



Focusing on Performance as a Tool for Growth

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At 5.12 solutions, we believe that building strong teams requires a focus on People, Processes, Planning, and Performance. In fact, these 4 “Ps” are the foundation of 5.12 Solutions’ Innovative Team Model.

As we enter the 4th quarter of the business year, it’s time to get ahead of the game in terms of the fourth “P” - **Performance**. As a leader, you can use performance appraisals as a tool to provide your people with the purpose, direction, and motivation they need to grow professionally, thrive personally, and live passionately.

Now...most people cringe at the thought of completing performance appraisals. I would suggest that is because they are more concerned about how to correctly complete the company forms than they are about using the process as a tool for growth.

When it comes to performance appraisals, your first job as a leader is to **set clear standards and expectations**. It all starts at the beginning of the year by helping your people shape their annual goals, align them with organizational goals, and ensure expectations are clear and understood. The clearer you are about your expectations, the greater the chances are of your people being genuinely motivated to achieve them.

The performance appraisal process is not a “once-a-year” deal. As a leader, you should **support ongoing performance communication throughout the entire year**. Your people should not have to wait until year-end reviews to receive feedback on their performance. Let me say that another way - there should be no surprises at year end! Here are a few suggestions:

1. Manage by walking around, get to know your people personally as well as professionally, and make yourself visible on a daily basis. Having a strong rapport with your people will make it

easier for you to deliver feedback and more likely that it will be accepted.

2. Conduct meetings at which employees report on the status of their projects. Hold them accountable and provide feedback along the way.
3. Meet with individuals over lunch, coffee, or even during a run, bike, or golf outing. Change things up – break your current patterns.
4. Maintain an open door policy and keep an open line of communication with your people.

Your next role as a leader, as it relates to the performance appraisal process, is to **identify and remove obstacles to performance**. Part of your job is to help your people succeed. This involves eliminating obstacles that stand in the way of their success and providing them with resources they need to achieve success.

Finally, when it’s time to formally conduct that year-end review, you are responsible for **providing specific feedback**. Tell your people what they did well, what skills they successfully developed, and identify opportunities for improvement. Your job is to go beyond the standard line of “yes you are proficient.” Additionally, help your people find the resources they need to continue to build their skills (e.g., training, professional associations, books, mentor/coaching programs, etc.).

Take care of your people, and they will take care of you. Start with their professional development and watch them grow professionally, thrive personally, and live passionately.

About 5.12 Solutions

5.12 Solutions is a Boulder, Colorado based training company dedicated to inspiring innovation through team building and leadership development programs. For more information, please visit www.512solutions.com.