

INTERVIEW APPROACHES

A performance evaluation system is most effective when the discussion between the employee and the supervisor encourages employees to improve performance on their own.

Performance evaluation interviews, when poorly executed, can make even the best supervisors and employees anxious and defensive. Evaluations that are well-designed according to the job and company goals—and are discussed in an open and objective manner—can significantly enhance performance improvement efforts.

There are two basic approaches to the evaluation interview—direct and indirect.

- **The Direct Approach:**
With the direct approach, the supervisor does most of the talking. The direct approach is useful for presenting facts and judgments or to orient the employee to a different way of doing the job. This approach is most common when an employee is performing poorly or when other methods have failed.
- **The Indirect Approach:**
With the indirect approach, the supervisor asks questions, encourages responses from the employee and spends time listening rather than talking. This approach is an excellent method for getting the employee to think of ways to improve performance. When the supervisor listens, more information is gained regarding the motivation and perceptions.

Example of the direct approach is as follows:

A **direct approach** might be necessary for a warehouse worker who is having a problem getting to work on time, picking orders accurately, and placing incoming product and returns into the proper bins. In meeting with this employee, the supervisor explains the importance of company policies with regard to punctuality and work accuracy, presents the information documenting the worker's need to improve performance and outlines the improvements to be made.

Example of the indirect approach is as follows:

An **indirect approach** might be applicable for an inside sales rep who is performing well overall and is hitting his/her sales numbers, but is failing to meet the required gross margin. After listening to the sales rep, the sales manager learns that the employee is concerned about his/her perceived fairness of the margins on a number of items, and is nervous and lacks confidence in presenting prices. After agreeing that the margins need to be maintained, the rep and sales manager further agree that the employee will use a script provided by the company for difficult situations, attend a seminar on dealing assertively with price objections and take a home study course on distributor

profitability. The inside sales rep suggests a time frame that is accepted by the manager. They agree to meet in a month to review progress in meeting the needed gross margins.

A well-executed performance evaluation interview covers the following areas:

- Measure the degree to which employee's performance reached the established objectives and performance factors
- Recognize the employee's contributions
- Clarify expectations and actions to improve performance
- Allow the employee to express opinions regarding performance-related issues in a non-threatening environment
- Mutually agree on necessary actions
- Plan growth and development opportunities for the employee
- Establish objectives and standards for the next evaluation period

Keep in mind the Three Cardinal Rules for performance evaluation:

- Complete it on time
- Do it in a humane and sensitive way
- Make it a constructive, regular exercise for the organization