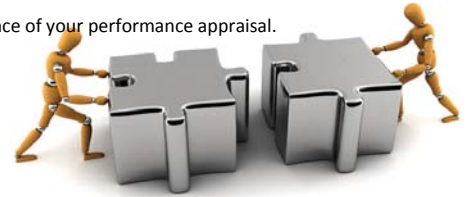


# A Winning Annual Performance Appraisal - 8 Smart Steps to Prepare For It

"Yikes! I have my performance appraisal coming up in two weeks." Often employees dread performance appraisals because they fear they may not measure up or won't be appreciated by their bosses. Here are eight smart steps that employees can take to prepare for their performance appraisal and to ensure a successful outcome.

**Step 1:** Prepare a written summary of your work accomplishments for the past year and submit it to your boss, in advance of your performance appraisal.

- \*Highlight your top two work accomplishments.
- \*Briefly outline your individual and team results for each goal.
- \*Identify challenges and obstacles you faced and successfully overcame.
- \*Note goals you didn't meet, with a brief reminder on why, e.g., priorities shifted by boss.
- \*Note any special projects you took on and the outcomes.
- \*Attach customer appreciation emails, letters, or other praiseworthy materials.



**Step 2:** Rate yourself using your organization's performance appraisal form and submit it to your boss as input to the appraisal, along with the written summary of your work accomplishments.

- \*Claim your accomplishments
- \*Admit to any shortcomings
- \*Avoid inflated or deflated ratings.
- \*Provide specifics in the comments sections.

**Step 3:** Briefly summarize your learning and development (L&D) activities for the past year and submit it to your boss, along with the written summary of your work accomplishments.

- \*Highlight your agreed-upon L&D goals.
- \*For each goal, list the formal and informal training you completed (e.g., workshops, formal education, online training, on-the-job training, and professional reading) and how you applied that knowledge in your job.
- \*Identify additional L&D activities that you participated in as part of your work and how you applied learning from these to your job.
- \*Mention L&D activities you did outside work and that you paid for, and explain how you applied the knowledge you gained from them to your job.

**Step 4:** Make a list of what you most appreciated from your supervisor during the past year and determine how best to share it with your boss.

- \*Identify qualities you most admire about your boss.
- \*List specific actions your boss took to support you in your work.
- \*Remember the work opportunities your boss created for you.
- \*Note barriers your boss eliminated or helped you to overcome.
- \*List resources your boss obtained for you, such as additional budget, staff, and supplies.
- \*Identify situations in which your boss helped you solve a major problem.
- \*Recall L&D activities you requested and that your boss provided for you.

**Step 5:** Identify options to maximize your and the team's work performance and which of them are most important to bring up in the discussion.

- \*Brainstorm specific ways to streamline the work.
- \*Outline cost-saving measures.
- \*Identify what additional resources are needed to enhance your job performance.
- \*Determine other support you need from your boss to effectively carry out your work.

**Step 6:** Combine the following steps to identify your specific career development needs and strategize how best to mention them.

- \*Clarify both your long- and short-term career goals.
- \*List work experiences that will move you in the directions of your career goals.
- \*Identify the next job where you'd like to advance.
- \*Make a list of additional education and training that will best prepare you for your desired career.
- \*Get clear on your greatest/lowest areas of interest and passion, as well as what skills, strengths, and knowledge you are most/least motivated to use.
- \*Identify new projects or work activities you could take on as part of your current job and that jive with your ideal work activities.
- \*Notice what pieces of your boss' job you'd like to take on and how doing so could benefit your boss, e.g., (take on important work your boss doesn't have time for or seems to lack interest in doing).
- \*Clarify your least desired work activities and alternate ways to get that work done (e.g., automate it, shift it to another employee, or outsource it).



**Step 7:** Follow these guidelines to ensure you have a positive and healthy frame of mind, prior to your appraisal.

- \*Relax (take deep breaths).
- \*Set a positive stage for your review and be ready to put your boss at ease with your opening remark (e.g., "I'm looking forward to the opportunity to have this performance appraisal discussion with you").
- \*Be poised to make it an enjoyable experience for both of you.
- \*Invite input from your boss.
- \*Be ready to listen and to inquire further about your boss' comments and concerns.
- \*Avoid common defenses and excuse such as explaining, justifying, pointing fingers, and complaining.
- \*Admit to your shortcomings.
- \*View the discussion as a learning opportunity.
- \*Think about things from your boss' perspective.
- \*Be sure to thank your boss for the time spent on your appraisal.

**Step 8:** Set the stage for the coming year by reviewing the following items and deciding which of them to include in your performance appraisal discussion.

- \*Be sure to ask for clarification about next year's goals.
- \*Ask how next year's goals will be measured (e.g., increased revenue, number of new customers, what a successful outcome will look like).
- \*Determine additional resources you may need to achieve your goals.
- \*Discuss any training you will need to achieve your goals.
- \*Suggest that you and your boss have regular update sessions (weekly, bi-weekly) to enhance communications, as well as your performance.
- \*Suggest the use of additional reporting mechanisms, such as submitting monthly reports.

In summary, a performance appraisal can be a positive and successful experience for both the employee and the boss! It's an opportunity to learn more about how you are currently performing, identify specific ways to enhance your performance and career, and set the stage for your successful performance in the coming year.