

Prep for Your Performance Appraisal

by Renee Berg, Monster Contributing Writer

Here it comes -- your annual performance review. Don't let anxiety set in. The right attitude and preparation can make the process go smoothly.

"Most people dread the performance appraisal," says Julie Fuimano, MBA, BSN, a personal and career coach with Nurturing Your Success, a career coaching firm. "It shouldn't be like that. Before you go in, say a few words to yourself about remaining open and hearing what your boss has to say."

To bolster your chances for a good review and lay the foundation for a potential raise or advancement, solid preparation is critical. Here are some tips.

Prepare Year-Round

Keep your eyes open all year for activities you can list as accomplishments on your review. Taking courses, keeping current with emerging technology and reading healthcare journals are all ways to impress your boss come review time. In addition, if opportunities come up during the year to broaden your knowledge or skills, don't wait for your supervisor's invitation to take advantage of them.

"You have to move purposefully through your career," says Fuimano, who specializes in advising healthcare professionals. "You need to be out there looking for what courses interest you, showing a sense of lifelong learning, especially in healthcare, because there's constant change."

Speak Up About Your Accomplishments

Before the appraisal meeting, compile that list of accomplishments to discuss with your supervisor, Fuimano recommends. Most performance reviews have a self-appraisal section where you should detail your yearlong successes. Committees you've served on, classes you've taken or seminars you've attended are all achievements that belong in this section. Also be sure to highlight specific areas within your specialty. Nurses, for instance, should detail their expertise with clinical-care matters such as changing dressings, inserting IVs or teaching patients how to care for themselves.

Fuimano says healthcare workers often hesitate to outline their achievements, but reminding your boss that you spearheaded a team project or helped institute a policy change is just fact. "People have a really hard time talking about themselves in a positive way," Fuimano says. "I tell people to put that aside. This is a business exchange. These are things you've done, and you want to bring them to the table."

Brush Up on Negotiating Strategies

If you're seeking a raise or promotion, preparation is again key, says career coach Jane Kalagher, MA, BSN, of Coaching Resources. If you plan to ask for a raise, Kalagher recommends reading up on negotiating strategies. If your goal is a promotion, ask your supervisor about your workplace's management track and how you can gain the knowledge and experience required to move up. In addition, Fuimano recommends asking your supervisor how he advanced in the company and about challenges he overcame. Also, seek input on your skills that are appropriate for management.

Take the Positive and Negative

Even with all your preparation, your performance review is unlikely to be entirely positive. Kalagher says you should be ready with a plan to address any weaknesses your supervisor might bring up. "It's obvious that whomever is giving the review will look for strengths and weaknesses," Kalagher says. "The employee should be prepared for that and should say how they're going to improve." Remaining businesslike throughout the review is also important. Going into the performance appraisal prepared to hear both positive and negative feedback is best.

Fuimano says healthcare workers need to remember that their performance appraisals are an opportunity to improve their careers. Too often, they lose sight of their own goals, she says. "This is the caregiver's mantra," Fuimano explains. "We learn to put everyone before ourselves, and that's not a good thing."