and motivational is to include the word *success* in the process.

By including *success* as you review your employees' successful attainment of hard numbers, your words will have a more compelling impact. Although your feedback will still have its share of rates, ratios, and percentages, such data will be wrapped in a motivational package that gives your employees a strong sense of recognition and personal competence.

Employees may or may not take the numbers with them after your review session, but the powerful psychological impact of this type of recognition will stay with them for a long time. Plus, because recognition is such a strong motivator, your use of the word *success* increases the likelihood that your employees will repeat their excellent behaviors in the future.

Thanks

In light of the large amount of ground that you have to cover in performance appraisals, one powerful word that you can easily overlook is *thanks.* If you forget to use the word *thanks,* you're losing a valuable and cost-effective opportunity to raise an employee's spirits, morale, and sense of self-worth.

As you prepare your performance appraisals for each employee, try to single out one major accomplishment that made a truly positive difference in the department or company at large. During the appraisal session, after you discuss this particular achievement, pause for a second or two and then thank your employee. Don't be surprised if your employee pauses for a second or two in return. She'll probably be shocked, and that fact alone will allow your thanks to have a deep and lasting positive impact.

Yes

Most people are conditioned to react positively to the word *yes* because it's associated with favorable outcomes in most areas of their lives. The word *yes* is particularly powerful because it plays a critical role in building mutual understanding and agreement. You want your employees to listen to your comments and act on them, and the more they hear the word *yes,* the more likely they are to do exactly that.

Some managers give the word *yes* a good deal of play but then undo all its power and effectiveness by attaching one little word to it — namely, the word *but.* When employees hear "Yes, but . . ." the word *yes* becomes a prelude to a rejection. As a result, that *yes* may as well be *no,* which is another word to avoid in the appraisal process.

The best way to benefit from the power of *yes,* and still add some points afterwards, is to say "Yes, and. . . ."

You can further strengthen the impact of your feedback by giving your employees more opportunities to say *yes.* One of the best ways to generate a *yes* is to end a sentence with a rhetorical question that can only generate a *yes.* For example, you're reading this book right now, aren't you?

Chapter 19

The Top Ten Behaviors Meriting Special Recognition

In This Chapter

- Identifying special behaviors that deserve special attention
- Reinforcing behaviors that add value to the employee and to the company
- Increasing the likelihood that outstanding behaviors will be repeated

Recognition is one of the most powerful sources of employee motivation, and performance appraisals offer a perfect opportunity to formally identify and recognize your employees' successes and achievements, whether in terms of their job performance or their personal growth and development. Although recognizing all of your employees' accomplishments is important, ten behaviors jump off the chart and merit *special* recognition.

The common theme shared by these behaviors is that they demonstrate particularly high levels of dedication, commitment, and energy — all of which add significant value to the company. Plus, when one employee engages in these behaviors, some of her co-workers will likely follow suit because they, too, will be interested in receiving recognition from you.

If you want your employees to repeat these outstanding behaviors, the best step is to recognize them as you manage by wandering around and as you conduct performance appraisals.

Your employees learn from you every day, not only as a result of your direct guidance and mentoring but also as a result of your actions. So, another powerful way to draw out the top ten behaviors from your employees is to engage in them yourself.

Exceeding Expectations

Employees have the opportunity to exceed expectations in virtually every aspect of their jobs. They can exceed tangible and measurable expectations (such as the quality and quantity of their work), as well as intangible expectations (such as their attitude or energy).

When employees exceed expectations, they don't necessarily do so as a result of your guidance or direction — they do it more as a result of their own initiative, drive, and personal standards of performance. Employees who exceed expectations typically derive a great deal of personal satisfaction out of doing so — and this satisfaction is enhanced and reinforced by the positive feedback that you provide, especially in your performance appraisals.

Mentoring Co-Workers

Employees who mentor others are actually demonstrating several excellent behaviors simultaneously, all of which are worthy of special recognition. First, in order to serve as a mentor, an employee must have a high degree of expertise, along with a full understanding of the company's performance standards in the area in which he is mentoring.

Mentors also send clear messages about the company's values, ethics, and mission. As a result, employees who serve as mentors are key purveyors of the company's values — and that's easily as important as their specific mentoring responsibilities.

In addition, mentors must have solid training abilities that build and reinforce other employees' skills. Plus, mentors must have solid organizational skills, allowing them to train other employees while simultaneously maintaining excellent levels of performance in carrying out their other responsibilities.

One of the most desirable characteristics of any employee is the ability to add value to the company, and mentors are able to do this in two ways:

- In order to mentor successfully, they must develop their own skills to expert levels, which clearly adds value to the company.
- When employees are mentored, *their* value to the company increases as well.

Taking Classes

When an employee takes classes, she's demonstrating her strong desire not only to continue her learning, growth, and development but also to increase the value that she brings to her job and the company at large. In addition, the fact that she can take classes while successfully carrying out her job responsibilities is a testimony to her energy, drive, persistence, and organizational ability.

There is no question that your employees' value to the company increases as they build their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Plus, their emphasis on learning indicates that these employees have maintained their intellectual curiosity and in no way see themselves slowing down, burning out, or topping out. Their desire to further their education is a clear sign that they continue to be motivated to achieve, advance, and play increasingly important roles in the company.

Although education is its own reward, the special recognition that you provide to your employees in this area *literally* makes education more rewarding.

Coming Up with a Great New Idea

Great new ideas merit great recognition. When your employees come up with truly outstanding ideas, such as those that save money, generate money, highlight better ways to get a job done, or build significant goodwill, you should give them special recognition — not only when they come up with the idea but also during the performance appraisal.

In order for your recognition to have the maximum impact, be sure to focus not only on the outstanding idea but also on the underlying factors that brought it to life. These ideas are actually the result of a combination of creative thinking, persistence, dedication, self-direction, and a strong need to achieve.

When your employees generate great ideas, the message to your *own* manager is that you've created a climate that focuses on innovation and creative thinking — which can lead to some great recognition for *you,* too!

Taking Self-sacrificing Actions

Providing recognition to your employees who place their own needs and priorities behind those of the company is particularly important. These employees are willing to set aside their own plans and step up to work on serious situations that are spinning out of control, such as rescuing a difficult and demanding project, taking care of an unhappy customer, calming a volatile situation, or handling emergencies.

The recognition that you provide for self-sacrificing behaviors should encompass more than the behaviors themselves. Your special recognition should also focus upon your employees' expertise in the situations that called for such sacrifices, as well as upon your employees' loyalty, commitment, and strong sense of responsibility.

Solving a Long-term Problem

Some of the toughest problems to solve in a company are resistant to efforts of some of the best problem solvers. These problems can exist in any area and include any aspect of company operations. They can be as varied as turnover, slow-paying customers, product design, system glitches, and turf wars between departments, to name just a few.

However, at some point or another, someone comes up with a perfect solution to one of these problems. If one of your employees is the problem solver, she clearly merits special recognition from you.

The bulk of your recognition should naturally focus on excellent problem-solving skills, but you should provide equally compelling recognition for the behaviors that accompanied your employee's problem-solving success, including her persistence, inquisitiveness, innovative problem-solving style, and refusal to give up.

Volunteering

When employees volunteer to serve on committees, help with special events and programs, or undertake additional projects, they're demonstrating behaviors that contribute to their own growth and development, while also helping the company — and both of these actions merit special recognition.

As companies solicit volunteers for various projects, employees who step up are demonstrating their desire to be part of the team and take hands-on actions to help the company meet its objectives. Underneath each act of volunteerism is a strong sense of loyalty, dedication, and a desire to make a contribution to the company.

Plus, when employees perform successfully in various voluntary roles, while performing equally well in carrying out their formal job responsibilities, they're demonstrating solid planning and organizing skills. Such skills are worthy not only of special recognition but also of special consideration when supervisory positions open up.

Building Goodwill

At some point, one of your employee's actions in the company or in the community will generate major positive recognition for the company itself. Perhaps this employee will reach a particularly important landmark. Maybe he'll head a highly successful fundraising effort. Or perhaps he'll play a central role in spearheading company support for victims of a natural disaster.

Regardless of the specific achievement, your employee's actions, leadership, or service will give the company's reputation, stature, and image a significant boost. And when company goodwill gets a boost, the value of the company gets a boost as well.

When you have an employee who successfully engages in extraordinary behaviors that enhance goodwill — whether such actions are part of his job description or not — he clearly merits extraordinary recognition from you.

Surpassing Goals

As you work with your employees, monitor their progress, and provide them with coaching and guidance, you'll find a select few who surpass their challenging performance goals or developmental goals. This achievement is one of the most revealing indicators of your employees' work ethic, personal standards, and drive, and it's clearly worthy of special recognition in the performance appraisal process.

Employees who surpass their goals know that they've done so, and they're likely to sense high levels of personal satisfaction, competence, and effectiveness as a result. You can elevate these positive feelings to even higher levels during the performance review by specifically recognizing your employees' success in exceeding their challenging goals.

TIP

Some employees' overall goals are to exceed their goals. The more special the recognition you provide for doing so, the more likely they are to continue their special goal-oriented performance.

Going the Extra Mile

As you review the broad range of behaviors displayed by your employees during the course of the evaluation period, be sure to look for steps that your employees have taken to do something extra to help their co-workers, customers, or the company at large. Often, these extra steps — large or small — make the difference between a good employee and a great employee, and, as such, they deserve special recognition.

Employees who go the extra mile are demonstrating an ongoing willingness to do whatever they can to help others, and they're willing to do so with high-level assignments as well as with minor chores.

These kinds of supportive and dedicated behaviors by some of your employees not only reflect highly positive attitudes but also help build such attitudes among their co-workers. In light of the widespread positive impact associated with going the extra mile, you should go the extra mile yourself in providing extra recognition to these employees.

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