

Performance Check

Eighty percent of our conversation about people at our work place, whether they be our supervisors, peers or subordinates revolve around their negative aspects. But how often do we stop to reflect on ourselves and evaluate our own negative points? Do we always have to wait for the annual performance appraisal to find out how well or how badly we are doing?

Since my previous job with a multinational financial services organisation in the Gulf, I have learnt to regularly ask my boss “how am I doing?”, “am I performing to your expectations?”, “are there any areas in my performance

in which you would like to see an improvement?” When was the last time you asked questions of this nature from your boss?

The new trend among executives employed with global giants today is to ask these questions not only from their boss, but from their peers, subordinates and from themselves as well. This type of appraisal, has been branded as the 360 degrees appraisal, where you evaluate your performance levels by obtaining the views of all the people around you and then develop a road map to work on the areas of improvement.

There are many types of questions which can be included in a 360 degrees appraisal, which could be developed based on the areas of performance one wishes to be evaluated.

In Sri Lanka, as we move to a new financial as well as an appraisal year from April 1st, I share with you (by courtesy of the developer of the questionnaire David Hagen Associates of New Jersey, USA) the five core competence areas and 39 key people managing skills which as ‘people leaders’ are part of our work life. These could be used as a 360 degrees appraisal, to evaluate your current level of leadership.

I. Gaining Commitment to Goals and Standards

1. You communicate high personal standards informally in conversation, personal appearance, etc.

2. You demonstrate strong, personal commitment to, and persistence in achieving your unit's goal.
3. Your staff members have a chance to influence the performance goals and standards that are set for their jobs.
4. You establish clear, specific performance goals and standards for staff members' jobs.
5. You help staff members understand how their jobs contribute to the overall effectiveness of the work group.
6. You ask staff members to participate in setting deadlines for the achievement of their goals.
7. You ask staff members to participate in deciding which of their goals are most important.
8. Your staff members have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities.

II. Coaching

9. You build warm, friendly relationships with the people in your work group, rather than remaining cool and impersonal.
10. You try and make the best use of staff members' skills and abilities when making assignments.
11. If you feel your staff members are right, you will definitely go to bat for them with your superiors.
12. You provide help, training and guidance so that staff members can improve their performance-feedback on how they are doing on their jobs.
13. You pay close attention to what staff members are saying when they talk to you.
14. Your staff members can be completely open in telling you about their mistakes.
15. Your staff members can get a clearcut decision from you when they need one.

16. You prepare staff members to fill in for each other when key people are absent or unavailable.

III. Rewarding

17. You use recognition and praise (aside from pay) to reward excellent performance.

18. You are more likely to recognize staff members for good performance than to criticize them for performance problems.

19. You provide staff members with the information they need regarding pay and other compensation policies.

20. You make every effort to be fair with staff members regarding their pay.

21. You notice and show appreciation when staff members have put in extra time and effort.

22. You relate rewards (salary increases, recognition, promotions) to excellence rather than to other factors such as personal relationships.

IV. Appraising Performance

23. You communicate your views honestly and directly during discussions of staff members performance.

24. You consider all relevant information when appraising staff members' performance.

25. You work with staff members to reach mutual agreement on their performance appraisal.

26. You help staff members develop specific plans to improve their performance.

27. You work with staff members to determine their realistic short-term career objectives.

28. You give staff members feed-backs on how they are doing on their jobs.

- 29. Your staff members' written performance appraisals are consistent with the feedback you give them informally.
- 30. You explain to staff members the factor used in judging their performance.
- 31. You sit down regularly with staff members to review their over- all performance.

V. Work-group leading

- 32. The work-group meetings. you conduct serve to increase trust and mutual respect among work-group members.
- 33. You make sure there is a frank and open exchange of ideas in work-group meetings.
- 34. You periodically try to get a feel for work-group morale.
- 35. You emphasize cooperation as opposed to competitiveness among members of your work- group.
- 36. When conflicts arise in your work-group, you make an effort to work them out with the individuals involved.
- 37. You establish departmental or work-group goals.
- 38. The work-group meetings you hold are well-organised and thought out.
- 39. Your staff members have a clear understanding of what was decided at the end of work-group meetings you hold.

The methodology for a 360 degrees appraisal is for you to:

- 1. prepare a list of the areas of competence in which you want your performance to be assessed and then do a self-assessment.
- 2. get your supervisor to give his/her assessment of your performance in those areas.
- 3. get at least 3 to 6 peers (peer view) and finally your subordinates (direct reports view) to give their assessment. Given below is an example of a score card, of the

performance say of Mr A, based on the five core areas of competence.

The overall average people managing score of Mr A 2.7 (on a scale of 1 to 5). Do this appraisal on a quarterly basis and you will achieve top performance, by the year end. The score card reads as follows,

Core Competence	Self Score	Managers Score	Peers Score (Average)	Direct Reports Score (Average)	Average Score
1. Gaining commitment to goals & standards	3	4	2	3	3
2. Coaching	4	2	2	4	3
3. Rewarding	2	3	3	2	2.8
4. Appraising Performance	1	5	3	4	3.2
5. Leading work teams	2	4	1	1	2
Average	2.4	3.6	2.2	2.8	2.7

1 = exceptional

2 = outstanding

3 = good

4 = needs improvement

5 = unsatisfactory



Sunil Dissanayake is a Human Resources Management & Development specialist. This article has been developed from his personal experiences in his professional career.