“The Do’s and Don’ts of Performance Appraisals”

Weekly Learnings 02 / 2024

It's Appraisal season for many folks, and below is my one slide on the topic for you.

Appraisal origins are vague. Records show that the Wei dynasty in 221 AD used to rate family member's performance in everyday life. Around 1910 Frederick Taylor published his book on Performance Management and he, a consultant promised a productivity increase to his clients. In WW1, the US Military used performance appraisals to weed out the underperformers. In the 1920s, an Australian, Walter Scott running WD Scott and Co introduced performant appraisals in his Sydney company.

The US Army started forced ranking (which Jack Welch and GE became famous for later) in WW2.

Performance appraisals became the norm in most companies in the 60s. They began as simple methods of income justification - you had a good year you were paid more, you had a bad year, and your salary was cut. In the early years companies that didn't have performance appraisals found that their managers were evaluating people naturally, informally and arbitrarily. So, everyone accepted that a performance system was needed to reduce bias.

The 1960s saw self-appraisals.

In a fast-changing world, is one year too long? 70% of companies do an annual cycle appraisal while 33% of employees want a continuous management system to assess them. Some technology companies have two appraisals a year - a first half and a second half, the two halves are not linked in any way.

The performance appraisal in the last ten years has given way to a new concept and jargon - CATCH UP. This is an informal way to assess performance.

Great appraisals happen when there is good documentation on both sides, there is a shared understanding of context and there is robust data.

I have my share of stories on appraisals.

I had two incompetent bosses when it came to appraisals. With them, one needs to be even sharper in detailing the performance and focusing on the objectives to be discussed.

I had a few colleagues who rated their own year OUTSTANDING and rated all their team member's AVERAGE. I could never understand that. Your performance finally has to be a sum total of your team's performance!!

Here's a simple slide for you - this is what I have seen works and doesn't work.

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Do’s and Don’ts in Appraisals

Doing the Appraisal	Being the Recipient
1.Prepare well, a good review takes time, NO Distractions	Fill it and Go through your self appraisal in great detail
2.Focus on the ISSUE, not the person, Don’t be Judgemental	If feedback is vague, seek specific examples
3.Be honest, don’t practice false positivity	Ask what you could have done better to realise potential
4.If behavior is an issue, give concrete examples	If you don’t like the appraisal, seek another time, don’t get emotional and say things you might regret
5. Make it a 2 way chat, encourage the person to speak	Focus on the context in which results were delivered
6.Give 2 clear development areas for the next time frame	Never compare your performance with peers
7.Focus on softer skills – Attitude, Effort, Responsiveness	Don’t link this conversation to salary and promotion
8.End on a positive note, ask how you can help	Thank the person for the feedback and review

Do's and Dont's in Appraisals - Shiv