

# Appraisal Meeting

## Appraisal Skills

Team FME

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## Preface

The appraisal meeting should be a productive and stress free experience that recognizes past achievements and sets clear objectives for the future. This eBook gives you practical advice on how to prepare for and conduct this critical meeting.

You will learn how to:

- Maximize employee engagement by integrating this meeting into a fair and objective performance appraisal cycle
- Identify the key elements that must be in place to ensure a productive meeting
- Phrase your opening remarks to encourage full employee participation
- Deal with any disagreements that may arise when you have different opinions about past performance
- Set targets for specific goals and competency development that will satisfy their aspirations as well as the needs of the organization

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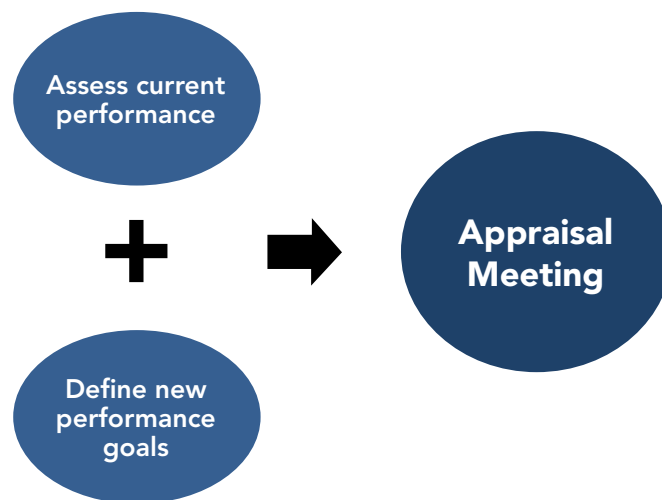
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## Introduction

The appraisal meeting has a dual purpose: firstly, it provides a forum where you and your team member can discuss their performance over the most recent appraisal period; and secondly, it gives you an opportunity to discuss and agree with them a new set of goals for the next appraisal period.



Appraisals will be of limited value if you merely talk to the individual and assign a rating to their performance. You must actively and openly talk about how they rate their own performance and discover their reasons for the rating. If this differs from your own rating, then you need to find out why and arrive at a final rating that is satisfactory to you both.

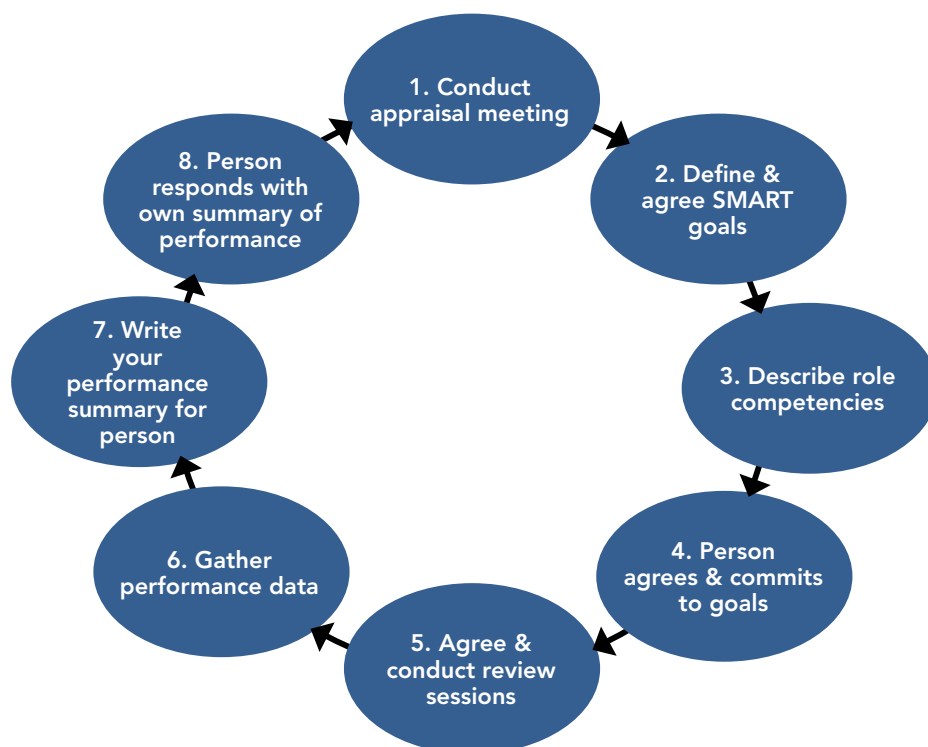
The importance of getting the team member to buy into this process and maximize their 'engagement' with the organization is covered in the eBook 'Principles of Performance Management,' which you can download free from our website [www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com)

## The Appraisal Process

Most appraisal processes are conducted over a twelve-month period as it matches the annual cycle of other key business functions, for example budgeting, pay reviews, and performance bonuses. You should allocate a high priority to your tasks associated with your appraisals as the success or failure of these meetings will directly impact performance.

Too often managers will delay appraisals because of a heavy workload or looming deadlines and these postponements leave people feeling undervalued, resulting in poor morale and a lack of motivation

You can easily avoid such a situation by showing that you view appraisals as an ongoing cycle that has regular reviews and feedback sessions throughout the year and is not just a one-off event.



The stages of the appraisal process are:

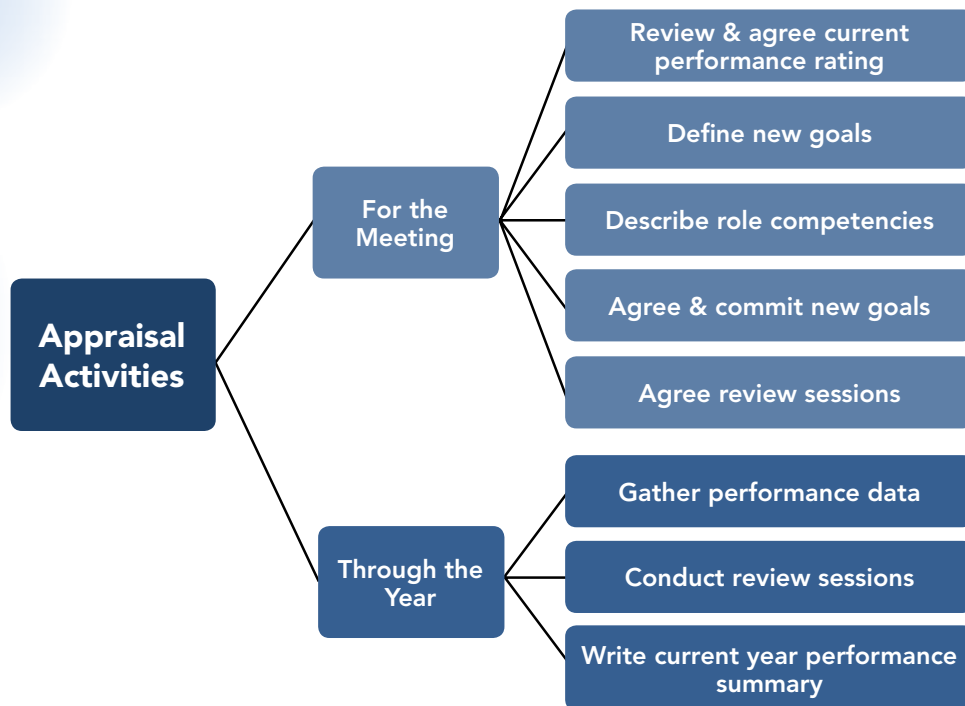
- 1.** Conduct the appraisal meeting.
- 2.** Define and agree goals.
- 3.** Describe role competencies.
- 4.** Agree goals with the individual, and gain his or her commitment to them.
- 5.** Agree and conduct regular review sessions.
- 6.** Gather a wide range of performance data throughout the whole cycle.
- 7.** Write your performance summary for the individual.
- 8.** Individual responds to Stage 7 with their own performance summary.

For practical purposes we will use the actual appraisal meeting as the start of this cycle. This is because as a new manager one of your first actions should be to meet with each team member and understand what they see their role to be, what goals they are working towards, and how they view their contribution to the organization.

This eBook will focus on the first five of these stages since the final three stages represent activities that need to be conducted outside of the actual meeting.

You need to allocate frequent slots within your monthly work schedule where you collate and record performance data. An effective way to collect the required data is to ask your team to structure their monthly progress reports in a way that maps to their personal goals.

You will also want them to record details of any significant incidents that have occurred. You should also create your own notes on such events, whether positive and negative.



In addition you need to solicit information from both internal and external ‘customers’ of your team, in order to gather your own data about their performance and attitude.

Another key activity outside of the meeting itself is that of writing your summary and rating each person’s performance and behavior against their roles and responsibilities. This must be done at least two weeks prior to the actual appraisal meeting to allow sufficient time for the individual to take on board what you have written and then comment on it when they write their own summary and hand it to you, which they should do at least a week before the appraisal meeting.

You may feel that you have little influence on how your organization wants performance appraisals conducted, but you can ensure that you incorporate all the eight stages of the process so that you have a real understanding of your team’s performance. In this way you will be able to increase the effectiveness of your team members and improve their understanding of your organization’s goals.

If you would like to learn more about the final three stages of the appraisal process that you need to conduct throughout the year or appraisal period then visit our website [www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com) and download our free eBook titled ‘Principles of Performance Management.’

## KEY POINTS

- ✓ Most appraisal processes are conducted over a twelve-month period as it matches the annual cycle of other key business functions.
  - ✓ The stages of the appraisal process are:
    1. Conduct the appraisal meeting.
    2. Define and agree goals.
    3. Describe role competencies.
    4. Agree goals with the individual, and gain his or her commitment to them.
    5. Agree and conduct regular review sessions.
    6. Gather a wide range of performance data throughout the whole cycle.
    7. Write your performance summary for the individual.
    8. Individual responds to Stage 7 with their own performance summary.
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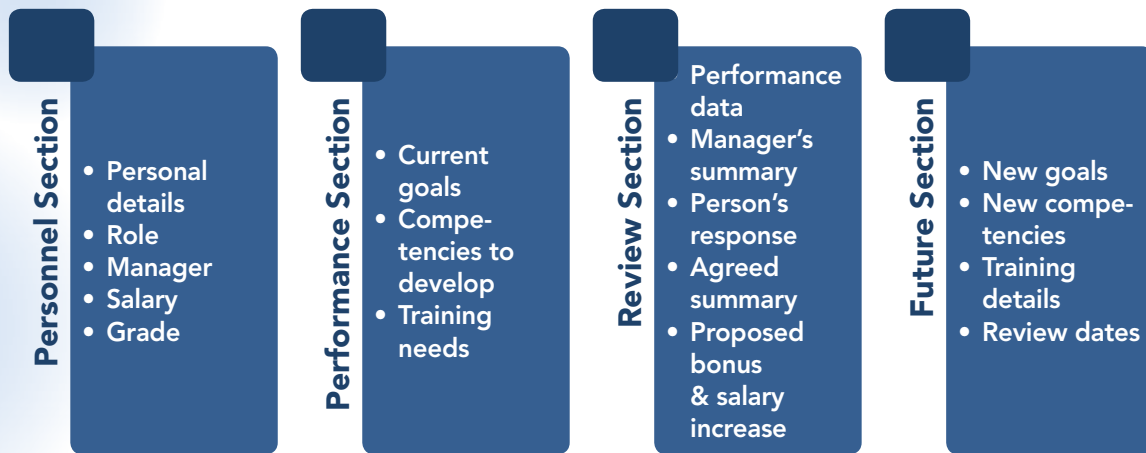
## The Appraisal Form

The first five stages of the appraisal process are covered as part of the meeting and should each be reflected in the appraisal form. The form should consist of four main sections that record all the necessary information for an appraisal. The four sections are:

- Personnel
- Performance
- Review
- Future

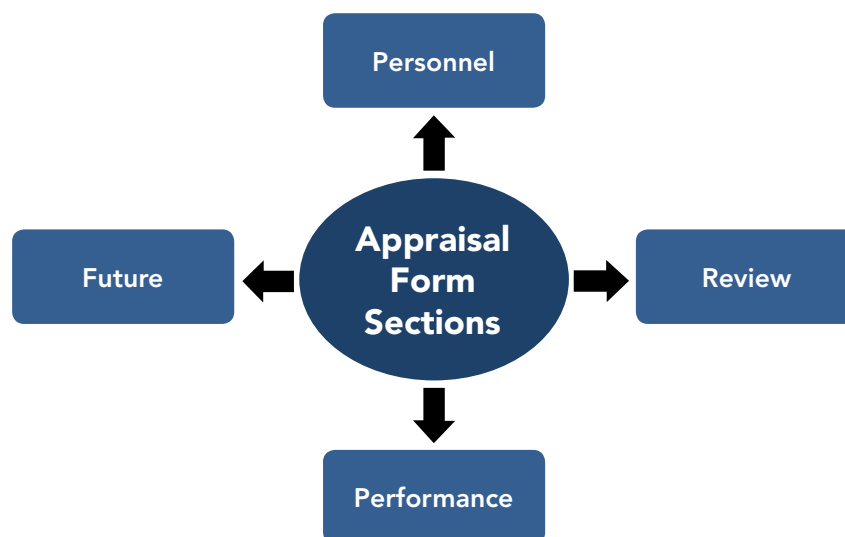
The form must also include an area where you and the individual can sign your agreement to the written summary of that section. The form also provides you with an agenda for the meeting, ensuring that you remember all the key aspects of the appraisal and helping you to form your opening statement.

By using a form with all of these sections you will make certain that you have a complete record of everything that occurred throughout the whole appraisal process. The terminology used by your organization may be different, but the essence and contents of each section are essentially the same.



The first section, 'Personnel,' should include the individual's name, date of birth, job title and grade, current salary, department, manager, and salary band for grade.

The second section, 'Performance,' should detail the team member's current goals along with the relevant measures and timescales. Then it should also list the competencies that the individual is developing. You will need to detail the names and schedules of courses, on-the-job training, or mentoring that is required to attain these goals and competencies.



The third section, 'Review,' is the one that will form the main thrust of the appraisal meeting and is the section that will be completed at the conclusion of the meeting.

This section contains:

1. A summary of the individual's performance as written by you.
2. The team member's written response to your summary.
3. The performance data you have collected over the appraisal period in order to provide the supporting evidence you will use to back up your summary.

By exchanging each other's rating of performance prior to the meeting you can both fully prepare for the discussions that are likely to occur and know the extent to which you agree or not!

One thing you should do when reviewing the team member's written response to your summary is to look for any indication that the team member feels as though either:

- The appraisal process lacks legitimacy because the performance data on which it is based is incomplete or selective.
- You have no genuine interest in them and the whole thing is simply an administrative necessity you both would rather not have to bother with.

Unfortunately, this does happen occasionally and it is usually a result of a busy manager *not being seen* to take an interest in a team member's performance during the year. Imagine yourself as a hard-working team member dealing with problems day after day, getting very little recognition for it, and submitting reports to their manager about which they never receive any feedback. Suddenly, they are notified of an appraisal meeting and their first reaction is 'Who does this person think they are to judge my work? Do they know what I actually do? How much do they even care?'

Now you may feel that this is unfair; after all, managers are busy people with their own duties and responsibilities. But if you don't spend sufficient time *being seen* to take an interest in your team members then you can expect to get this reaction from time to time. If this happens then it is obviously a sign that the team member is feeling 'disengaged,' something that needs to be addressed immediately and guarded against in the future. In the short term you should meet with the team member with the specific purpose of talking through the issue and trying to get to the bottom of why they feel the way they do and to ask them what can be done to remedy the situation.

If this level of disengagement has been allowed to develop then you may need to accept some responsibility for it and take steps to prevent it from recurring. If you choose not to address it before the appraisal meeting then the meeting will only serve to alienate the team member even more as they are forced to take part in something which they feel lacks any legitimacy.

It is these three things—data and the two summaries—that you will discuss and agree with the individual in the final wording and rating of their performance. You will add your signatures to this as formal acceptance.

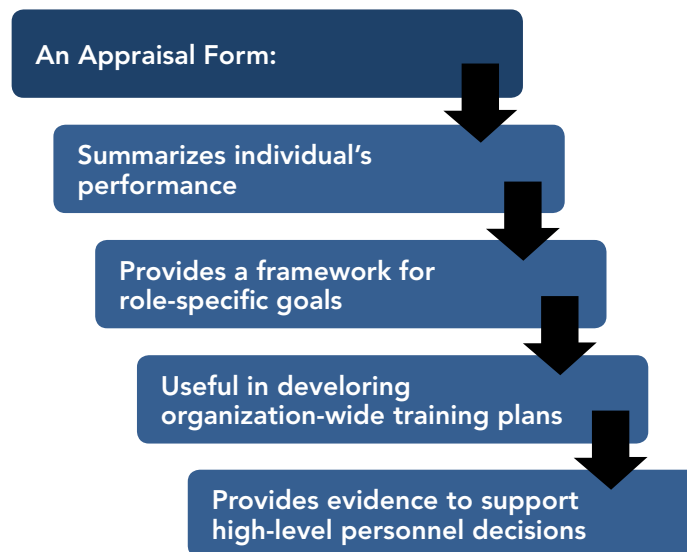
Finally in this section you should also detail any discussions you have had concerning a bonus, change in remuneration, or pay grade. This is also where you would record any disagreements or formal disciplinary actions that result from the appraisal meeting.

The fourth section, 'Future,' is concerned with the coming year and it is here that you would detail the new goals and required competencies you have discussed with the individual and gained their agreement to. This is also where you would specify the necessary training and development to be offered to the person to assist them in attaining their goals.

It is within this section that you will diarize the regular review dates to monitor their performance throughout the forthcoming appraisal period. These meetings also provide an excellent and essential opportunity for feedback to be exchanged between you and your team member. These reviews enable you to avoid surprises by providing you with ample opportunity to address poor performance as soon as it becomes evident.

If the form your organization uses does not include or allow for each of these items then you should add separate sheets to the supplied form in order to ensure that you have a complete record of the discussions that took place in the meeting. This can prove to be a lifesaver if you ever need to justify or defend your decisions at a future date.

This completed form is then copied to the employee as well as being placed in their personnel file. It also provides an effective way to highlight an employee's performance from the last review or date of hire to the present in relation to the requirements and responsibilities identified in the job description.



The most common function of the appraisal form is to present a summary of performance, but they can also provide the necessary information to help develop an individual's career path and ascertain whether or not promotion or a pay rise is appropriate. The form also enables organizations to:

- Provide evidence and a framework for role-specific goals
- Develop organization-wide training plans
- Provide evidence to support high-level personnel decisions

The ideal performance appraisal form combines descriptive terms that require supporting narrative with sufficient space for employees to comment on their manager's evaluation.

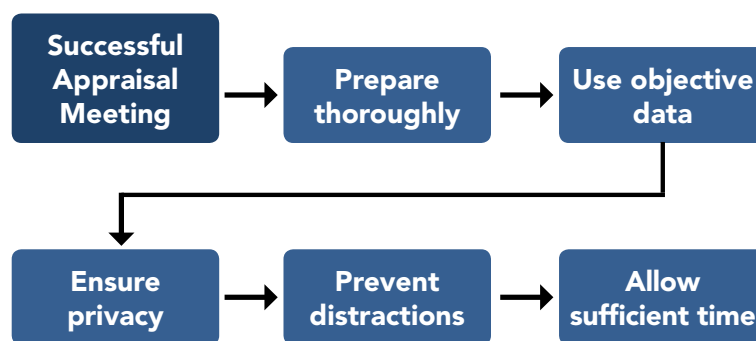
You can download a sample appraisal form from the 'Templates and Checklists' section of our website [www.free-management-eBooks.com](http://www.free-management-eBooks.com)

## KEY POINTS

- ✓ The appraisal form should contain four sections covering: Personnel, Performance, Review, and Future.
  - ✓ 'Personnel' should include the individual's name, date of birth, job title and grade, current salary, department, manager, and salary band for grade.
  - ✓ 'Performance' should detail the team member's current goals along with the relevant measures and timescales.
  - ✓ 'Review' contains:
    - ✓ A summary of the individual's performance as written by you.
    - ✓ The team member's written response to your summary.
    - ✓ The performance data you have collected over the appraisal period in order to provide the supporting evidence you will use to back up your summary.
  - ✓ 'Future' is concerned with the coming year and it is here that you would detail the new goals and required competencies you have discussed with the individual and gained their agreement to.
-

## The Appraisal Meeting

This two-way interaction between the manager and the employee is essential for maintaining a positive working relationship and encouraging career development. An essential feature of the appraisal is that the employee should feel as though their own opinions have been considered and that the completed form represents a fair, agreed, and unbiased view of their performance for the period.



Sound preparation is an essential aspect of your appraisals and can only be achieved if you follow the OSCAR principles as detailed in the 'Performance Management Principles' eBook, which can be downloaded from [www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com). Remember, this preparation represents an ongoing process throughout the appraisal period; it is not something that can be done in just a few hours before the meeting.

You should do everything you can to avoid postponing or rescheduling the meeting because something 'more important' comes up. It may be more important to you, but it is unlikely that your team member will see it that way. Postponing an appraisal meeting should only be done when it is absolutely unavoidable. Postponing it twice could damage your relationship with your team member irrevocably.

You should also allow sufficient time to discuss and agree new goals and competencies since these are often a natural progression of the goals you've just been reviewing. You do not want to hurry through the final points due to poor timekeeping, as you risk appearing rude and disrespectful, which could undo all the rapport-building and respect you had acquired. To avoid this ensure that you allow 90 minutes for each appraisal, which should be ample time provided that you have prepared properly.

Holding your appraisal meetings in the afternoons allows you to deal with your daily workload and then focus completely on the meeting. You must avoid any disruptions during your meetings, as this would show a lack of respect for the team member. These interruptions also negate any privacy you hope to have for the meeting and create a tense rather than comfortable atmosphere.

Remember that first impressions are key and will set the tone of the whole meeting, so you must make sure your opening statement creates the desired atmosphere.

As with all your meetings state the timings you wish to adhere to from the start so that everything can be covered to both attendees' satisfaction. The team member's response to your performance summary should provide you with a good indication of any areas that are contentious and therefore likely to take the most time to resolve.

### Openings for Success

The first thing you need to do is to put the team member at ease and reassure them that you want open and honest discussion of their performance to take place. Your opening remarks set the expectation for the meeting in terms of the degree of formality and sequence of topics. Each example of a possible opening given below clearly indicates to the employee that you see the appraisal as an inclusive process and expect their full participation. The words you say must portray a willingness to have a frank and open discussion. They also illustrate that whilst you act on behalf of the organization you are responsible for their final rating.

#### Possible Appraisal Openings

Hi *Name*, thank you for your form, I've been looking forward to the chance to talk to you about your work & I'm sure our discussions will be helpful...

Hello *Name*, you've read my ratings of your performance & I've had chance to read your feedback so do you want to start off by explaining your ratings and your rationale...

*Name*, good to see you. I'd like to work through my summary of your performance and explain my thinking behind it. I'd welcome your feedback...

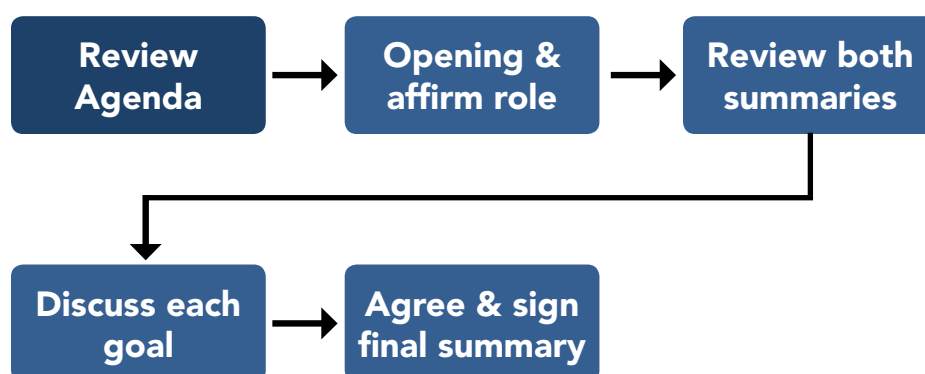
By referring to the appraisal form in your opening you indicate that the structure of the discussion will follow its layout. Avoid wide-ranging and general questions such as, *'So, how do you think things have been going this past year?'* as this can quickly take the conversation into areas that the team member has strong feelings about and result in an unstructured general discussion.

Throughout the meeting it is important that you demonstrate your genuine interest in their point of view through the questions you ask and how you seek out relevant facts. Making notes and maintaining a reasonable amount of eye contact demonstrate that their opinions matter to you.

### Reviewing and Rating Current Performance

Reviewing an individual's performance is the main thrust of the appraisal. Your success in this meeting will depend on how well you have prepared, the quality of the data you have collected, and the quality of the review sessions you had throughout the appraisal period.

If you use the OSCAR principles in managing performance you should avoid any nasty surprises. You will know what tone you wish to adopt for the meeting from the type of summary you have written and the nature of the review sessions you have had during the period. This could be one of recognition and mentoring; support and development; frustration and coaching; or disappointment and disciplining.

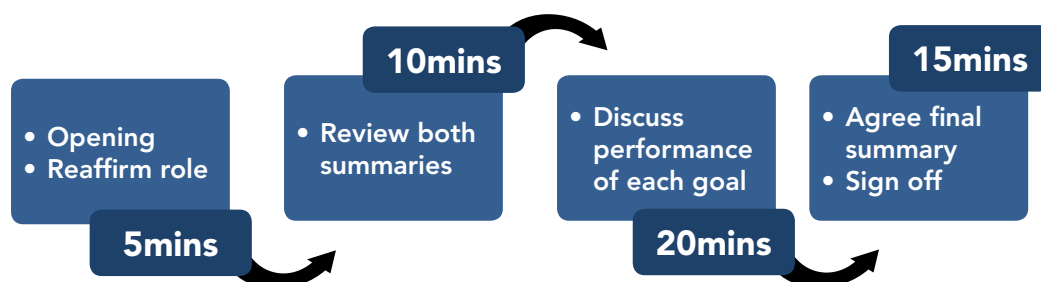


As a prerequisite to the performance review it is always advisable to reaffirm the employee's understanding of their role's functions as outlined in the job description and how this translates into their goals and levels of performance.

The choice is yours as to whether you run through your performance summary first or let your team member go through their response to your summary before you comment. You may chose the latter if you have found the individual's performance summary to be drastically different from your own and want to see what supporting information they have to support their view.

Both summaries should reflect the same level of understanding of the criteria on which the individual is being evaluated and have a clear definition of successful performance. This is especially important when you inherit an individual or team part of the way through the year.

The most appropriate structure and timings for the discussion is to work through the current year's goals in sequence for the meeting. Having set goals for your staff at the start of the period you know that these goals are set out in terms of their importance to the role and its contribution to the organization.



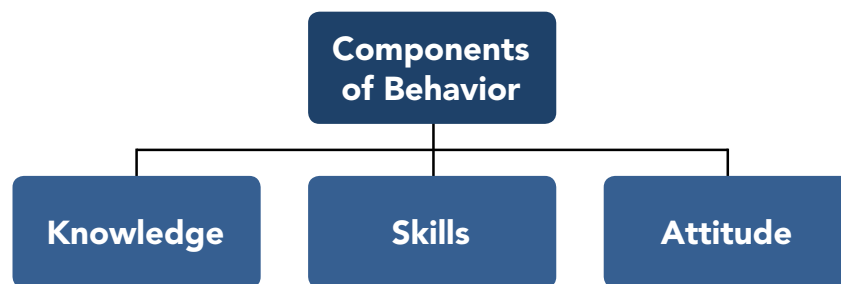
As you discuss each goal, you should take turns to explain the performance rating assigned to that goal and the supporting evidence for this decision. You should provide objective examples distilled from your own observations and reviews made during the appraisal period.

Your notes should include sufficient detail to demonstrate your awareness of and the importance you place on the individual's day-to-day work. There are many sources of performance data, for example from monthly reports, supervisors, time sheets, actions from meeting minutes, personnel records, and so on.

Without detailed notes and data you will undermine the legitimacy of the whole appraisal process and give the impression that the appraisal is a subjective exercise in which your 'opinion' and theirs are equally valid. The legitimacy of the appraisal process relies

on it being seen as purely objective rather than being based on the working relationship and rapport you have with your individual team members.

When you share your ratings with the individual it is important to acknowledge the merits of their own rating first and then illustrate why your rating may differ. Where the performance ratings match, it is key to outline your reasoning. You do not want the individual to feel you have glossed over a goal performed well with a glib comment such as *'I won't go into detail about that since we're obviously in agreement.'*



Where your ratings differ you should show how you arrived at your rating based on the performance data you have collected. You can relate the individual's performance to that stated in the goal and to what extent they demonstrated the competencies expected of the role.

The way you assess an individual's competencies is based on the behaviors they display in performing their role. You need to communicate what is expected of the individual in the role and outline how they will be measured by subdividing their behaviors into Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSA).

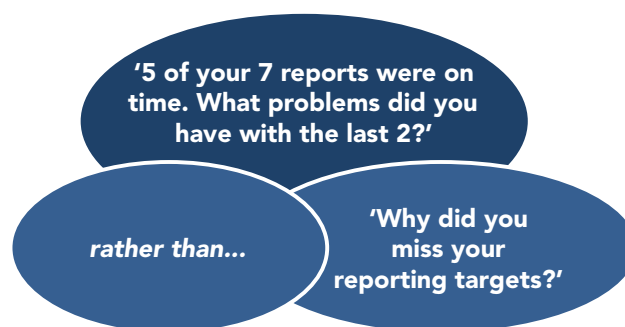
This is a complex area and you can read more detail about this part of the appraisal cycle in our free eBook, 'Understanding Competencies.' You can download this when you visit our website [www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com)

Where possible avoid starting the meeting with goals that you have rated differently to the member because this can send a negative message to them and create a hostile atmosphere from the outset. You should also avoid using vague terms like 'average' and 'satisfactory,' because they don't really explain how you derived your rating and show a lack of thought on your part.

Even if the individual is not fully persuaded that your ratings are fair and objective, they will at least come away with a better understanding of how their performance is measured and the level of performance that is expected in the future. Ensure you recognize successes and failures honestly in your assessment.

The key issue to understand is why they have not met the agreed goal and to discuss the causes and possible resolutions, which may include increasing available resources. You need to give careful consideration to any issue raised by the team member that sheds new light on your assessment, and be prepared to modify your rating if appropriate.

You can often find yourself having to ask an individual why they didn't meet their goal. In this instance be sure to ask in an objective way, giving credit for what was achieved, so that the real issues are raised. For example,



Your discussion of past performance should take about a third of the meeting, regardless of whether most of the feedback is positive or negative. If you have performed your coaching duties effectively throughout the year and given feedback in the regular reviews and as you gather data then nothing said during this part of the appraisal meeting should come as a surprise.

Also be mindful to ensure that your language is not contentious during the meeting, as you do not want to become embroiled in a legal battle because you failed to use objective, job-related facts rather than personal characteristics. Also make sure that you provide specific evidence to support your statement.

**Objective job-related comment with evidence:**

*'The job calls for the ability to communicate effectively and on 3 separate occasions customers have commented on poor communication skills when dealing with this salesperson.'*

**Not a subjective comment, no evidence:**

*'This salesperson is a poor communicator.'*

Many books recommend that you announce any bonus or pay increase at the appraisal meeting, but this can give the impression that the outcome of the appraisal was a fore-gone conclusion and that the team member never really had any influence over their performance rating. In addition, many organizations will not formally sign off bonuses or promotions until all appraisals have been completed throughout the whole organization.

**KEY POINTS**

- ✓ The team member should feel as though their own opinions have been considered and that the completed form represents a fair, agreed, and unbiased view of their performance for the period.
- ✓ You should do everything you can to avoid postponing or rescheduling the meeting because something 'more important' comes up.
- ✓ Allow sufficient time to discuss and agree new goals and competencies since these are often a natural progression of the goals you've just been reviewing.
- ✓ Your opening remarks set the expectation for the meeting in terms of the degree of formality and the sequence of events.
- ✓ Reviewing an individual's performance is the main thrust of the appraisal and your success in this meeting will depend on how well you have prepared.
- ✓ Without detailed notes and data you will undermine the legitimacy of the whole appraisal process.
- ✓ Your discussion of past performance should leave sufficient time for summing up and then agreeing objectives for the coming period.

## Defining Future Goals

This second part of the appraisal meeting has equal importance to the performance review because it involves defining and agreeing new goals for the coming year. This involves four steps: setting new goals, defining new competencies the individual needs to attain, agreeing a training schedule that enables the individual to attain the KSA's needed, and finally the scheduling of review sessions.



You should agree new goals that reflect the job description and develop the required competencies. You should also ensure that the team member understands how these contribute to the organizational goals. The importance of this part of the appraisal means that it should take up about a third of the overall appraisal meeting.



Each goal needs to clearly state what is required, be easily measured, be a task that is attainable not impossible, be relevant to the team member's role, and have a defined time frame. If you would like more information on this aspect of the appraisal cycle and setting goals then you should visit our website [www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com) and download our free eBook 'Setting Effective Goals.'

An important aspect of gaining the team member's commitment to their goals and performance measures is the willingness of you as manager to negotiate and compromise your first draft of their goals. This may mean bringing forward their training schedule or offering on-the-job mentoring, so that the individual feels that they can attain their goals.

Discussions on future training should take into account the personal aspirations of the individual as well as your departmental requirements. This will keep them motivated, particularly if they feel they are gaining marketable skills. In the real world budget is often a constraining factor, but remember that bought-in training is not the only solution; so be creative in how you develop your team.

In order to identify how the employee can achieve personal and professional development you could ask the following questions:

- Are there any skills you have been called upon to use this year that you would like to develop?
- Are there any organizational procedures that you feel to use effectively you need to develop certain skills?
- What aspects of your role do you find most difficult?
- Are there any elements of your role that interest you more or less than others?
- What kind of work would you like to be doing in two years' time and do you feel this role allows you to acquire the necessary skills?
- Do you have any particular skills you would like to attain in this period?

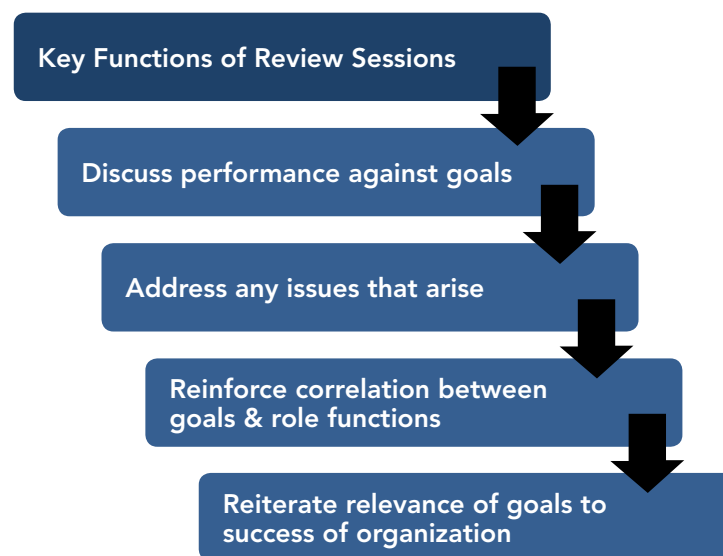
In each case, make sure that you ask for specific instances or examples of the perceived need.

One extra thing you should try to determine is how well the employee's own career plans match your requirements as their manager. It can be difficult to avoid showing disapproval if their plans do not fit in with your future needs but it is a good idea to be as supportive as possible whatever you may think privately. Remember, you may be working with them for the foreseeable future and it is pointless to take issue with someone for being honest with you about their personal aspirations.

Even though it may be tempting to ignore an individual's desire to move on from their current role, especially if they are very productive, be mindful that they could cause you

serious problems if they left suddenly in the middle of a critical project. The fact is that some members of your team will have career plans that you cannot accommodate within the team and it is better to know about them rather than finding that you are the only person who is surprised when a resignation letter or transfer request lands on your desk.

Finally, you should schedule and agree the regular review sessions you wish to have with the individual throughout the appraisal period.



These sessions provide you with ongoing opportunities to discuss and reinforce the role's functions and how they are reflected in the goals, reiterate the organization's goals, discuss how well performance is progressing, and address any issues early enough to alter the outcome. They also allow you to update or amend goals if external factors change sufficiently to cause the original goal to be no longer attainable.

Finally, be careful not to make any implicit promises of promotion or job security. It can be very tempting to do this at the end of the appraisal meeting particularly when you feel as though you want to impress on the team member that you are pleased with their performance. For example,

*'Your work so far has been excellent and I expect to see you taking over Sarah's job when she goes on maternity leave.'*

*'I know there's been some talk about redundancies but I want to assure you that your job is secure.'*

In both of these cases you would be implying a contract about something over which you do not have complete control. This is called an implied contract and could result in charges of discrimination if what you promised does not materialize.

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ This second part of the appraisal meeting has equal importance to the performance review because it involves defining and agreeing new goals for the coming year.
  - ✓ It involves the following four steps:
    - ✓ Setting new goals
    - ✓ Defining any new competencies the individual needs to attain
    - ✓ Agreeing a training schedule
    - ✓ Scheduling review sessions
  - ✓ Never make any implicit promises of promotion or job security even if you feel that you need to placate a team member at the end of the meeting by giving them some good news.
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### Handling Disagreements

Occasionally you will need to deal with a poorly performing individual and in these cases the quality of your preparation will be a major influence on the success or otherwise of the appraisal meeting.

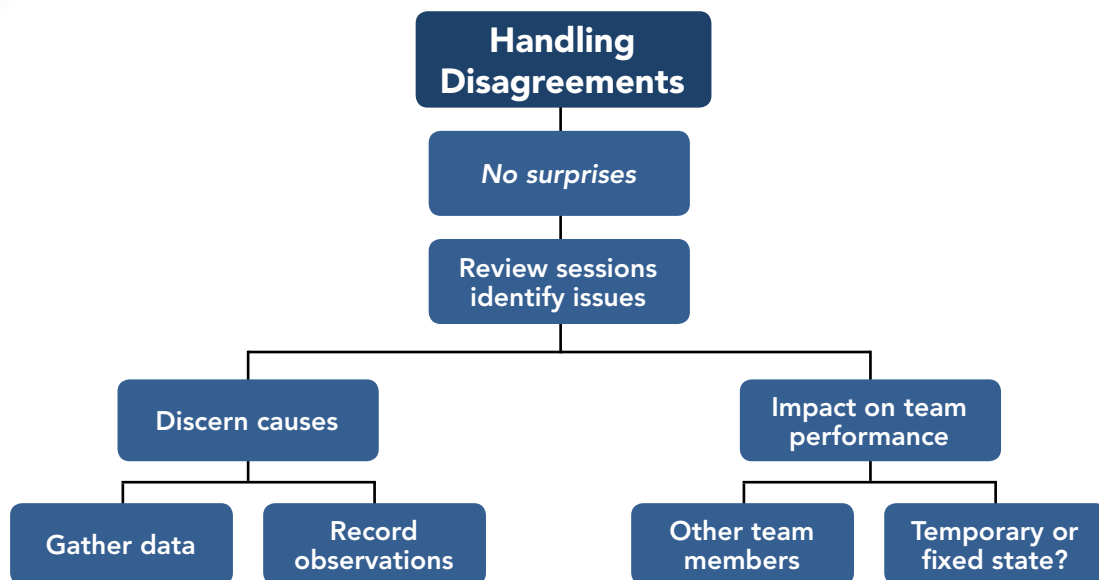
The meeting should never be the first time that you inform them about their poor performance. Your regular review sessions with the person should provide ample opportunity for you to notify them of sub-par performance and to devise a plan to help them get back on track.

However, if this has failed and you have arrived at the appraisal meeting with differences of opinion then you will have to deal with it. The important thing is that these differences do not come as a surprise to either party.

You will need to be able to illustrate their poor performance from the data you have collected. You should also have observations and feedback from third parties that show the

team member's lack of competencies or inability to attain his or her goals. It is absolutely vital that this data is both objective and authoritative. You will need to maintain a tight control over this meeting if it is going to be productive and not simply degenerate into an argument about whether or not there is a problem.

If you suspect that the meeting might get heated then it can be a good idea to invite someone from the Human Resources (HR) department to act as a neutral third party and to calm things down if necessary. The presence of a representative from HR can also act to increase the level of formality of the meeting, which is usually a good thing in confrontational situations.

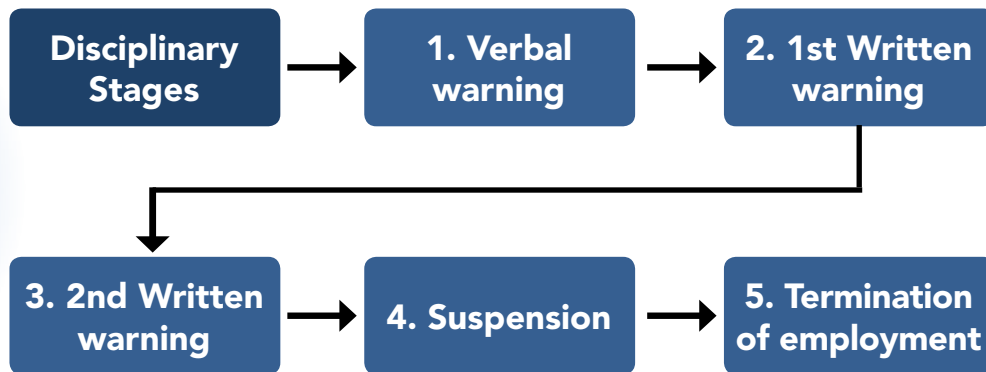


Anyone performing below the required standard will have an impact on the rest of the team and other members may be carrying the extra burden or having to repair damage done. Appraisals and review meetings with other team members should provide data that supports your low performance scores.

The main objective for this meeting is to discover the cause of the poor performance and to assess whether or not this is a permanent or temporary problem. If the low performance is a longstanding issue then you need to devise a plan of action to resolve it.

In some instances, despite your best efforts you may have to instigate disciplinary action. In these circumstances consult your Human Resources representative who can brief you

on the current legal procedures and issues, assisting you in how best to address and document this action.



If you find yourself in the situation where you need to initiate disciplinary action against one of your team members you are likely to take the following steps. You need to check with the HR department before you do anything to ensure that you follow the policy and procedure of your organization.

**Stage 1 Verbal Warning**—always hold this meeting in private and use it as an opportunity to clarify the reasons for poor performance and eliminate any incorrect assumptions. After discussing this situation with the person inform them of what will happen if the situation persists.

**Stage 2 First Written Warning**—this occurs when the individual does not change their performance and this warning is a written one. It details all aspects of the poor performance supported by the evidence previously discussed with the person and defines what actions are expected in order to address this. In this private meeting you give the individual the opportunity to respond and ensure they understand the letter's meaning before signing it.

**Stage 3 Second Written Warning**—where the individual does not take the action agreed in Stage 2 and they continue to perform poorly you privately meet them following the same procedure and issue a second warning letter.

**Stage 4 Suspension**—in circumstances where the problem persists or worsens you are faced with meeting in private with the individual to outline the reasons for and length of the suspension (often 1-3 working days). You must also warn the person that failure to

address their continued poor performance or conduct may result in the termination of their contract. This will be written down and signed by them.

**Stage 5 Termination**—on the individual's return to work if the poor performance or conduct persists despite all the prior stages then you will formally dismiss the individual following your organization's procedures for such an event.

In such meetings you are likely to come across examples of both active and passive behavior and it is important that you know what to expect and how best to handle such behavior.

When there is a disagreement the individual is more likely to actively argue against your interpretation of the event. You need to be aware that you may not be able to talk them around to your point of view. The individual wants to defend their self-image and may attempt to transfer the blame or cause to other members of the team and respond emotionally to the specific examples you provide. This defensiveness is only to be expected and it is acceptable as long as it does not undermine the appraisal process.

The person may genuinely feel that there are mitigating circumstances, which you must show that you have actively listened to. Despite this viewpoint you need to ensure that they take on board the fact that there is perceived to be a problem and that it is their responsibility to take the necessary action to improve their performance during the period.

Active Behavior	Passive Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Argue with your view</li> <li>• Defend self-image</li> <li>• Blame others</li> <li>• Emotional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed body language</li> <li>• Lack of eye contact</li> <li>• Reluctant to contribute</li> <li>• Resentment</li> </ul>

If you are presented with behavior that exhibits passive disagreement—for example, closed body language, lack of eye contact, crossed arms, sitting back in their chair, etc.—it is harder to deal with as the team member is only contributing reluctantly. This type of behavior often occurs where the employee feels as though the manager has no right to be conducting the appraisal.

This may result from a feeling that they are more experienced than you, or because they feel you haven't spent enough time with them or are misinformed about their role. Resentment is at the root of this problem and this is a management problem rather than a problem with the appraisal process itself.

Recognizing the root cause is the first step to fixing this issue. You should ask yourself how you would feel if you were in their position. Be honest about the answer: would you really feel that the person doing the appraisal was sufficiently qualified or appreciated what your day-to-day work involved?

You need to decide the best way to overcome such a situation that may have resulted from a rapid change in organizational structure or an expansion in your department, which the management structure has not yet taken into account. In some circumstances you may want to conduct the appraisal with a team leader as well so that historical data is fully appreciated.

There is a limit to how many people you can appraise properly and if this limit has been exceeded then the appraisal system itself needs to change to take account of this. Whatever the final outcome the individual must feel that their viewpoint has been carefully considered; if not, the appraisal process will be undermined.

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ The appraisal meeting is not the place to inform someone about a performance problem for the first time.
- ✓ Use objective and authoritative performance data from as many sources as possible to prevent the meeting degenerating into an argument about whether or not there is a problem.
- ✓ Appraisals and review meetings with other team members often provide data that supports your low performance scores.
- ✓ It can be a good idea to invite someone from the Human Resources department to increase the level of formality of the meeting and to calm things down if necessary.
- ✓ If you need to initiate disciplinary action then involve the HR department as soon as possible.

## Summary

Appraisal meetings create a formal record and provide documentary evidence of an individual's performance over a defined period. If you want to conduct successful appraisal meetings then it is imperative that you see them as part of an ongoing process and not an isolated annual event.

One way to achieve this is to effectively manage your time so that you can collate accurate and pertinent performance data for your team. You can choose to delegate some of these tasks in the form of regular reports. This collection of data needs to relate to the measurement criteria so that a true evaluation of performance can be made.

Another key activity is the organizing of regular review sessions with each member. These sessions create an atmosphere where open and honest dialogue can take place, during which one receives and gives constructive feedback. Such sessions culminate in a true assessment of the ongoing performance.

It is important that you ensure each individual has a clear understanding of the performance goals and competency development they signed up to and on how they are being measured, monitored, and evaluated. These sessions provide you with an ideal opportunity to keep each team member's performance on target and show your support and recognition of their efforts and commitment.

These sessions should prevent either you or the individual from having any shocks at the time of the formal appraisal and therefore ensure you attain the best performance from your team. Such activities are key to you being able to successfully conduct performance appraisals and to having a team that believes in you as a manager.

If you want to explore the area of appraisals and performance management in greater detail visit our website [www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com) to download more eBooks in this set including:

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