

Employee Performance Evaluations

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Take Home Message

Evaluating an employee's performance should be beneficial to the employee and the organization. In order for performance evaluation to work effectively, there are four basic areas that need to be covered in the process:

- ✓ What is expected of the employee?
- ✓ How is the employee doing so far?
- ✓ Is there room for improvement in any area?
- ✓ When will the progress on improvements be reviewed?

Ultimately, delivering the best possible service to the business owner or customer through a productive employee is the mandate of any organization. Performance evaluations can assist an organization in achieving that mandate.

Why is Employee Performance Evaluation Useful?

- Performance evaluations provide a systematic and consistent framework enabling management to provide feedback to an employee regarding their performance on the job.
- From one review period to another, this process provides a progressional record of performance.
- Performance evaluations indicate to the employee areas where performance is satisfactory and/or areas where improvement may be needed. If an organization is in tune with the strengths and improvements needed of an employee, this will assist in knowing the employee's productivity (quality and quantity work).
- Management can determine in a timely manner where the business as a whole is working well or areas that need changes.

How Does Employee Performance Evaluation Work?

- An employee should be aware that there is a performance evaluation process used in the organization. When an employee is hired, and during the orientation process, the employee's job, role and expectations should be reviewed. It is important to make clear to the employee what they are expected to do, thus making feedback and evaluation pertinent.
- Evaluation should be seen as a constructive process.
- Evaluations should be a continuous process, where feedback on performance is ongoing. If there has been an open rapport between staff and the supervisor, completing performance evaluations will not be so threatening.
- Performance evaluations should be a mutual process, and management needs to allow the opportunity for staff to give feedback on their job in the context of the organization.
- Performance duties (as per the job description) or goals should be measurable. In other words, how will you know that an employee is doing well or needs improvement?
- Most performance evaluations have a regular review time. If areas for improvement are noted, they must be brought forward for review in a specified time period.
- Evaluations should assist in making sound personnel decisions respecting pay, promotion, transfer or discipline.
- Evaluations identify training and development needs of the employee.

What is Difficult About Employee Performance Evaluation?

- Performance evaluations clearly delineate between front line and management staff. Therefore, if there is a supervisory or 'lead hand' type position that is most comfortable with being 'one of the boys', providing feedback on a worker's job productivity can put them in an uncomfortable position.
- Some management staff may not be comfortable with authority and will therefore want to avoid confrontation on an area where a staff member needs improvement.
- Employee reviews often require management personnel to take a look at how they are running an area. If there is some aspect of organization that needs improvement, this may reflect on management as well as the employee.
- Many feedlot staff that hold supervisory positions have been promoted from the front line as a labourer and may not have the training or comfort level to carry out performance evaluations.

When are Employee Performance Evaluations Done?

If an open rapport exists between staff and management, evaluation should be an ongoing process. Commonly however, review is done in the following time frame:

1st Week of Employment

Overview the job description and the standards with which these duties will be done. Provide the employee with a copy of the performance evaluation outline so that the employee becomes familiar with the document.

Three to Six Month Review

Review the employee’s performance based on their job thus far, referring to or actually using the performance evaluation outline. At this time, the employee should set some goals to be reviewed by the end of their first year of employment. Important: If there is a noted problem area, this needs to be made clear between the employee and management so that improvement can be the focus at the next review.

One-Year Review

Complete the performance evaluation using the performance evaluation outline and set new goals for the upcoming year. If there are areas that may need review before the next annual review, set the review date at this time.

Who Does an Employee Evaluation?

Performance evaluations can be done in a number of ways. In a feedlot setting, most staff and management are comfortable with a more informal process. One effective way to assist the employee to buy into the process, is to have a simple outline that encourages input at all levels of the organization as follows:

- Self-appraisal: Have the employee complete the evaluation outline for himself or herself.
- Supervisory Review: The person who directly supervises the staff member then completes the review from his/her perspective with the staff member. The supervisor may wish to inquire with other staff members to gather peer review feedback on the employee. If there is a higher level in the organization that the supervisor reports to, they may wish to conduct this review in conjunction with the overall manager.

Tips For Conducting an Employee Evaluation

- Keep the discussion as sincere, natural and business-like as possible, keeping in mind serious nature of the discussion.
- If the employee has completed a self-appraisal, begin by having them reiterate this evaluation. If they have not, ask them to give their impression of their performance (strengths and areas for improvements).
- Ensure review of the areas that an employee has done a good job in as well as the ones that will need improvement.
- If there has been a past incident that has been dealt with, don't dwell on it. If it has not been dealt with until the review time, do not make an issue of it; if it was not important enough to deal with at the time of the incident, then maybe it is not worth bringing up at all.
- Avoid comparing one employee to another – use production examples of what the employer expects to be done.
- Take notes on the highlights of the discussion, especially the expectations around improvements. If a commitment is made on the part of the employee or the organization, this will have to be documented. Ensure the employee recognizes and agrees to the notes and/or any expectations made.
- If a discussion becomes confrontational, don't let anger guide the discussion. Acknowledge the confrontation, and decide if there is a solution to the problem. The need to reconvene the meeting until cooler heads prevail may be the reasonable option.

How Should Employee Performance Evaluations Be Designed?

Performance evaluations commonly use a combination of two written methods of feedback design; a rating scale and written comments. Performance evaluations often focus on the following areas of review;

- Completion of Job Duties (as per job description)
- Productivity Skills
- Organization and Planning Skills
- Communication Skills
- Judgment (decision making/problem solving)
- Teamwork
- Attitude
- Attendance

Rating - Each of these areas can be rated for example, on a performance scale from 1 to 4 (1 as exceptional, 2 as strong, 3 as satisfactory to 4 as needs improvement).

Comments - Further to the rating scale can be the opportunity for written comments on the employee's goals for next year, training and development objectives and suggestions for organizational improvements.

Conclusion

Organizations invest a considerable amount in the training, development and in promoting the longevity of an employee. Providing the opportunity to review the performance of an employee is further investment in that employee. Performance evaluations offer the opportunity to reward for exceptional performance, recognize good performance and work on improvements of performance. If conducted on a regular basis, they provide for an excellent management tool, satisfaction for the employee and ultimately a good level of productivity for the organization.