

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



304 Update on Performance Reviews

A little over a year ago I took a controversial stand on a topic that takes a toll on just about every organization that deals with it, and that's most of them. I'm Jerry Roberts and today we'll update our position on the dreaded annual performance review, next on The Extra Point.

Almost 15 months ago when this radio show was just getting underway, I suggested that employers ditch performance reviews. To some this would be like banning red rice from fiesta tables. I heard about it for a long time, with opinion evenly split between "Let's do it!" and "Are you crazy?"

Some HR people told me they hated the review process, as did all of their workers, but they had no choice — it was a requirement. If you would like to read my take on annual reviews, go to guamtraining.com and download Extra Points #3 and #4. Here's the short version...

Evaluations are expensive, people dread them, they disrupt production, and the scoring isn't very precise. One year on the question of whether I was self-motivated, on the scale of one to five, five being the highest score, I selected five. My manager gave me a four and when I questioned that he said he agreed that I was a five in motivation, but he always graded a little bit lower just to leave — are you ready? — room for improvement. I asked him directly what purpose that served, that if he felt I was a five I should get the five. He gave me a disturbed look, then said in an animated way, this was the way everybody did reviews and I should just get used to it. I knew then the review process was highly flawed, and nothing since has changed my mind.

I'm happy to say I'm not the Lone Ranger in this opinion. A lot more people these days are questioning the value of annual reviews. A recent survey backed by Employco USA, a national human resources company with nearly 30,000 employees, found that two-thirds

of organizations feel that their performance reviews are not effective. They described them as "subjective and highly ambiguous." Imagine that. However, Employco CEO Rob Wilson, said reviews may be difficult to eliminate as they do allow employers to work on merit increases for workers.

What am I missing here? If the scoring isn't all that accurate, then the foundation for giving the merit increases isn't exactly rock solid, right? Wilson says "Modern performance reviews are largely based on the merit system used by the military in World War I. It's a hundred years old.

There's not much good to choose from here. If we're using the results of these reviews to give out raises, promotions, or in some cases to justify terminating workers, then we're doing all that with numbers we know aren't totally trustworthy. On the other hand, if we ignore the reviews when making those decisions, then what's the point in having them?

My opinion now is the same as before. Reviews should be an uplifting session between the manager and the worker, with two-way feedback, all centered on higher performance. Do we need to establish mentoring or coaching or training, and where do we both agree we want to be three, six, twelve months from now. If you train your managers right, relationships will be stronger and then if you do some kind of review, you can come up with numbers that actually stand up under scrutiny.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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