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02.27.20

Dear HR Knowledge: Are annual reviews still the best practice?

It's no secret that the phrase "annual review time" makes both managers and employees cringe at the thought of writing a year's worth of feedback in one or two sittings. We often are asked by employers if annual reviews are still a best practice.

HR Knowledge still firmly believes annual reviews are important and we have not yet jumped off that bandwagon — as providing time to give formal and documented feedback is necessary for so many reasons. However, we *have* jumped on the bandwagon for more frequent check-ins and rethinking how and when employees should receive feedback.

According to management research firm CEB, 42% of employees consider annual reviews ineffective, mainly because feedback comes at the end of the year when it has almost no relevance. And 95% of managers are dissatisfied with their company's performance review process, according to the same study.

We think there is a better way and that employers should consider shifting from the once-a-year review to a more modern approach to performance management that allows employers to more frequently coach employees. Let's face it: in today's tough job market, with few qualified candidates, working more closely with your existing employees to improve their performance is a far better option than trying to replace employees. This is where we believe frequent check-ins are invaluable.

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There are a number of ways to implement frequent check-ins — managers can use the weekly or biweekly one-on-one method or meet with employees on a monthly or quarterly basis. At HR Knowledge, we find implementing a 30-, 60-, 90-day, 6-month, and annual review for new employees and then moving to a weekly one-on-one is a highly effective way to provide more relevant feedback and coaching. Meeting more often enables the manager to tailor feedback to specific employee performance and provides the opportunity for pinpoint coaching. Scheduling individual check-in meetings at set intervals also allows for goal setting and tracking progress toward those goals throughout the year.

Pairing frequent check-ins with annual reviews will give your employees the opportunity to act on the feedback they have received. It means there will be few, if any, surprises at the annual review. Your employees already know where they have fallen short and how they can make changes to hit milestones and goals, since you have given them growth and development opportunities all along, throughout the year. As an employee, wouldn't you feel more dedicated to your job if your manager took an interest in your growth more than just once a year?

The People Simplifying HR

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