



INSIGHTS

... for Exceptional Leaders

The Holbrow Group

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My associates and I are surprised by the number of managers and leaders that become nervous or detest delivering feedback to their direct reports (or coachees) through the performance appraisal process.

The reasons for this discomfort include:

- Performance reviews are an arbitrary, mandatory, and thankless, dreaded task which can result in an unsatisfactory conversation and outcome if not properly prepared;
- This annual event is a “whipping tool” and can negatively impact employee opportunity for advancement and/or performance bonus as well as taint the relationship between a boss and employee;
- Due to circumstances and time constraints, some managers may resort to “cutting and pasting” information gleaned from others. The feedback during the appraisal may become synonymous with what others have observed;
- Some managers lack the positive self regard and/or a feedback framework to help guide the conversation towards the intended positive outcome.

How people perform is critical to the ongoing success of any organization. Designing and executing a performance and development feedback loop that effectively sets mutual expectations, regularly monitors progress and determines consequences is a fundamental cornerstone of success.

Imagine what would happen if you only occasionally checked the tire pressure in your car and assumed the required (let alone recommended) amount of air will stay in the tires for the entire time you operate the vehicle. Sooner or later your tires will become inoperable and put you, your family and friends at serious risk.

Used effectively, performance appraisals will help to build an open, positive, collaborative relationship between an employee and their manager.

Here are some suggestions to help you enhance the delivery and outcome of staff performance appraisals.

News

A PDF copy of the January 2009 Harvard Business Review article, **Making Performance Reviews Less Stressful** is available on our website www.TheHolbrowGroup.com under INSIGHTS Newsletter

Over the past few months, The Holbrow Group is pleased and honoured to add the following clients:

Scotia Capital

Legrand Canada

York Region,
Environmental Services (Operations,
Maintenance & Monitoring Leader-
ship Team)



1. See the performance appraisal process as a deli sandwich. The top layer of the Sandwich Appraisal Feedback is the “what” you intend to discuss and the outcome you are seeking from the appraisal process.

The middle of the sandwich (depending on your diet and taste buds) consists of the key focus of the dialogue - “how” well is the employee doing relative to the expectations and performance measures set by your organization. The layers of lettuce, cheese, vegetables and meat also represent what the employee needs to improve or strengthen in order to accomplish their identified role, responsibilities and tasks.

And finally, the bottom layer - a review of what has been said and a wrap-up of actions from the appraisal.

2. Set a tone of respect when approaching an employee to schedule a time to meet. Honour this timeframe unless an emergency comes up.
3. Invite the employee to prepare a self assessment of their performance before your meeting. An essay format or multiple choice electronic questionnaire formats are widely used today by many organizations.

We are also delighted to be leading professional development workshops with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries at the June 2010 Vancouver Conference.

This is the third conference, following Halifax and Ottawa that The Holbrow Group has designed and delivered leadership development workshops for the members of the CIA

Congratulations to Marie Delorme on being awarded the Aboriginal Woman Entrepreneur of the Year at the 2010 Alberta Business Awards.

More information is available on Marie and our team of Associates by visiting www.TheHolbrowGroup.com.

Visit our website
www.theholbrowgroup.com.

We've updated the site and added new faces and executive-related specialists including our fitness expert Dave Reesor.

Watch for a future edition of INSIGHTS when we focus on the critically important topic of delivering effective workplace feedback.



4. Have a positive mindset going into the conversation. See the employee as an equal and not a subordinate. Let them tell you their story for the successes and lessons learned.
5. Be ready and prepared for the performance appraisal meetings. Do your homework in advance to identify and understand your employee's personality, communication and learning style as well as strengths, talents, values and shortcomings.
6. Create a framework for what you intend to say and share in the conversation. Then practice, practice, and practice some more what you intend to say. Approach a trusted colleague, family member or friend, mentor or coach to role play the situation and ask for their candid feedback on how they received your message.
7. Start with the positives first. Be genuine and at all costs avoid judgemental verbal and body language. Using phrases like "you are frequently late" or "you let me and your team mates down when you ..." places the employee in a desperate and defensive position that could trigger conflict.
8. Turn up the active listening volume dial. Ask open-ended, curious, probing questions that show empathy and a willingness to better understand their perspective.
9. Identify and discuss how obstacles can be overcome. Brainstorming is an effective tool in helping your employee find the solution that works for them.
10. Build in accountability into the conversation. At the end of the conversation, ask your employee to give you a summary of outcomes along with next steps and timelines.
11. Look for opportunities to integrate developmental opportunities into this and future discussions. Look for what is missing and what resources are available to help them be positive and productive and looking to move into new challenges in the future.
12. Schedule your next discussion. Keeping the momentum and setting accountability into place will help ensure they are growing and feel relevant and clear on expectations.

In addition to the "formal, annual" appraisal, move to expand the opportunities for ongoing contact. It's a much better situation when you build regular as well as in-the-moment feedback "snapshots". The "do or die" annual appraisal is primed for tension and potential conflict.

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To learn about Executive and Organizational Team Coaching visit
<http://www.TheHolbrowGroup.com>