

# STAFF REVIEWS THAT WORK: AN OUTGROWTH OF GOOD ONGOING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

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I must admit that staff reviews are not my favourite pastime. But really they are a bit like anything else on which I procrastinate. When I start the reviews I wonder why I delayed. Most of the time the reviews are interesting and even fun. I feel guilty when I am late in doing them. Guilt? Yes, because I know that good managers do staff reviews. That is what the text book says.

Over the years I looked at various models of staff reviews and eventually adopted one that I found reasonably satisfactory. Before getting on to my favourite model I will offer a few comments. I do not like checking performance against a job specification. For a start, I appoint a person because I believe he or she can do the job. It seems redundant to check to see if they are meeting a job specification. I would have to wonder about my selection skills. It is silly to wait for a year to tell someone that he or she is underperforming. It is better to do this as situations arise. The same applies if the person has done something really well. Not much point telling the person at the end of the year. You know how a dog has to be patted or reprimanded at the time of doing something? Not much sense leaving that for a year. People are the same although I can do without my ear being licked by a grateful staff member. There is however, a similarity in the hangdog look of a staff member who has been reprimanded.

Confession. I do not like appraisals if I do not like the character of the person. I have an aversion to staff members who believe every cloud contains a cyclone. I have a

passionate dislike of staff who see problems not opportunities. Fortunately this has only happened with staff I have inherited so I can't blame myself for poor selection.

Returning to my favourite form of appraisals. Before the interviews I advise all staff that the reviews are about the future not the past. I have hopefully covered the last year as the year progressed. I ask them to think about their job description. I ask them to tell me in what ways they think the job has changed, or in which ways they would like it to change. We then have a discussion. If possible I tell them on the spot if any of their requests are possible.

The next part is to ask them how they think they can contribute more to the organisation. This links to the previous question about the job specification. I ask in what ways the organisation could improve its performance in serving the members. This is often the most rewarding and creative part of the appraisal.

Lastly I ask staff members if they can suggest ways in which their job could be improved. This links to the allowance I provide every staff member for professional development. (That is another story).

After the appraisal I draft the report, give the draft to the staff member for agreement or amendment, and then we both sign it. If all has gone well, the process ends on a positive note with the staff member ready and enthusiastic for another year.