

THE DREADED APPRAISAL



Jacqui Burke, of *Flourishing People*, discusses why the appraisal process fills employees with dread, and how it can be turned into a positive experience

There has been some discussion in HR circles recently about dumping appraisal processes. I acknowledge that there are often problems with the way that appraisals are conducted which make them a less than positive experience for all concerned - but let's not throw out the baby with the bath water.

There are things that can be done to turn the appraisal from a process that managers and staff members dread into something that is a positive and valuable experience.

So what are the problems...

Employees need and want regular feedback, so a once a year review, where feedback has been "saved up" is of little value. For feedback to be valuable it needs to be timely so it can be acted on immediately.

One of the reasons that we conduct appraisals once a year is that often the process is very unwieldy. I come across businesses where appraisal forms are 10 or 12 pages long with additional forms to be completed beforehand. So it's no wonder that a common complaint is that appraisals get delayed or abandoned altogether due to time pressures.

Appraisals are often dreaded by employees as they are used to criticise and complain without much in the way of praise.

Appraisals that are used to determine pay and to agree development needs can create an environment where an employee is reluctant to admit to their weaknesses in case it impacts negatively on their pay.

So what can employers do?

Create a culture where managers have conversations with staff about performance on a more frequent basis. Giving feedback in timely manner enables performance improvements to be made immediately, so the appraisal is more valuable.

Review the appraisal process so that it's more focused on managers having meaningful conversations with staff rather than a massive form filling exercise. Simple notes summarising what's happened recently and how things need to happen in the near future are all that are required.

Ensure managers have excellent feedback skills; they must know how to balance praise with constructive feedback, and to set specific and measureable goals and targets which feel achievable to staff. This way the discussion will be much more motivational for staff.

Have a separate conversation about pay and reward so that employees feel that they can be open and honest about their development needs.

So don't dump the dreaded appraisal – improve it!

Flourishing People provide training for managers on how to conduct appraisals as well as confidential 360 degree feedback reports to support appraisal discussions.

MORE INFORMATION

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