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## Under review

How to provide powerful performance reviews — that work!

BY MONICA WOFFORD, CSP

**I**T WAS EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW TIME, and everyone was dreading the process.

Typically, Dr. Jeremy surprised everyone in the review session with a winter's worth of ammunition he'd been storing. His approach didn't sit well with employees, but they knew if they endured the hour-long "constructive criticism," they could go back to doing things in the same manner until next year.

It could be worse, or at least different, if they worked for Dr. Simpson. His style of performance reviews included high praise — as if every employee walked on water. However, in between these semi-annual sessions, he was a ticking time bomb. If the smallest detail were left unattended, he could explode.

While these review sessions

served to share positive news, the mixed messages of annual praise and daily discipline left employees perplexed.

And then again, it could be even worse if one worked for Dr. Miles. Her style was to forgo the annual performance review process entirely and merely share "drive-by coaching" scenarios with little or no documentation.

It seemed, however, that she had patience and managed to keep even the most tiresome and low-performing employees employed.

### A method that works

You can provide performance reviews as an annual or semi-annual event, or not at all. You can document them or not (but remember that if it's not written down, it didn't happen).

You can use them to berate, belittle, or uplift and encourage, or to coach, guide, motivate, and share feedback, which is their intended usage.

No matter which method you chose, use a method that works.

The following are a few guidelines to keep in mind.

#### 1. Use a consistent tracking method.

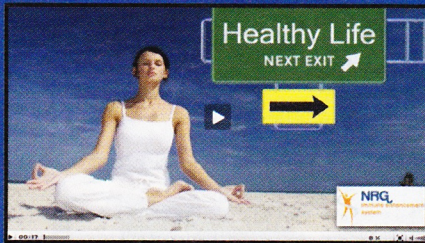
Rather than relying on your memory, even if it trumps that of an elephant, document everything an employee does and every conversation you have about it.

You probably won't remember the time and details of a conversation if you end up using it as ammunition to let someone go. Also, discipline and coaching become far less tedious when you are consistently

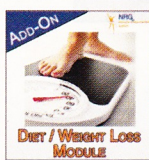
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## PERSONALGROWTH

taking the time to record what works and what doesn't.

Consider updating each employee file with conversational data of the day's or week's activities every day or once a week.

### 2. Use reviews as a reminder.

At no time should an employee be surprised by what you have included in your performance reviews.

This is not the time to spring feedback on them from something they did months ago. At that point, it's too late to fix it.

If the behavior is important enough to be written in a review, it was important enough to have been shared at the time it occurred. In this way, a review is a reminder and a follow-up to an already transacted conversation and sharing of feedback.

You are giving them feedback on how they have done since the last time you had the conversation. This shouldn't be the first time they will have heard about it.

### 3. Begin your review process with clarity.

To be fair to those you lead, fill your review with three to five measurable objectives employees know about well in advance of your data-gathering period.

Tell new hires that you conduct reviews every six months, and tell them what is on the review so they know what level of performance to reach.


If you leave the objectives on the review a surprise,

you will create frustration and resentment, and employees will argue that you never told them what was expected. Why set yourself up for that kind of conversation?

Performance reviews are often seen as a necessary evil, when really there is nothing evil about them. You give your patients regular feedback and, in some cases, homework, so why should employees be any different?

Until you tell them, employees may not know what you expect, and they may not be used to doing things your way, so your feedback is required.

The performance review process is just that: a review of what you've already told them and their progress toward clearly stated objectives. If you make it more than that, you may be faced with reactions you aren't prepared to deal with, attrition you didn't want to handle, and results that are far from what you desired.

Be clear, be consistent, and be a leader. It's the role you play in your practice that is second only to being the doctor. 



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training and consulting firm. Her 20 years of leadership experience makes her a highly sought after coach, consultant, speaker, and trainer. She can be reached at 866-382-0121 or through [www.contagiouschiropractic.com](http://www.contagiouschiropractic.com) or [www.contagiouscompanies.com](http://www.contagiouscompanies.com).