

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Understanding and Preparing for a Performance Appraisal

When it’s time for a performance appraisal, do you react with fear? Concern? Excitement? Enthusiasm? Whether it's your own performance that's being appraised or you're the one responsible for the appraising, performance appraisals never fail to bring out strong emotions.

Performance appraisals are generally thought of as one-time events that take place every year or so. But to be most effective, performance appraisals should be seen as an ongoing process. Frequent communication provides both employee and supervisor with the opportunity to better understand what the other is thinking. This can really help improve performance.

Both managers and employees have responsibilities in the performance appraisal process:

Employees' Responsibilities

- Committing to goal achievement
- Soliciting performance feedback and advice
- Communicating openly and regularly with supervisors
- Collecting and sharing performance data
- Preparing for the performance review

Managers' Responsibilities

- Creating conditions that generate employee motivation
- Observing and documenting performance
- Updating and revising objectives and standards as conditions change
- Providing performance feedback and coaching as problems or opportunities arise
- Providing opportunities for professional development
- Reinforcing effective behavior and progress towards goals

Preparing for Your Performance Appraisal

By preparing yourself and demonstrating a willingness to co-operate, you will create a positive impression. Try to assess your own performance from your manager's perspective. Make sure you understand your organization's appraisal process. Anticipate your manager's comments and questions, and prepare your responses.

Here are some key tasks and questions to consider as you are preparing your strategy:

- Analyze your agreed upon goals and ask to what extent you achieved them.
- Review your job description, your role within the organization, your duties and responsibilities.
- Have you taken on any additional responsibilities or been involved in extra projects?
- How have you dealt with any changes or unexpected problems?
- How have you handled communications with colleagues?
- How effectively have you applied problem-solving and teamwork?
- Are there any ways in which you can increase your value to the organization?

© 2026 LifeWorks (US) Ltd.

Document Your Efforts

Keep a record of your work activities. Specify your contributions and achievements, your difficulties and frustrations. Ensure you have all the necessary documentation to support your claims, such as letters and e-mails. Also make a list of training courses, conferences and seminars that you attended that have enhanced your performance.

Make sure to also document difficulties as you encounter them during the year. This will put you in a better position to discuss them in context and with confidence at an appraisal. Be open and engaging with your manager. When receiving difficult feedback, acknowledge the problem and deal positively and maturely with your manager. Avoid giving the impression that you are angry or on the defensive.

Being prepared for a performance appraisal will ensure an informative and objective process. You'll feel more comfortable, confident and able to use the process in your own best interests. Performance reviews can and should be a critical tool for career management and progression.