

# absolutely business



## Appraisals – making them work for you

By Denise Walker FREC

I love appraisals. And I hate them!

When they are done properly, appraisals can be great for both the appraisee and appraiser. For *both* parties, they are motivational; inspire confidence; enhance communication; help to build common goals and help individuals and the business to reach potential. I have seen examples of very good appraisal systems, which, when used well, help to create high performing teams and unlock great potential in individuals. I truly believe that this is because a good staff appraisal system is highly motivational and can highlight needs, which often do not come to light during day-to-day activities.

On the other hand, when done badly, they can be incredibly negative for *both* parties; they encourage distrust; impair communication; result in unfocused goals and prevent individuals and the business from reaching potential. Unfortunately, appraisals are not always done frequently enough or properly and so, in some cases, they have a bad reputation amongst appraisers and appraisees.

Whether you are the appraiser (normally the Branch Manager) or the appraisee, there is much you can do to ensure you experience the positive.

**Great appraisals systems are fair, measurable and easily-understood.** If the appraisee's feedback, the appraiser's feedback, appraisal competencies and personal objectives are all included and each is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART), then there should be little room for misunderstandings. Appraisals should be an honest attempt to appraise current performance and identify development needs for future career progression, for the benefit of both the appraisee and the organisation. Administration should be simple too – any forms used should support this process, not the other way round.

**Great appraisal systems are objective and allow the for appraisee's development, as well as taking into account the needs of the business.** The emphasis should always be on encouraging individuals to carry out appropriate activities, because they want to do them. And business objectives are equally as important as the appraisee's personal objectives, personal learning plan and career development plan.

The appraisee should be encouraged to reflect and obtain feedback on current performance in the period under review. This normally consists of a review of agreed action points from the last appraisal, "evidence" of achievements, areas where improvements could have been made, ideas on how current performance can be improved and the next achievable yet challenging personal and business goals. It goes without saying, therefore, that prior planning and preparation, by both the appraiser and the appraisee is essential.

**Great appraisal systems encourage the exchange of fair feedback.** Both parties should give examples, covering the whole period under review and, when giving feedback they must be honest (whilst considering the other's feelings), clear and constructive. Good managers also understand the need to include giving recognition, because it is highly significant to job satisfaction and motivation.

**Great appraisal systems are applied at the right times.** The timing of appraisals varies from business to business but, as a rule of thumb, most are carried out for new employees at the end of the probationary period and then annually, with regular reviews of the appraisee's personal objectives.

As with all things people related, my belief is that, when it comes to staff appraisals, the investment of time spent on planning and effort can make a fantastic difference to recruitment companies' and individuals' performance – and the rewards can be immense. So I love appraisals - as long as they are managed properly!

#### About Denise Walker FREC

Denise Walker owns and runs Absolutely Business, a specialist management consultancy, designed exclusively for the recruitment industry, delivering **business consultancy, interim management and training services.**

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