

Performance Reviews for Millennials

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Performance reviews are often one of the most important yet misunderstood development tools used in organizations today. Recently I've been asked some questions about the performance review process for the millennial generation.

Should the performance review process be different for a millennial?

I believe the answer is both yes and no.

No, the general characteristics or the process should not be different. The foundation for the tools or process should remain as a standard for any employee review.

Yes, the type of interaction and perhaps the style or flow of the conversation might be more productive if it is managed a little differently.

Performance Reviews

Performance reviews should be recognized as one of the most powerful and useful tools for continuing to develop employees and the organizational culture. Unfortunately it is often misunderstood, taken for granted, and inappropriately used.

Here are several areas that show up near the top of the misunderstood and misused list:

- an opportunity to scold or negatively blast employees
- highlight one specific error or wrong doing
- used to justify other issues, such as no pay raise



The performance review process should consider all efforts and should in some way be appropriately connected to a job description. It should be used as an opportunity to focus on future performance, help to establish future development goals, and to reinforce the performance that is most desirable.

If you have an employee that is struggling to achieve or maintain successful levels of contribution and organizational performance then you probably should consider a *performance improvement plan* (PIP) instead of using an annual or semi-annual performance review process. Certainly, there can be some overlap with the uses of these tools, but the general approaches should be different.

Millennial Considerations

As I've already mentioned the foundation of the process should not be different for a millennial employee but taking into consideration a few common characteristics might be helpful. Generational differences are not so much about age as they are about values and beliefs and many millennials struggle with a traditional or boomer boss in a number of areas.

Here are a few common areas of struggle that the millennial employee may feel.

1. **Unheard or not listened to.** Perhaps this happens when millennials share an idea but then fail to see any implementation or what they perceive as consideration for their idea.
2. **Not well respected.** There is a difference between not respected and disrespected. Often the millennial employee interacting with a boomer boss feels that the boss lacks appropriate respect for the millennial.
3. **Different about solving problems.** Traditionals and boomers typically view problem solving as requiring effort and a plan. While millennials almost always seek to improve the situation through a technology solution.

Frequency

Different values and beliefs brought about in-part because of societal changes could mean that many millennials are seeking more frequent feedback on performance.

A formal review process is typically annual or semi-annual and any employee on a specific PIP would receive feedback more frequently. Informally, more frequent feedback exchanges are often welcomed by millennial or gen Z (Gen 9/11, iGen) employees.



The stereotype is that traditionals and baby boomers are willing to view a day on the job as, no news is good news, whereas the youngest representation in our workforce today needs feedback for encouragement, motivation, and to help keep anxiety levels low.

Millennial Reviews

Should performance reviews be different for millennials?

Every performance review approach, style, and delivery should have some variances.

Some common mistakes made by supervisors are that they themselves don't take the feedback process serious enough.

Supervisors often feel unprepared or challenged by any conflict that might arise. They then deliver based on how they themselves would feel most comfortable and achieve the most benefit. When in fact, the best performance review *should be delivered with considerations for how **the recipient** would benefit the most.*

– DEG

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