

Skills 360 – Preparing for your Year-end Review

Discussion Questions

1. Does your company review employee performance regularly?
2. How do you feel when you are evaluated for the work you do?
3. What kind of preparation do you think is important for a year-end review?

Transcript

Hello everyone, Tim here with another Skills 360 podcast. The end of 2011 is [fast approaching](#), and it's the season for [performance reviews](#) and end-of-year [appraisals](#).

Few people actually look forward to sitting down with their [supervisor](#) and talking about the past year. For most, it's quite a [nerve-wracking](#) experience. But today I want to show you that if you're prepared, there's no reason to be [shaking in your boots](#).

[First up](#), as you may have guessed if you're a regular listener, is preparation. I really can't [overstate](#) the importance of good preparation. A lot of people think that the performance review is something we just have to [grin and bear](#) every year. But that's not really the case. If you are an active participant in your own review, it can be a [golden opportunity](#). So [take the bull by the horns](#), make sure you're prepared, and walk into your review with confidence and a smile on your face.

But how exactly should you prepare? Well, a good place to start is to look at the situation from your supervisor's perspective. What is he or she looking for? What topics will likely be covered? What questions will you be asked? What are some of the things your supervisor probably *doesn't* want to hear? Think about what *you* would do if you were the supervisor. Once you've given this some thought, you'll be ready to focus on what really matters and put the [trivial](#) stuff to the side.

What else should you think about? Well, remember that a performance review, or at least an effective one, evaluates you based on established goals and past points of comparison. So look back to your *last* performance review. What [objectives](#) did you and your supervisor [set](#) for yourself? What did you do well? In what areas was there [room for improvement](#)? You want to show that you've progressed as an employee and worked hard to be successful. To do that, you need to use that last review as a [point of reference](#).

Okay, I mentioned both the positive and the negative there, and that's important. Performance reviews address both successes and failures. Let's start with successes. [Reflect on](#) the past year. Browse through your reports, your calendar,

and even your email just to [jog your memory](#). As you do this, make a [quick and dirty](#) list of your greatest achievements. These could relate to how you found solutions to problems, how you made the company more money, or how you improved some aspect of the workplace. You need to emphasize achievements that relate directly to the past objectives you set as well as to your job description.

But that's not all. You really want to show how you went [above and beyond the call of duty](#). Show your supervisor how you stepped [outside the box](#) and did something that was *not* expected of you. And whenever you can, put numbers to your achievements. What do you think sounds better: "I sold more paper," or "I established five new major corporate accounts and increased my year over year sales by 34%"? [Get the picture?](#)

Now, you have to be realistic, and you can't overlook your failures and weaknesses. So think back on the year and make a list of instances when you could have done better. Remember that supervisors don't expect perfection – well, some do – but they do want to see that you have identified your weaknesses and thought about how to improve them. For each of those instances you thought of, prepare an explanation. Not an *excuse*, but an *explanation*. Also think about how you plan to correct each problem or [shortcoming](#). Again, be specific. What do you think sounds better: "I'm going to be a better employee," or "I'm going to take some conflict resolution training so that I can handle difficult colleagues better and make a positive impact on the [workplace culture](#)"?

[When it comes to](#) weaknesses, don't forget to look at those you identified in your last review. Be ready to talk about what you've done to improve. Your weaknesses might remain the same, but you probably shouldn't be setting the same improvement objectives. Remember, you want to show how you've progressed as an employee.

With the right preparation, you should feel [equipped](#) to be an active participant in your performance review. You're not there just to listen, smile, and nod. You're there to impress. And you do that by showing that you understand your job, you have a commitment to your organization, and you can follow through on your goals. And [at the end of the day](#), hopefully you can justify a promotion, a raise, or whatever else you hope to gain.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at our [myBEonline.com](#) website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long! And see you again in the New Year.

Vocabulary

Fast approaching – happening soon; “The design staff had to stay late every night because the deadline was fast approaching.”

Performance review – an employee evaluation, often at a set point in time; “An important part of every performance review is looking at whether an employee reached his goals.”

Appraisal – often used as part of “performance appraisal,” this is an evaluation of how well and employee has done; “My manager asked me to evaluate myself during my performance appraisal.”

supervisor – a person who manages or oversees the work of other people; “Jared’s supervisor has to constantly remind him to be on time for work.”

Nerve-wracking – stressful; causing worry or anxiety; “Most people find job interviews to be extremely nerve-wracking.”

To shake in your boots – to be afraid or nervous; “All the employees were shaking in their boots when the layoffs were announced.”

First up – we say “first up” to introduce the first of several ideas; “Thanks for coming everyone. First up, let’s talk about the things we’ve been doing right.”

To overstate – to exaggerate or make something seem more important or serious than it really is; “I think the CFO was overstating how successful the company has been just to attract investment.”

Grin and bear – to endure or tolerate something without complaining; “Because I couldn’t change the situation, I decided just to grin and bear it.”

Golden opportunity – a great chance to do or get something; “John had a golden opportunity to study at Oxford, but he accepted a job on Wall Street instead.”

To take the bull by the horns – to face or deal with a difficult situation or problem directly and confidently; “When I lost my job, I took the bull by the horns and started my own company.”

Trivial – not important or of little value; “People who telecommute find they don’t have to waste time dealing with trivial problems at the office.”

To set objectives – to make goals or targets; “During our quarterly sales meeting, we set clear objectives for the following quarter.”

Room for improvement – we say there is “room for improvement” when someone or something could do or be better; “Ted’s been a manager for over 20 years, but he still has room for improvement.”

Point of reference – something in the past that is used to compare with something in the present; “When we looked at how sales improved this July, we used last July’s sales as a reference point.”

To reflect on – to think about something deeply or carefully; “It is important to reflect on your overall career goals before changing jobs.”

To jog your memory – to make or help you remember something; “I rely on my administrative assistant to jog my memory about upcoming appointments.”

Quick and dirty – done or made quickly but not completely or well; “Jones gave a quick and dirty report about progress on the company’s plans for expansion.”

Above and beyond the call of duty – if you do something “above and beyond the call of duty,” you are doing more than is expected or required; “Employees who go above and beyond the call of duty regularly are often rewarded with promotions or raises.”

To think outside the box / Outside the box - to think of new, creative, or unusual ways of doing something or thinking of something; “Some of the most successful online businesses have been started by young people who think outside the box.”

To get the picture – to understand a situation or the meaning of something; “I explained my amazing product idea several times, but nobody got the picture.”

Workplace culture – the basic beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are common and acceptable in a company or office; “Because we have such a great workplace culture, our employees stay with us for a long time.”

Shortcoming – a fault or weakness; “A lack of confidence is a terrible shortcoming for a salesperson to have.”

When it comes to – we say “when it comes to” something to introduce it into the conversation; “We’ve had great success in Asia, but when it comes to South America we still have a lot of work to do.”

Equipped – having the right ability or knowledge to do something; “The training program is designed to make sure new employees are equipped to do their jobs well.”

At the end of the day – after considering everything; “I like my job, but at the end of the day I’d really prefer to be my own boss.”

Review

1. According to Tim, if you are an _____ participant in your performance review, it can be a golden opportunity.
2. What does Tim recommend starting with when you prepare for your review?
 - A writing an overview of your accomplishments
 - B thinking about your supervisor's perspective
 - C analyzing your last review
 - D finding ways to calm down and reduce your stress
3. How can you show that you've progressed as an employee? [CHOOSE 2]
 - A by emphasizing your accomplishments over the past year
 - B by demonstrating that you have addressed your identified weaknesses
 - C by presenting a balance of successes and failures
 - D by showing you met objectives established in your last review
4. Why says "I established five new major corporate accounts and increased my year over year sales by 34%" as an example of...
 - A ... making a significant accomplishment
 - B ... establishing a realistic objective
 - C ... displaying a lack of shortcomings
 - D ... putting numbers to your achievements
5. When preparing to talk about instances in which you failed, you should come up with _____, but not _____.
6. Which of the following does Tim recommend doing before or during a performance review?
 - A listening, smiling, and nodding
 - B reviewing reports and emails
 - C discussing your nervousness with your supervisor
 - D talking about both strengths and weaknesses
 - E considering what questions you will be asked
 - F comparing yourself with other employees
 - G assessing the goals you established previously
 - H being specific about what you've done

Review Answers

1. According to Tim, if you are an _____ participant in your performance review, it can be a golden opportunity.

active

2. What does Tim recommend starting with when you prepare for your review?

B thinking about your supervisor's perspective

5. How can you show that you've progressed as an employee? [CHOOSE 2]

B By demonstrating that you have addressed your identified weaknesses.

D By showing you met objectives established in your last review.

6. Tim says "I established five new major corporate accounts and increased my year over year sales by 34%" as an example of...

D ... putting numbers to your achievements

5. When preparing to talk about instances in which you failed, you should come up with _____, but not _____.

explanations... excuses

6. Which of the following does Tim recommend doing before or during a performance review?

B reviewing reports and emails

D talking about both strengths and weaknesses

E considering what questions you will be asked

G assessing the goals you established previously

H being specific about what you've done

Online Practice

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice**:

