

Phoning In Your Performance Reviews? Here's How To Add Real Meaning



You've heard of actors "phoning in" a performance—just going through the motions without making much of an effort. The result is usually pretty dismal: a performance that lacks meaning or merit.

Well, performance reviews are no different. In the business world, when managers and employees simply go through the motions of a review, it usually produces pretty dismal results.

If your organization's reviews have become a fairly meaningless exercise, you might want to take a gander at an article that [Forbes](#) published last year titled, "[How To Make Performance Reviews](#)

[Relevant.](#)" Written by certified career coach, business consultant and former Fortune 500 executive, [Lisa Quast](#), the article shares seven tips to make performance reviews more meaningful to you and your employees.

One of Quast's tips practically leaps off the screen as an essential piece of sound advice: Don't close the review until you're both on the same page.

Quast notes that she treats performance reviews as though they're sales calls, working to gain agreement during each step of the discussion. She writes: "My goal during a performance review is to make sure I have a complete understanding about the employees' performance, their achievements and failures/pitfalls, their next year's goals and objectives, and their development plan. By focusing on gaining agreement during each aspect of the review, it helps me ensure that they hear my point of view, that I hear their point of view, and that we reach a mutual understanding on our shared view of their working world and future."

Two concepts are crucial to Quast's approach: 1) Her reviews are two-way discussions in which both parties speak and listen carefully. 2) Her reviews require both parties to come to the table prepared—i.e., ready to speak intelligently about performance successes, failures, stumbling blocks, goals and objectives for the future, etc.

By using the approach Quast advocates, your managers and employees are far less likely to "phone in" their reviews. In fact, her approach practically requires your employees to conduct meaningful [self reviews](#), which can add immense value to your review process.

Another great piece of advice for ramping up the meaning and value of your reviews comes from [Sharlyn Lauby](#), president of ITM Group and author of [HR Bartender](#), in the article, "[Bad Vibes? Bring Out the Best in Your Negative Co-Workers.](#)"

Asked to share tips on how managers can work with staffers who have a tendency to be negative, Lauby's response also applies perfectly to negative performance appraisals. Her advice: don't make it personal. Focus instead on their specific negative behaviors—not their negative personalities. "One of the quickest ways to get someone angry with you is to tell them they have a negative attitude," Lauby says. "Identify the behaviors that are causing challenges and then coach the employee."

Clearly, these are just a few strategies to ensure that your managers and employees don't phone in their [performance reviews](#). And if the goal of your reviews is to drive targeted, results-oriented performance (which it should be), then don't hang up on them before you give them a try.

