

# A Guide to Leadership in Uncertain Times

## Appraisals

### The Situation

Given the current circumstances we find ourselves in, it might be easy to think that undertaking appraisals and managing your team's performance is not a top priority. This might be because you can't conduct these in the same way as you would have previously done in an office environment as well as the uncertainty many of us face at the moment, especially business owners.

However, there is an argument that managing an employee's performance is more important now than ever before! We must be adaptable to the new "norm" and the way of working we find ourselves in.

### Is There a Need to Do Appraisals?

- Yes! It is so important just now to maintain a regular flow of communication even if there is not much to say. Given the changing dynamics of business, there may also be lots to say!
- This current situation has created concerns about having to adapt to new ways of working but this could be a positive! Employees could say that there is not much to do and it's the same thing over and over – or they could say there is too much to do and they need to think on their feet. Whatever the situation this is a great chance to realign workloads.
- If there isn't much going on, what else could be done just now and if there is too much, how is this set out to be realistic?

### What Will it Really Achieve?

- This current situation allows employers and employees to try out new channels and everyone must be prepared to adapt.
- This could be a chance for employees to work on new projects and concepts, thinking differently about things. It allows for a chance to push boundaries!
- It also forces employees and employers to change their behaviour as new circumstances can create new rules.
- This situation gives the employer the chance to communicate the big picture and context.
- If you build connection now to show what you are actively continuing to do, this will be important in what unfolds further down the line

and builds on team morale by offering support and guidance.

- Share stories – make things human. Make feedback a priority just now so that this period is not wasted.

### What Happens If I Don't?

- If you don't have a review, you could be setting a "new norm" of lower standard of work as you don't have the same power to oversee how an employee is performing.
- In turn, quality issues could become real concerns, client complaints could come in.
- The team could become split if there is a perception that some people are getting away with doing nothing.
- If you don't set goals, a grievance could develop as employees feel they have no direction and feel there is no emphasis on their own individual needs.

Given we are mostly all working remotely, you might ask how this can be carried out?

We've put together some simple steps to help you and your team prepare and make the most out of 1-2-1's.

### Preparing for The Meeting

- Appraisals can make employees feel nervous and anxious, in some ways more so if it's now going to be conducted on video call. The more you prepare in advance of the meeting, the smoother it will go for both you and them. Share the files you will discuss on the call.
- Give the employee notice so that he /she can prepare for the discussion.
- Consider your goals and objectives from the last review and understand how they may change given our new ways of working.
- Review the employee's job description prior to the meeting and consider if it should be updated in line with how you are working now.
- Review departmental goals and how these specifically link with the employee's role. What do the next few months look like?
- Review the employee's job performance over the past year. If they have **SMART** Goals how is this situation going to impact them?

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- Be prepared to provide evidence – this can be done via screen share online.
- Identify potential **SMART** Goals for 2020 and what you want them to focus on next. Let them understand this may change as this situation changes. Perhaps don't think too far ahead as goals may need to be altered.
- Identify potential Development Goals for 2020 with one of them taking advantage of this new way of working – find a positive within it. Is there anything this new way of working has shown the employee needs to focus on or can focus on now? Have any new business needs come out of this that can be worked on in quieter times?
- In addition, come prepared to discuss when the next meeting date will be – don't leave the next review for another 6 months – regular catch ups need to happen now.
- Be prepared for the employee to provide you with honest, open feedback about their employee experience. Some things they share may be a shock to you, especially given their new work environment. Actively listen to the feedback and consider the points raised and understand how you can make things better for them.

## Conducting the Meeting

- Make sure your focus is on the person and not on distractions - commit to a meeting like you would at any other time.
- Mutually agree and create SMART Goals for 2020. These goals should support the employee's personal career goals and link to the departmental goals just like before.
- Employee Comments: This is a chance for employees to review their own progress during the time period. Be conscious that much of this is now going to be focused on this new reality and they will want to focus on this. You can ask them to complete this prior to the meeting and send it to you, or you can discuss it with them during the meeting.
- Manager Comments: In this section, you should review the employee's overall performance. You should take some time to consider this before the meeting, reviewing the employee's performance over the period so it does not just

reflect recent weeks. However, a big focus may be what is going on just now.

## How Do I Make a Plan in These Meetings?

- Performance needs to be put in context – where does the employee's role fit into where the organisation is now and where you want it to be.
- Take time to understand how the employee is feeling just now. Listen to what they are saying.
- Take a moment to strip out everything else that is going on just now. What does the business need to focus on and how does that employee help you get there? Their role may be the same or it may be turned on its head. How do you manage that, either in the short term or long term?
- Take coaching styles to support the employee and find solutions that will work for them.
- Agree on next steps, just now it's absolutely fine if these are small steps that set a different direction.
- Meet sooner rather than later – turn reviews into a weekly, fortnightly or monthly review but no longer than that. If things change too quickly, momentum and direction will be lost.

## Final Thoughts

It can be really easy to think that there is no time or no point in doing performance reviews just now, but they are as important as ever.

If you don't dedicate the time to do this and check in with your team, things can get lost very quickly.

It's likely that your business will be adapting to change like never before so if you don't involve your employees in the journey, you may lose them along the way.

## Further Guidance & Support

Contact your Account Manager or a member of the team for support and any further queries you may have.

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We are here to help!