

How to get the most out of PDRs

A guide for managers

1. Set clear expectations



Do

- Discuss with the employee that the PDR will set the next year's goals and priorities, which you'll be regularly discussing and catching up on through the year
- Assuage any fears or concerns the employee has – PDRs should feel conversational, not intimidating
- Discuss with the employee how they'd like to receive their feedback



Don't

- Assume that the person having their PDR will want to receive their feedback the way you'd like to deliver it
- Let the PDR be the first and/or only time you discuss an employee's goals and give them feedback
- Wait until the PDR to raise performance issues

2. Phrase the PDR positively

Most employees will be performing well and should be motivated through praise and encouragement. PDRs are about developing staff to become top employees, not punishing them for past mistakes.



In the weeks before the PDR, encourage the employee to start jotting down their achievements for the year.



Be sure to encourage employees to reflect on their strengths, not just their weaknesses.



Focus on performance over the year, not just on recent events, especially if recent events may skew your perception.



When delivering points for development, focus on behaviours and actions, not personality traits.

3. Give clear, concise feedback

Feedback delivery is crucial to how your feedback will be received and implemented.



Do

- Give clear, specific examples of the observed/desired behavior
- Explain the effect of the observed/desired behavior (and why you're recommending they continue/change it)
- Invite feedback on your management performance from the employee
- Give feedback as frequently and immediately as possible



Don't

- Give "feedback sandwiches": this sends mixed messages and causes confusion
- Sugarcoat feedback. This makes it more likely that the receiver won't fully understand and implement it.
- Be vague. "You need to take more initiative" does not give the employee a clear understanding of what specific actions they should take.

4. Questions

Questions should be open (i.e. they can't be answered with one word) and should prompt the employee to reflect on their performance without leading them to an answer.

X "Are you happy with your performance this year?"

X "Do you think you communicate well?"

Closed questions are easy to answer without giving any real thought or detail.

✓ "How do you feel I could improve in managing you?"

✓ "What skills have you been developing since your last PDR?"

✓ "What has been your biggest achievement this year?"

✓ "How would you judge your communication skills?"

✓ "How can I support you in achieving your goals?"

Open questions encourage reflection and help you create specific actions and points for development.