

The McKenzie Mailer

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**BEST WISHES TO
ALL FOR A SAFE,
PROSPEROUS AND
HAPPY 2003!!**

Look for my article in
the upcoming issue of
the Jacksonville
Business Quarterly

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 9

FMLA Presentation at the
Putnam County Chamber
Commerce Meeting

February 19

Interviewing Strategies
University of North Florida
Division of Continuing
Education
Call 620-4242 for info

March 27

Harassment Update
Small Business Resource
Network

April 9 & 16

Human Resources
Management Certificate
Program
University of North Florida
Division of Continuing
Education

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Performance Appraisals – This Isn't High School Anymore

Ask your co-worker this question, "What is the purpose of a performance appraisal?" Many people believe that a performance appraisal is a recounting of the history of the past year. Others believe it is a way to document and justify merit increases. If there is one thing to remember from this article it is this - **"The purpose of performance appraisals is to improve future performance."**

Probably the most dreadful event for both supervisors and the employees is the annual performance appraisal. At the end of the review period, supervisors get a form, fill it out, obtain the necessary approval from the next level of management and then go over it with their employees. These "discussions" usually result in the supervisors handing the completed forms to the employees. The employees then read the form and sign it. There is usually very little discussion at all. When this exercise is completed, everyone gives a sigh of relief. "Whew – got that out of the way." Now we can get back to doing the same things we have always done and wait until next year to perform this exercise all over again.

If your appraisal form is like most, there are performance factors such as quantity, quality, cooperation, teamwork, customer service, job knowledge and initiative. There is also probably some type of rating scale such as 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. Under this system, a score of 1 means that the person is about to be terminated, a 3 denotes the employee meets expectations and an employee that rates a 5 is able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. Since there are no real standards for each of the factors, and supervisors do not want to upset any of the employees, everyone gets rated about a 4 and get about the same percentage merit increase. Nothing of any substance changes.

To make this a more meaningful process, managers should establish goals and performance standards at the beginning of the review year. What does quantity, quality, initiative or customer service mean in that particular position? What are the factors measured against? How do the employees know they are meeting standards? If you have trouble defining these measurements, then ask your employees to help. If you still have trouble, measure some of the processes over the course of a month or three months to set a base line that you can measure future performance against. Expectations must be set up front. What level of performance constitutes a 3 rating in the above scale? Most companies expect employees to meet quality, quantity and customer service standards. If these standards are met, this means a 3 rating – not a 4. Most employees still have a high school mentality where a rating of 3 equates to a grade of C or average. This mindset must change. Expectations must be communicated that a score of 3 is good, as it means the employee is doing everything that they are supposed to do – a worthy accomplishment.

Once these standards are developed, the next step is to follow up often. Develop checkpoints and discuss progress. Have a regular 30 minute one-on-one meetings with your employees every three months to discuss individual progress. Celebrate successes of the individuals as well as the team. Alternatively, tell employees when things are not going as well as expected. Ask for their suggestions.

Start the New Year out right. Identify goals and performance standards for yourself and for your employees. Determine regular checkpoints and follow up often throughout the year. Take note of the good deeds as well as the not so good deeds of your employees.

Next year, when you have to conduct performance appraisals, it will be less stressful, more relevant and will set the stage for a higher level of performance in 2004.