

Step-by-Step Manager's Guide to Preparing for a Performance Appraisal

1. Ask the employee to complete a self-appraisal prior to the meeting

Allowing the employee to self-assess their performance will not only assist them in preparing for the meeting, it will also help you to better understand their approach to their role and their long term goals.

2. Take a look at any previous appraisals

What performance goals or career aspirations were discussed? Have these been met? If not, why? Were there any mitigating factors that may have prevented them being achieved? Highlight any areas that will need to be covered in the upcoming appraisal.

3. Familiarise yourself with the employee's position description

This should detail the expectations of the role, clarify responsibilities and KPIs, and explain how the role fits within the broader organisation. This will provide you with criteria to measure their performance against. Also ensure the employee has a copy of this document, so they can prepare for the meeting.

4. Keep notes throughout the year

These will be invaluable when it comes time to conduct performance appraisals and will help you to cite examples of achievements or areas for improvement.

5. Be clear on the timeframe and criteria the appraisal covers

Refer to the goals set in previous appraisals, as well as any changes to the position description since the last appraisal, such as new responsibilities that may have come with a promotion or a change in role.

6. List accomplishments and areas of improvement

Include how these relate back to the position description, and use examples, where applicable, such as a particular piece of work or achievement that demonstrates each point.

7. Be conscious of your language

Using open-ended questions that allow for reflection and promote discussion is more helpful during an appraisal meeting, especially when discussing negative aspects of performance. **For example:**

What goals/deliverables were you least proud of? Why? How will you do those differently in the future?

What do you like least about your current role? What would you change?

These types of questions allow the employee to participate in the problem solving process and take ownership of the solutions.

8. Set goals for the upcoming year

These can evolve through the discussion with the employee, who will have their own areas of personal development and career objectives they hope to achieve. These goals should follow the SMART principle and be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. A successful performance appraisal meeting will enable you to establish some mutually agreed goals that satisfy both manager and employee.