10 Tips to Help You Ace Your Next Performance Appraisal

by ASAPorg.com Staff

Performances appraisals are often fraught with tension—for managers and employees alike. But this annual review can actually be very beneficial. No matter the economic climate, constructive feedback can help you structure your position to maintain an up-to-date skill set for the current job market. While you can’t control how your employer runs your appraisal, the following suggestions can help you use the meeting to position yourself as a valued member of your organization, and to make it easy for your boss to give you a glowing review.

1. Be prepared. Don’t leave your appraisal in your boss’ hands. Do some self-appraising of your own before the meeting. Write out your strengths and any areas that may need improvement. Be honest in your assessments. Additionally, put together a list of topics you’d like to discuss, along with answers to potentially tough questions.

2. Speak up. Take an active role in your appraisal. Ask questions and speak your mind. By participating in the meeting, you’ll arm yourself with a more complete picture of your job and your performance, as well as a clearer idea of your boss’ expectations. Also make sure that over the course of the meeting, you convey your enthusiasm for and commitment to your job and organization.

3. Be specific. Don’t use generic statements full of “marketing speak” that actually mean nothing or inflate your job performance. Use specific examples of accomplishments and obstacles you overcame to showcase achievements and present a clear picture of your current position. Quantify whatever you can—“Reduced costs by 10%,” “Increased sales by 15%,” etc.

4. Don’t get defensive. If you are offered criticism, keep the discussion calm and professional, and not about your personal feelings. Remaining open to criticism is key to maintaining a productive dialogue with your boss. You only weaken your position if the meeting devolves into a shouting match. Accept responsibility for any mistakes you may have made. Owning up to your mistakes will almost certainly garner respect from your boss.

5. Give your boss feedback. If you feel comfortable doing so, provide your boss with feedback about your working relationship and how it affects your job performance. Whether praise or criticism, phrase your feedback in a professional manner. If you feel uneasy speaking off-the-cuff, prepare your statements beforehand.

6. Do your research if requesting a raise. In today’s economic climate, a performance appraisal is
no longer a guaranteed salary bump, not even a simple cost-of-living raise. Research the salary parameters for your particular job, at your company and within the marketplace, so that you have realistic expectations going into any salary negotiations. If you don’t get the raise you’d hoped for, learn why and what you can do going forward to change your manager’s perception of your performance.

7. **Set goals.** Don’t just look at your work over the past twelve months. Use this opportunity to set definable, concrete goals and map out future growth for your career path over the coming year. Use these as a starting point for next year’s appraisal.

8. **Get it in writing.** Many employers will give you a copy of the appraisal paperwork to provide you with written guidelines of what was discussed and the expectations for your job over the next twelve months. If your company doesn’t provide written copies, take notes during the meeting or write down the issues discussed immediately afterward so that you have a record of the discussion.

9. **Schedule regular follow-ups throughout the year.** Twelve months is a long time between discussions about your job and job performance. Take a proactive role in scheduling follow-ups to keep the lines of communication open and head off any potential issues early on.

10. **Start a work journal.** Realize that your boss probably doesn’t remember everything you’ve done over the course of a year. So make a list of projects completed and accomplishments on a daily or weekly basis. This will give you a good place to start when preparing for next year’s performance appraisal.

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