

Job Market

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Reviews are just part of the modern job

There should be no surprises for anyone at an annual performance review, Peter McLaren says.

EMPLOYEES should have no need to feel uneasy heading into a performance review.

So says Peter McLaren, managing director of Wellington-based management consultancy firm McLaren Associates.

"When it comes to an annual performance review there should be no surprises. Rather, it should just be the culmination of an ongoing workplan that consists of monthly and/or quarterly reviews.

"Employees can expect the 'workplan' itself to include key performance indicators, no more than seven or eight, covering, for instance, people management, achieving business targets, stakeholder or internal people relationships, and alongside each key performance indicator, the expected standards of performance.

"This should be a living document that is reviewed regularly, so employees are completely in the know and at ease when it comes to the annual review," says Mr McLaren.

"Unfortunately for people working for an organisation that has no format for evaluating performance, this can be a different story, whereby if there is no regular dialogue and documentation in place throughout the year, both employees and employers may be left scratching their heads come review time."

The result will have negative connotations if there has been no evaluation of how a person performed in the past 12 months, he says.

"The staff member might think they are going in one direction, but the manager thinks they're going in another which can cause the review session to be a complete disaster.

"You may, on the other hand, have a work situation that's blown up just before the review, which

leaves the whole discussion rather tainted, even though that person may have overall completed excellent work beforehand."

Whatever the case, Mr McLaren advises employees to enter the annual review with a clear head and to look at the process objectively.

Other tips include:

- Be well-prepared, document your achievements and list anything you wish to discuss.

- If you haven't kept track of all your achievements, spend some time figuring out what you have accomplished since your last review and, most importantly, how your employer has benefited.

- Complete a pre-appraisal evaluation – a form every organisation should give their employees.

- List any areas of self improvement.

- List potential areas for personal development and training, career opportunities identified, or courses you could undertake.

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Mr McLaren suggests employees should gain an understanding of the review process, which has the aim of increasing communication both ways, establishing clear expectations, reinforcing good performance, improving unsatisfactory

performance, and fostering a spirit of teamwork in the workplace.

Once the process is completed, employees who feel they have received an unfair review should consider responding to it by having a follow-up discussion with their reviewer within a few weeks.

Objectivity, rather than subjectivity is key, says Mr McLaren – is the criticism really off the mark, or is the employee upset they were being challenged in the first place?

A paper trail is helpful for the employee – present anything factual in writing, in order to back up any comments.

He says employees should regard a review as an opportunity, where they can take away valuable information about themselves and work on those points to become a more effective and valued staff member.



Review time: McLaren Associates' managing director Peter McLaren.

Photo: JOHN NICHOLSON