

# Seven Deadly Sins of Employee Performance Management

- I. Making performance evaluation an annual event  
Is the annual evaluation conversation the only time you discuss performance? It shouldn't be. Employee performance management should be a series of conversations throughout the year – setting up the plan, checking in on progress, and looking back and evaluating how the year went. Make it the way you do business and the performance results will surprise you.
- II. Doing performance planning & evaluation TO employees  
Too often managers and employees approach performance planning and evaluation as a one-way street, with all of the power and control in the hands of the manager. That's like handing the manager a big stick. But employee performance management is not a stick – and if you use it like one, performance will suffer. Take a partnership approach and use the tools of planning and evaluation to make it a shared effort.
- III. SURPRISE – you stink!  
One of the reasons folks dislike evaluations is that they are afraid they might be victim of a "gotcha." That is, they are afraid the boss is going to zing them with something unexpected -- and it's *never* good news when s/he does that, right? Don't let anything, positive or negative, be a surprise. Ensure that progress and problems are discussed promptly – don't wait until the evaluation to bring something up.
- IV. Including what you heard about, or assume is true, in an evaluation  
Nobody is going to include in an evaluation something they did not observe themselves, right? You'd be surprised. Be sure that the evaluation you provide is based in reality – in what you have observed and measured and know to be true.
- V. Giving exceptionally good (or bad) performance evaluations without balance or explanation

Even poor employees have good traits – praise them. Even great employees have areas for improvement – help them to see what those are. And every employee, no matter how incredible or not-so-incredible, will benefit from particular examples of what you liked and did not like. Be specific and use examples, and chances are you'll get much more of the good and much less of the bad.

VI. Basing an evaluation on just how you did last week

We're human, and so we tend to evaluate folks more on how they have done recently. If a year of weak performance ended with a really good month or two, well, it's the more recent stuff we tend to remember. The objective performance measures that are part of the evaluation will help with evaluating the entire performance period, but it's important to be mindful of this tendency.

VII. Having a performance conversation with someone as they walk down the hall (or a similarly bad setup)

All performance conversations need to be done in a private setting, with the manager and the employee sitting side by side and taking the time to have a conversation. The time you invest in these conversations will be more than saved through better performance. Give this powerful tool the time and attention to do it well.