

## Appraisal – your biggest motivational tool

It's 'that' time of year. With a to-do list as long as your arm, reports to write and endless meetings clogging up your day, you're expected to put appraisal meetings into the diary. It feels totally impossible.

As a direct report, it's a real chore. You've done a 'good enough' job and objectives have largely been met, so hopefully it won't be too bad. You'll hope for a quick 'in and out' and back to the day job.

This is how many people see the dreaded appraisal process, but what a waste. In fact, this is your biggest motivational tool: the moment to review the past year, consider the successes, clarify the development areas and get excited about the time to come. If you avoid it in order to get on with the 'proper job' you're missing a real opportunity.

Researching Inspirational Managers over the past year has really opened my eyes about appraisal. For Charlotte, it's a special time with her direct reports; the time to focus and talk in detail about how work is going. She makes sure it's a good experience, something everyone looks forward to. Even when the messages are tough, if the conversation is carried out in a spirit of support and development, it is positive and affirming.

What appraisal is really about?

Your task as a manager is to deliver outputs through other people and unless you've chosen to run yourself into the ground by doing the work yourself, your one to one meetings are key. It's about setting up the team for the next year, so you - and they - can deliver on objectives.

On a more subtle level, it's the time to demonstrate how important each person is to the success of the team. We go to work for all sorts of reasons, but not least is the chance to succeed at something and feel good about ourselves. The more you foster this, the better performance you'll gain. So appraisal is an opportunity to show your appreciation and encourage even greater effort. You want each person to walk out of the room feeling positive and excited about the year ahead, with a desire to deliver their best work. And most important – knowing that you're on their side and will be there to support them.

How have you done?

For Charlotte, an important consideration is her own effectiveness as a manager. Has she addressed issues as soon as they've arisen, has she paid attention to their well being and how much care has she taken to challenge and encourage. If your job is to deliver through others, then outputs depend

on your behaviour. High performance reflects on you, as does under performance – it's all a joint effort, so begin by looking at how well you've managed. Ask the big question – would you want a manager like you?

Appraisal runs both ways so look at what you could have done better over the year. If the person was under performing, did you help them address it or put your head in the sand? Did you celebrate their success and have you made the team a good place to work? Taking responsibility for your part in team outputs is a great example to set and one that will inspire others to do the same. Setting a tone of collaboration and joint accountability will ensure people want to work hard for you.

Make it your aim to understand how you could be more supportive and leave each person feeling valued, inspired and looking forward to the next year. Then appraisal time will pay off in spades.