

■ Managing Performance: Two Things Employees Want to Know

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Employees want to know two things: what is expected of them and how they are doing. While your direct report's annual performance appraisal is the time to set expectations for the coming year, feedback needs to happen much more frequently. Here are some things to consider.

When setting performance objectives, always follow the "SMART" method. That is, write the objectives so that they are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**esults-oriented, and **T**imely. It is critical for both you and your direct reports to know how their performance objectives link to the overall business results that the organization desires, as well as when they successfully complete a given objective. The SMART method ensures both outcomes.

Next, use weekly or bi-weekly meetings to give individual feedback to direct reports on how they are doing in meeting their performance objectives. One effective way is to use the "what's working/what's missing" approach. Start by giving the employee your observations of what's working

well regarding their performance. You might say, "What's working well is the thoroughness with which you complete your assignments." Then share what you believe is missing such that if it were present, it would help the employee take their performance to the next level. Notice you are not going to use the words "here's what's not working." That approach often leads to "shame and blame monologues" that never end well. Instead say something like, "What's missing and needs to be present is submitting your reports by the deadline." Following this approach ensures that you are sharing what the employee is doing well, and what specifically needs to be present in their work as that person moves forward. Finish the conversation by asking the direct report, "Is there anything you need from me that will help your effectiveness?"

Being a manager means getting work done through others. Performance management does take time. However, it is the cornerstone of good management practice. ■

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