

# Appraisal Interviews

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# Introduction

## How does your staff perform?

Appraisal is the cornerstone of an organisation's approach to managing people and supporting the achievement of corporate objectives. The appraisal interview can be an invaluable process supporting both personal and organisational development by reviewing the performance of an individual, identifying strengths and areas for development, evaluating their performance against corporate objectives and setting mutual performance objectives for the future.

This Tool-kit for conducting an appraisal interview consists of:

- A user guide providing step- by- step instructions explaining how to conduct an appraisal interview in a company
- Checklists that outline the key points for agreeing on plans for the future and for an effective appraisal interview
- Guidelines for effective appraisal interviews
- A questionnaire for an appraisal interview
- A background paper giving some inspiration as to how to conduct appraisal interviews and how these can support personal and organisational development

By combining the different documents, you will be able to make:

- Self-appraisal - where the individual rates his or herself against company objectives, sets targets to be reached and areas necessary of personal development
- Manager appraisal - where the individual gains feedback from their manager on their performance
- Customer, peer or subordinate appraisal - where the individual gains feedback from important stakeholders in the company

The individual gains feedback on their own performance against company objectives and is able to establish objectives for the future, as well as identifying any personal development areas and career plans necessary to meet the required performance and achieve company objectives.

## Author

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# User Guide

An appraisal interview is the process by which an individual discusses his or her performance against set objectives with a line manager. The aim of the interview is to review past performance, identify strengths and areas for development and mutually agree on performance objectives for the future, which keep in line with the company's strategy.

The appraisal process is valuable to an organisation and to an individual because it:

- Is an opportunity for individuals to gain feedback on their performance over a set period.
- It allows individuals to know what they have done well, what areas need development and how they fit into the performance of the team, the department and the organisation.
- It allows the organisation to set performance objectives that fit with the business strategy.
- Is an opportunity to measure (even though) subjectively, how people are progressing against the performance objectives.

As a result of the appraisal process, the individual will gain feedback on strengths and areas for development and gain knowledge on how their individual performance 'fits' into the company's performance. The company is able to identify how the individual is performing against business objectives and when reviewing the appraisal process company-wide, this information provides a holistic picture of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the company's human resources against the corporate strategy.

In short, the appraisal process is one of the most important methods of evaluating the performance of a company's human resources against the business strategy and informs other processes such as training and development, career and organisational development and human resource planning.

This product package introduces performance management systems and places the appraisal process in context. The features of an appraisal process are outlined, issues relating to appraisal forms are briefly introduced and the aims and benefits of appraisal are balanced against the most common criticisms of the process. The work necessary before an appraisal interview and how to structure the interview are covered in

## Why Appraisal Interviews Go Wrong!

- Performance v personality
- The problem of follow up to ensure the review is an INTEGRAL feature of good management and not simply a form filling exercise
- Problems of poor on going relationships between managers and subordinates
- Avoidance of problem raising due to fear of conflict
- System not used by senior managers "do as I say, not as I do"
- Performance objectives are so vague as to be unmeasurable

a step-by-step approach. Information about effective appraisers, effective questioning techniques and giving and receiving feedback are presented in the guidelines. Checklists concerning developing plans for the future and effective appraisal interviews are also included.

## Performance Management Systems

An appraisal interview is only part of a company's performance management system, which translates the goals of the company's strategic plan into individual performance. The performance management system may contain processes relating to strategic objective setting, communications about business plans and progress, integration with operational initiatives (such as total quality management) and links with reward, training and development systems. Marchington and Wilkinson (1996) see the components of any performance management process as shown in the figure below.



*Adopted by Marchington and Wilkinson (1996)*

**Determining performance expectations of individuals.** Here individuals are made aware of the performance expectations, based on organisational goals, which are mediated through each department and agreed upon with the individual.

**Supporting performance.** This refers to the day- to- day informal interaction between managers and their employees, which includes discussions about the employee's use of the company's resources and systems. Daily interactions facilitate the achievement of individual targets and helps with accessibility. Support comes from either co-workers or line managers or from specialists through mentoring, coaching or welfare provision and assistance with the removal of barriers that may prevent excellent performance.

**Review and appraisal.** The annual or semi-annual meetings to review performance should only be seen as the formal part of the cycle, reviewing performance against objectives over the last period and determining goals and training needs for the immediate future. This is the stage that this Tool-kit is concerned with.

**Management of performance standards.** This final stage deals with issues that are highlighted during the reviews of progress. For example, performance- related pay might be integrated into the system at this stage but also some training and development

activities could be discussed. This stage may be used to analyze poor performance, deliberate failures to achieve performance standards and discuss problems that may be affecting work.

### **The features of the appraisal process**

- *A formal management process* takes place at planned intervals and is part of a systematic process of evaluating the performance of individuals.
- *A review and planning process* where past and current performance can be reviewed and successes and areas for improvement are highlighted. It can also review the job, and identify any changes that have taken place with job description or responsibilities.
- *Objectivity* is based on clear areas of competence. Both the individual employee and the appraiser agree upon the performance review.
- *A development opportunity* seeks to develop knowledge and skills within a long-term development strategy. It plans to give the employee the extra skills and knowledge they need to achieve their new objectives and prepare for future responsibilities.
- *Empowering and motivating* involves the employee fully and enables each to make a positive contribution to the company. Allowing the employee to propose various new objectives and suggesting how to achieve those objectives will motivate the employee to accomplish them and other objectives as well.
- *Planned performance* enables achievement of the set objectives if the appropriate support is given. Each individual review is a building block in the pyramid of group performance.
- *Improved performance* occurs if the review accurately identifies ways in which knowledge and skills can be developed, and any obstacles preventing development. Once the obstacles are eliminated, development of the desired skills will usually lead to improved performance.
- *Problem solving* is vital in any business to identify factors that affect performance, both positively and negatively. The interview gives each employee an opportunity to jointly identify barriers and solve problems.
- *Career development* aims to develop employees, their skills and their knowledge. This benefits both parties, since the individual can express career aspirations and managers can have accurate records of individual's development and progression.

### **Appraisal forms**

Appraising performance can be based on three types of performance criteria:

- *Traits*, which are personal characteristics such as loyalty, dependability or sensitivity.
- *Behaviours*, which are actions, displayed in the work environment, such as persuasion, good listening skills or strong leadership skills.
- *Outcomes*, such as the numbers of products sold or defects reported.

Most important, to your company, is the design of the appraisal form; the evaluation of performance should be linked to the business strategy, objectives and individual development. Based on good practice there should be two parts to the appraisal form and therefore to the interview process as well. In order to allow the benefits to the organisation and to the individual to be addressed, there should be one for assessment, evaluation and reward and one for development purposes.

### **Aims and benefits of the appraisal process**

The company should establish underpinning aims to the appraisal process and the interview and these are often to:

- Evaluate individual performance against company objectives
- Discuss feedback on performance and identify individual potential
- Highlight individual, and therefore company, competencies
- Evaluate individual adherence to the company culture
- Reward individual behaviour
- Identify training and development needs and highlight career aspirations
- Improve individual commitment to the company and increase motivation
- Increase productivity
- Set new objectives
- Provide information to aid in decision - making
- Set new individual objectives against the company objectives

The benefits of completing an appraisal process for both the company and the individual are shown in the following table.

<b>Benefits of Appraisal for Organisation and Employee</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Employee</b>
Company objectives are standardised	Clarifies the individual's present performance
Expected behaviour is standardised	Gives clear framework for developing behaviour
Evaluates human resources	Individuals know what they are working towards
Increases productivity	Gives employee an opportunity to have some input about objectives
Increases motivation	Feedback on performance
Utilises the potential of the workforce	Recognition of achievement

Evaluates success of the business strategy	Identifies barriers to performance
Sets action plans for development	Identifies strengths and weaknesses
Improves company performance	Improves job performance

## Criticisms of Appraisal

The appraisal process in companies is often undermined as managers and employees face a number of related problems. Companies should consider these carefully before implementing an appraisal system and carrying out appraisal interviews. The following are some of the main criticisms of the process:

- Inherent individuality
- Managers find it difficult to identify (let alone measure) the distinct contribution from each individual
- External factors that affect individuals may be beyond their control
- Line managers may lack employees or technical skills
- Managers may concentrate on recent performances
- Managers feel uncomfortable at “making judgments”
- Lack of time and resources to undertake regular reviews
- There may be conflict between assessment of performance and pay
- Labels such as average can be discouraging and affect motivation
- Managers may not be able to manage a conflict of views and/or address problem areas of work performance

## Work to do before the appraisal interview

Before conducting the appraisal interview, companies should decide on a consistent approach to gaining feedback on individual performance. Gaining feedback from a mix of the categories noted below is preferable to “one-on-one” feedback. Choosing an appraiser, the person to conduct the review, is crucial to the appraisal process and there are several options, the appropriateness of which will depend on the company structure and operations:

- The employee's immediate supervisor (this is also known as parent appraisal)
- His or her supervisors’ supervisor (grandparent appraisal)
- Colleagues at the same grade/level (peer appraisal)
- Internal customers to the individual's services (aunt / uncle appraisal)
- External customers for the individual's services (client appraisal)
- The appraisee's subordinates (upward appraisal)
- The individual him or herself (self-appraisal)

An appraisal interview is only as good as the appraiser (the manager) conducting the appraisal interview and their ability to communicate, question and support the individual. Guidelines for developing the appraiser are shown in Form 1: The Manager as an Appraiser.

## Preparing the interview

In preparing for the interview, there are some simple steps to help you to prepare for an appraisal interview:

- Organise and plan the interview
- Arrange a mutually convenient time
- Allow sufficient time
- Arrange a venue where there will be no interruptions
- Issue appraisee with relevant documentation
- Complete appropriate preparation form
- Set an agenda
- Decide what you want to talk about

Preparation from both appraiser and individual is necessary, because without effective preparation, the interview can wander without achieving the aims. For the employee, the interview is not a time for surprises, s/he should already know about any concerns and from his/her preparation for the interview, s/he should have developed a picture about his/her performance.

Allow plenty of time for the interview; the time, date and location should be mutually convenient and given that interviews can last from at least an hour and up to two or more, plenty of time should be allocated for the process. Do not allow interruptions, regardless of how familiar the appraiser and the employee are with each other, for this could be the only time an employee has the undivided attention of the manager.

It is rather important to create a non-threatening atmosphere, so avoid public places and choose a location that allows free and open dialogue. Managers should move out from behind desks and ensure both the individual and the manager are positioned at the same height level, preferably alongside each other.

Before you have the meeting, you should familiarise yourself with the individuals' previous appraisal performance or if this is the first appraisal, with the appraisal form and consider any areas you may need to explore further.

To assist with this, you should gather information on the following and consider:

- Last years objectives, where appropriate, or any other identified objectives

## How to open up in an interview

Managers often have problems getting individuals to open up. Consider the following when preparing for the appraisal interview:

- Allow time for them to talk
- Place the emphasis on appraisal not on discouragement
- Probe and listen
- Support them to face up to problems but do not present surprises - encourage self appraisal
- Criticism must be of performance and NOT the person
- Use positive language and stress success

## Giving and Receiving

- Be positive
- Be specific
- Use descriptive terms rather than evaluative terms
- Concentrate on behaviours that the individual can alter
- Prioritise any changes
- Be constructive
- Invite and offer alternative courses of action
- Facilitate the change

- Details of actual performance
- Any supporting facts and evidence
- Information regarding factors affecting performance, internal and external
- Possible objectives for the next year
- Support and development needs

### Increasing the Value of Feedback

- Listen carefully, don't explain or justify your actions when listening to the criticism
- Do not be defensive, reject or argue with the feedback
- Make a mental note of questions and clarify misunderstandings later
- Be clear on what is been said, avoid jumping to conclusions
- Use follow up questions, "Could you explain that further?"
- React honestly, people prefer to have an honest answer
- Express appreciation
- Check it out
- Evaluate the outcome of any agreed action

## Structuring an effective appraisal interview

Structuring an effective appraisal interview requires careful thought and should be based around the following:

### 1. Explaining the goals of the meeting

Explain anything that will help the individual know what to expect to relieve his/her anxiety, such as outlining how much time has been allocated and emphasising honesty and two-way communication for the discussion of his/her performance.

### 2. Encouraging dialogue with the individual

If possible, have the individual present his/her perception of his/her performance first and ask numerous open questions to ensure all the information is gathered. See Form 2: Questioning Techniques.

### 3. Discussing significant achievements with evidence

Recognition and positive reinforcement are very powerful tools as motivators and by expressing their feelings about significant performances, managers can create a constructive atmosphere in the interview.

### 4. Reviewing prior objectives

This should be grounded in dialogue and will require skills in communication, questioning and giving feedback. See Form 3: Preparing for an Appraisal Interview.

### 5. Discussing unsatisfactory performance with evidence

In addressing problems that need to be corrected, concentrate on the problem and not the personality and use directive questioning, a technique that challenges the individual to

explore new ideas, contribute solutions or defend statements. Most important, solve the problems together.

**6. Reviewing future goals and objectives and link to company strategy**

Be realistic and agree on objectives that can and will be done by the individual; consider their role in achieving the organisational objectives and strategy. See Checklist 1 for SMART objective setting.

**7. Planning any development activities and arranging support if necessary**

These areas should result from the process and should be agreed mutually. They should not be forced upon the employee. The appraiser must be responsible for following these up and ensuring that arrangements are in place to support the individual.

**8. Any areas of clarification or questions and reviewing the interview**

Allow time for both parties to clarify any of the issues rose and review together how the interview has gone.

**9. Agreeing an interim review date for progress in the next period**

Agree on a mutual date for an interim review of the individual's progress and any problems they may be encountering and note their successes. A review of objectives may need to happen at this stage depending on the progress of the individual and the nature of the company.

**10. Ending on an upbeat note**

Summarise the accomplishments of the individual and of the discussion and be positive about the future but always confirm that both parties have the same perceptions of what has been reviewed and agreed upon in this appraisal interview.

**The Best Approach to Feedback**

The best approach to feedback is problem solving and honest feedback on performance, including weaknesses and areas for development. But for managers this may lead to **CONFLICT**.

Providing feedback can be difficult, as most people hate being criticised, and often the ability to avoid conflict and to provide constructive feedback can be affected by a manager's preconceptions, the manager's values and the manager's needs. Ideally, the individual should leave the interview content that any criticisms made of their performance were constructive and justified, and that any course of action agreed upon is the right course and one to which they feel committed.

Questioning Techniques		
Type of Question	Examples of Questions	When to Use
<b>OPEN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell me about how the last six</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To get the</li> </ul>

<p>Requires more than a yes or no answer, asks about attitudes and opinions</p>	<p>months have been?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you identify your staffs' training needs?</li> <li>• What do you consider to be a good balance?</li> <li>• What was your involvement in the project?</li> <li>• Why do you think the project was successful?</li> <li>• When do you discipline staff?</li> </ul>	<p>interviewee thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish rapport</li> <li>• To gain much information</li> <li>• To identify their emphasis</li> </ul>
<p><b>CLOSED</b> Gets yes or no answers or factual information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you got a degree?</li> <li>• Was it your idea to start the project?</li> <li>• Would you consider yourself good as a manager?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you want to clarify a point</li> <li>• When you want to stop flow</li> <li>• When you want to know a fact</li> </ul>

Questioning Techniques		
Type of Question	Examples of Questions	When to Use
<b>REFLECTING/ SUMMARISING</b> Questions which summarise what the candidate has said	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You mentioned earlier ... have I got that right?</li> <li>So as a result of doing .... you were promoted?</li> <li>If I were to put it another way ..... would that be the case?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It shows you are listening to them</li> <li>To check understanding</li> </ul>
<b>LINKING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having heard about .... perhaps you could tell me how you dealt with the financial aspects of the proposal?</li> <li>You stated earlier that you had always wanted to work abroad, why then did you leave the job in Spain?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps the interview flow</li> <li>Shows you are listening</li> <li>To investigate evidence or statements</li> </ul>
<b>FOLLOW UP/ PROBING</b> Questions which build on what the candidates has already said	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was your role in the project?</li> <li>What was your particular responsibility?</li> <li>What's particularly important to you about the end result?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To follow up points made by the candidate, and clarify any misconceptions of the interviewer</li> <li>To delve deeper into a topic</li> <li>To establish responsibility/ Commitment</li> </ul>
<b>HYPOTHETICAL</b> Questions that are related to imaginary scenarios and usually linked to the choice a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What would you do if an employee disobeyed an order?</li> <li>If you had an important meeting, how would you prepare yourself</li> </ul>	BE CAREFUL - the candidate may be concerned with giving you the "right" answer, and might not answer honestly

person would make		
<b>MULTIPLE</b> Numerous questions in one statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When you were appointed to the project, what did you think was particularly important, or was it that you had no preconceived ideas, or perhaps you were already familiar with the issues?</li> </ul>	NEVER- the candidate may be confused on which question to answer and you might not receive the answer you were actually looking for
<b>LEADING</b> Questions which anticipate the correct answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a busy department – could you cope with that?</li> <li>Did you enjoy working for those cowboys?</li> </ul>	NEVER ask this type of question

### Preparing for an Appraisal Interview

This section outlines information to help you complete a preparation form prior to the appraisal interview and provides the form for both the appraiser (manager) and the appraisee (employee)

Both the appraiser and the appraisee, when preparing for an appraisal interview, should use this form. An example of a completed form is also included in this product package. (See Form 3: Preparing for an Appraisal Interview and Form 4: The Appraisal Interview).

### Guiding information for completing the preparation form:

- Before preparing the form, both the manager and the employee should gather, independent from each other, relevant information such as:
  - Job description
  - Any previous appraisal documents
  - Information, evidence and/or feedback from others, concerning performance of the individual in the review period
  - Relevant data concerning health and attendance records
  - Last year's objectives, where appropriate, or any other identified objectives
  - Information regarding factors affecting performance, internal and external
  - Previous support and development needs
- Both the manager and the employee should be prepared to discuss evidence in support of their comments on his/her performance.
- There is a tendency for appraisal interviews to concentrate on the most recent performances of the individual, whether they are very good, poor or indifferent. It is important that both parties review the whole period of performance to gain a balanced view, rather than analysing only recent activity.

- Both manager and employee should spend time contemplating about the employee's performance during the period under review and the progress that was made towards previous objectives. Together they should also look ahead to the next period when new objectives will be required.
- Both the manager and the individual should make brief notes against the suggested areas outlined on the form and bring the form and any evidence to support performance to the appraisal interview.
- The manager should set an agenda for the appraisal interview, allowing sufficient time for the discussion and should pass this to the individual in advance to allow him or her to add any additional items s/he would like to discuss.
- Remember the appraisal interview is not about surprising the individual. Therefore, any recognition of high performance or discontent with poor performance should be addressed at the time and not kept until the appraisal interview.
- An uncompleted copy of the form should be taken by the manager to the appraisal interview in order to record the agreed comments on the individual's performance during the interview.

#### An example of a completed preparation appraisal form

The form refers to an individual who works for a clothes retailer in a high street branch

<b>Preparing for Appraisal Interview</b>	<b>Date: 3/3/00</b>
Appraiser/Manager's Name: Sharon Mavin	Appraisee/Employee's Name: Mary Moffat
<i>Questions/considerations:</i>	<i>Brief Notes:</i>
What aspects of the job went well during the period and what evidence supports this?	Sales High number of store cards opened High number of recorded add - on sales
What aspects of the individual's performance went particularly well during the period and what evidence supports this?	Customer service & relationship development Evidenced by above and also from the repeat customers & two letters from very satisfied customers
What problems were encountered during the period and how were these problems dealt with?	Difficult relationship with another member of the team leading to conflict on two separate occasions Discussed these issues with manager, said she was going to talk to the person herself & resolve the problem
Which parts of the job provided the most satisfaction and which parts of	Changing Rooms on women's garments, evidenced by store cards & add - on sales

the job were least enjoyable and why?	Does not like deliveries & merchandising, would rather be dealing with customers - [this is an area which needs discussing as other members of team resent this*]
With regards to the manager's objectives, how has the individual contributed towards them?	Her high sales achievement has supported the branch & the area financial targets - [make sure this is brought up & evidenced in the interview*]
How has the individual performed with regards to the mutually agreed objectives in the period?	aIncreased sales, which was an objective rStill has not fully engaged with all the tasks required of the job, e.g. deliveries & merchandising aHas developed the skills to sell store cards effectively aHas developed supervisory skills through inducting new employees
Were there any barriers to achieving the previous objectives set and how were these managed?	No barriers identified - [bring this up in discussion]
Reflecting on the last period and the previous objectives, what realistic objectives are to be proposed in the next period for the individual?	Continue to increase sales Increase repeating customer base Fully engage with all the tasks required of the job, e.g. deliveries & merchandising and not just the ones she enjoys [this is now an important area of development] Train others to sell store cards effectively Continue to develop supervisory skills - [perhaps through my delegating some management tasks?]

### An example of a completed preparation appraisal form

The form refers to an individual who works for a clothes retailer in a high street branch	
<b>Preparing for Appraisal Interview</b>	<b>Date: 3/3/00</b>
Appraiser/Manager's Name: Sharon Mavin	Appraisee/Employee's Name: Mary Moffat
<i>Questions/considerations:</i>	<i>Brief Notes:</i>
What help, assistance, training and development are required?	To shadow me through some management tasks To partner experienced members of team when

	completing tasks she least enjoys
Are there any issues relating to personal aspirations in the previous period and for the future?	Check with Mary to see what she sees herself doing in the next period and longer term
Consider relevant personal, career and/or professional issues.	Discuss supervisory/junior management & any Head Office development courses

### Guiding information for structuring the appraisal interview and completing the form

There are guidelines for structuring an appraisal interview, are shown in Form 4: The Appraisal Interview. However, the following information is offered as a framework for using the appraisal preparation form to support the interview process.

The manager should outline the agenda and begin by asking the employee to work through the sections of the preparation form and to discuss their performance. In general, the manager should expect to spend 80% of the meeting listening rather than talking. Questioning becomes crucial to the process, thus the manager should use open questions to probe further if the individual is either over- or under- assessing themselves against the areas.

It is very important is that the individual feels that they have had the opportunity to have their perceptions and opinions heard by the manager. Even if these are different than the manager's, the individual is more likely to accept constructive feedback if they have had an opportunity to discuss their point of view.

The manager should guide the employee through the structure of the form, asking for further evidence or an explanation about the performance where necessary and offering their own where appropriate, either to reinforce performance assessment or to offer an alternative view.

What is important is that the individual and the manager are able to *mutually* agree on an assessment of performance, which is accepted by both parties. If this is not the case, then either an external third party could be called upon for their review of the performance or the manager should negotiate a compromise agreement or objective.

At this stage a manager could be confronted with a *difficult situation* as difficulties arise for a number of reasons including the following provided by Walter (1995):

- Unwillingness to fully engage in the appraisal process
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Insufficient preparation
- Poor or inappropriate performance

When confronting a difficult situation it is necessary to prepare carefully if you can:

- Define the behaviour that is unacceptable

- Be specific and record precise details of the behaviour, frequency and who is affected by it
- Understand the possible causes
- Carefully observe how the person gets on with others and the specific result of the behaviour
- Prepare yourself and make sure you are able to articulate and understand your own feelings
- Anticipate any difficulties that may arise during the discussions
- Think through in advance how you will handle all eventualities
- Prepare to speak with the individual concerned
- Do not offer opinions or judgments
- Ask questions to check understanding
- Be flexible and open to alternatives
- Be calm, firm, decisive, assertive and seek an action plan that meets the needs of all concerned
- Obtain specific agreement on actions, agree on deadlines and ensure you have confirmation that the other person will do what has been agreed

The manager should summarise the content of the meeting by reflecting back on what the employee has said and what the parties have agreed. The meeting should end with a full summary of the content of the meeting, points of agreement, mutually agreed performance objectives and follow-through action. See also Form 5: Follow up Action Plan.

### Case: A difficult situation in an appraisal interview

An extract from the appraisal preparation form showed that Mary had experienced difficulties with another member of the team:

**What problems were encountered during the period and how were these problems dealt with?**

*- Difficult relationship with another member of the team leading to conflict on two separate occasions. Discussed these issues with me, said she was going to talk to the person herself & resolve the problem*

In the appraisal interview, the manager raised the issue as Mary avoided it. The manager asked if Mary had talked to the person directly as she had agreed and if she had found a way of resolving the issue.

Mary said she had not and that by avoiding the person, there had not been a repetition.

The manager acknowledged to Mary that the problem was still there and would be affecting the team performance. Mary refused to discuss it, she refocused the appraisal on other issues that were more positive and when the manager changed the subject back to the problem, her behaviour became defensive and she grew more and more aggressive towards the manager, which was most unusual for Mary.

By remaining calm and firm, the manager regained control of the appraisal interview and by questioning Mary, the manager found out that she was intimidated by the other person and was uncomfortable about managing the situation herself. Mary and the manager agreed that the manager would meet with both Mary and the other person to facilitate the discussion and seek a resolution to the problem. They agreed when and where the meeting would be.

It is important that the individual and the manager can agree on an assessment of performance and objectives for future performance, which can be written up on the appraisal form and used as a tool for performance management throughout the next period.

A framework for objective setting is **SMART**:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**chievable
- R**ealistic or recorded
- T**imed
- G**ain agreement

Turn accusations into facts and focus on these. Invite solutions/suggestions and allow the employee to be involved in the planning and setting of objectives. Use defined and SMART objectives, which are linked to the organisational needs and business plans.

### Case: How **NOT** to write an objective

Mary's future objective: **to improve her communication skills**

- What does the manager mean by 'communication skills?' This needs to be more specific or Mary will never be able to 'achieve' this objective.
- How will Mary or her manager know she has met her objectives? Objectives need to be measurable.
- There is no time frame set for the objective and therefore no designated time set for the next appraisal interview.

Examples of How **TO** write objectives are taken from Mary's appraisal preparation form and are areas for immediate development for Mary:

*Mary's future objective:* to fully involve herself in at least one stock delivery per week, ensuring that she contributes to the unloading of stock from the lorry, removes the packaging and hangs and sizes the garments appropriately. This should be done within the two-hour benchmark for deliveries. Mary should initially work with Jane and Barbara to gain experience with good practices and they will be asked to give her feedback on her performance within a month. Mary's performance will be reviewed at the interim appraisal meeting.

*Mary's future objective:* to fully involve herself in the merchandising of the branch, this will include re-merchandising poor sellers and loss leader garments, merchandising deliveries of new stock and the new windows. Mary should shadow Andrew, who is responsible for display and merchandising, once per week for a month to learn the basic skills. After a month, Mary should be responsible for merchandising a delivery of new stock and be responsible for merchandising the add-on products that she sells very well. Within three months, Mary will have merchandised the window displays and re-merchandised the poor sellers and loss leaders. Those staff members normally responsible for these tasks will give Mary feedback on her performance immediately after her involvement and will be asked to give written feedback at the interim appraisal meeting.

- What is of vital importance is that a date of an interim review meeting is arranged and that follow-up action from both parties is agreed upon and appropriate deadlines set.

# Form 1: The Manager as an Appraiser

## The Manager

As described in the User Guide, the appraisal interview is only as good as the appraiser (the manager) conducting the interview. Here is a self-analysis tool to assess managers' potential as an appraisal reviewer. *10 means very much where as 1 means very little.*

Effective Appraisals Need Effective Appraisers										
1. I like being responsible for productivity	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. I like people and enjoy talking with them	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I don't mind giving criticism of a constructive nature	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I give praise freely when it is earned	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am not intimidated by staff who tell me what they really think	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. I seek new ideas and use them whenever possible	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. I respect the knowledge and skills of the people who work for me	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. I follow up to ensure commitments, goals and standards are being met	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. I am not worried by employees who know more about their work than I do	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	TOTAL .....									

A score between 90 and 100 indicates you have excellent characteristics to conduct effective reviews. A score between 70 and 89 indicates you have significant strengths, but could also improve in some aspects. Scores between 50 and 69 reflect a significant number of problem areas. Scores below 50 call for a serious effort to improve. Make a specific effort to grow in any area where you scored 6 or less, regardless of your total score.

# Form 2: Questioning Techniques

## Effective Appraisals Need Effective Questioning Techniques

Formulate an ineffective and effective question to obtain the following information about the individual about to be appraised:

1. Whether the individual has any weak points.

2. Why the individual has made a serious error.

3. Whether the individual will do the same mistake again.

4. Why the individual can be argumentative and angry at times.

5. Whether the individual can cope with the responsibility of promotion.

6. Whether the individual follows instructions.

7. Whether the individual needs any training.

## Form 3: Preparing for an Appraisal Interview

Preparing for an appraisal interview	
Appraiser/Manager's Name:	Appraisee/Employee's Name:
<i>Questions/considerations:</i>	<i>Brief Notes:</i>
What aspects of the job went well during the period and what evidence supports this?	
What aspects of the individual's performance went particularly well during the period and what evidence supports this?	
What problems were encountered during the period and how were these problems dealt with?	
Which parts of the job provided the most satisfaction and which parts of the job were least enjoyable and why?	
With regards to the manager's objectives, how has the individual contributed towards them?	
How has the individual performed with regards to the mutually agreed objectives in the period?	
Were there any barriers to achieving the previous objectives set and how were these managed?	
Reflecting on the last period and the previous objectives, what realistic objectives are to be proposed in the next period for the individual?	
What help, assistance, training and development are required?	
Are there any issues relating to personal aspirations in the previous period and for the future?	
Consider relevant personal, career and/or professional issues.	

# Form 4: the Appraisal Interview

The appraisal interview	
<b>Appraiser/Manager's Name:</b>	<b>Appraisee/Employee's Name:</b>
<i>Questions/considerations:</i>	<i>Brief Notes:</i>
What aspects of the job went well during the period and what evidence supports this?	
What aspects of the individual's performance went particularly well during the period and what evidence supports this?	
What problems were encountered during the period and how were these problems dealt with?	
Which parts of the job provided the most satisfaction and which parts of the job were least enjoyable and why?	
With regards to the manager's objectives, how has the individual contributed towards them?	
How has the individual performed with regards to the mutually agreed objectives in the period?	
Were there any barriers to achieving the previous objectives set and how were these managed?	
Reflecting on the last period and the previous objectives, what realistic objectives are to be proposed in the next period for the individual?	
What help, assistance, training and development are required?	
Are there any issues relating to personal aspirations in the previous period and for the future?	
Consider relevant personal, career and/or professional issues.	
<b>Appraiser's signature:</b>  _____	<b>Appraisee's signature:</b>  _____
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

# Form 5: Follow-up Action Plan

Follow-up Action Plan	
<b>Appraiser:</b> Follow-up action	<b>Appraisee:</b> Follow-up action
By when?	By when?
Action plan for individual:	
Interim Performance Review Date:	Interim Performance Review Date:
Appraiser Additional Notes:	Appraisee Additional Notes:
Appraisal Process Complete Date: <b>Appraiser</b> Signature:	Appraisal Process Complete Date: <b>Appraisee</b> Signature:

# Checklist - Key Points for an Effective Appraisal Interview

Key Points for an Effective Appraisal Interview	
Areas of concern	Your comments
<b>1.PREPARE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set the room appropriately</li> <li>• Pens and paper</li> <li>• Ensure there are no distractions</li> <li>• Allow adequate time</li> <li>• Complete the pre-meeting forms</li> <li>• Gather any necessary information</li> </ul>	
<b>2.PURPOSE AND RAPPORT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree on the purpose with the employee</li> <li>• Explain and agree structure and format for the meeting</li> <li>• Check that the pre-work has been completed</li> </ul>	
<b>3.ASK THEIR VIEWS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask employee to describe their performance over the last year</li> <li>• Document what went well, what did not go so well</li> <li>• What did they find difficult, how could they develop those skills</li> <li>• What type of training would be appropriate</li> <li>• What should their objectives be for next year</li> </ul>	
<b>4.OFFER YOUR VIEWS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show where you agree and disagree with their views</li> <li>• Offer your own views and explain why</li> <li>• Concentrate on behaviour not personality</li> </ul>	
<b>5.EXPLORE DISAGREEMENTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the different views</li> <li>• Concentrate on facts</li> <li>• Invite solutions</li> <li>• Agree on how to resolve differences</li> </ul>	
<b>6.RESOLVE DIFFERENCES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree on SMART solutions</li> <li>• Identify any resources/support the employee may need</li> <li>• Agree upon when these will be considered next; do not wait until the next appraisal</li> </ul>	
<b>7.CLOSE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise main points</li> <li>• Refer to follow up</li> </ul>	
<b>8.ENSURE DOCUMENTATION IS COMPLETED AND RETURNED</b>	