



Annual Review Checklist

Set up a successful annual performance review process.



ANNUAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Introduction

Conducting annual employee performance reviews across an entire company can be challenging. It's a long process involving different people and multiple steps.

But it's a necessary process, nonetheless. The company should make time each year to assess each person's performance and share feedback that helps everyone improve at their jobs. It's a win-win for the employer and employee.

Before your organization starts performance reviews, the human resources team should ensure everything is ready. We compiled this helpful checklist your HR team can use to set up a successful process.



Decide on the best time of year to conduct reviews

Annual reviews should be part of your company's yearly roadmap. Ensure your organization sets aside a couple of weeks for managers to focus on assessing each person's performance on their team. Consider the following factors when deciding on the optimal time of year:

Aim for a non-busy period

Peak business months aren't a good time to conduct performance reviews. Both managers and their direct reports will be focused on primary company activities, and the review process will seem like a distraction. Try to find a quiet time of year when everyone can give their full attention.

Avoid common vacation times

Remember that many employees tend to go on vacation when business is slow. It would be best to aim for slow business periods but avoid scheduling reviews around winter or summer holidays.

Ensure HR can focus on the review process

Since HR leads the employee review process in most organizations, they mustn't be busy with other projects or deadlines. HR activities often differ from regular business operations, so select a time of year that works for their team.



Prepare managers

While HR leads review efforts, it's up to individual managers to effectively assess the performance of their team members. Before 1-on-1 meetings start, train management on the points listed below:

Calculate role-specific metrics

Request managers quantify an employee's success by calculating any metrics associated with their performance. This is only possible for some positions, so stress that metrics are only relevant when applied directly to role objectives.

Train managers to conduct effective reviews

Regardless of an employee's performance, there are right and wrong ways for managers to conduct reviews. Train them on the points below before they meet with their team members:

- Give specific feedback
- Be honest, constructive, and fair
- Give recognition in addition to feedback
- Allow the employee to respond



Revisit individual employee job objectives and goals

Assessments should focus on how well the employee has achieved their role-specific responsibilities and goals. Have managers review the objectives set for them during the previous review cycle or when they were hired.

Establish evaluation criteria for all employees

Individual job responsibilities should take center stage in reviews, but some criteria apply to every employee. Let managers know to also cover these other areas in reviews:

- Time management
- Quality of work
- Initiative and personal growth
- Teamwork
- Adherence to company values

Implement performance review software

Reviewing every employee in your organization is complicated, but it can be properly managed with a performance review solution. The right software will provide your company with the following advantages:

Customize reviews for different departments and roles

As mentioned in the previous section, every employee deserves a review focusing on their job. Performance review software allows HR to create unique review criteria for departments and individual employees.

Feedback remains anonymous

Depending on your organization's review process, you could end up with sensitive information that isn't for everyone's eyes. Collecting feedback digitally ensures it's only visible to users with the proper access level.

The review process stays on schedule

Keeping track of who has and still needs to complete their review responsibilities can be a challenge. Managing the process using software allows HR to see who has pending action items so everything runs smoothly.



Implement performance review software (cont.)

Makes previous results accessible for future reviews

An employee's review should pick up where the last one left off, but a lot can be forgotten over a year. Employee management software makes previous review results accessible so they can be revisited anytime.

Simplifies different types of performance reviews

There are many ways to conduct thorough performance reviews. Software is necessary if your organization uses self-appraisals, 360-degree feedback, or long-term goal setting.

Continuously monitor performance and provide feedback

Annual reviews are a staple in many companies, but employees should receive consistent feedback throughout the year. The right software makes it easy to monitor employee performance so team members are always improving continuously.



Provide evaluation worksheets

Annual reviews should be part of your company's yearly roadmap. Ensure your organization sets aside a couple of weeks for managers to focus on assessing each person's performance on their team. Consider the following factors when deciding on the optimal time of year:

Convert evaluation criteria into easy-to-complete worksheets

Start by building your worksheets around the points HR wants each employee evaluated on. Then have managers add sections related to specific job responsibilities.

Include a scale for structured reviews

Reviews are most beneficial when they include a grading system. The employee understands where they stand in each area and where they have improved or regressed since their last review. We recommend using a 1-to-5 scale or terms like not effective, minimally effective, effective, highly effective, and exceptional.

Include a notes section for additional context

In addition to a grading system, include sections where managers explain their rating. This helps the employee learn exactly what they need to do to improve going forward.

Save worksheets to reference in future reviews

Worksheets should be securely stored for future review cycles. Completing assessments digitally using performance management software ensures every employee's evaluation is always easily accessible.



Ask employees to complete self-appraisals

A solid review process should also include the employee's thoughts on their performance. They can compare their review with their managers so both parties agree on what they're doing well and where to improve. Here are some ways to effectively include self-appraisals in the performance review process:

Have employees complete evaluation worksheets

Employees should complete a similar evaluation worksheet as their manager. Both parties can then get together in their 1-on-1 meeting and compare thoughts on the same review criteria.

Ask employees to set future goals for themselves

Self-appraisal worksheets should also include a section for the employee to share career goals to help them reflect on the strides they need to take to grow professionally.

Share self-appraisals with managers before the meeting

Allow managers to review their employee's self-appraisals before 1-on-1 meetings. They'll be able to complete their preparation by getting an idea of what areas the conversation should focus on.



Ensure managers and employees meet

The performance review process commences with managers and each of their direct reports meeting to discuss results. You've already trained managers on how to conduct effective reviews, but here are a few more tips for ensuring meetings go off without a hitch:



Every employee gets a 1-on-1 meeting

Since reviews occur only once a year, each team member deserves at least 30 minutes to discuss their performance with their manager. HR is responsible for making sure every employee gets a complete meeting.

Compare self-appraisals and evaluation worksheets

The employee and manager should come to the meeting prepared to compare their evaluation worksheets. The results of those documents keep the discussion focused on the criteria relevant to employee reviews.

Set future projects and goals

It's crucial for employees and their managers to prepare for future reviews by defining what work should be done in the future and how it will be measured. If the employee is doing well, consider giving them more challenging projects to take on.

Discuss employee growth and future career plans

The conversation about future projects can transition into discussing the employee's career aspirations. The manager should learn about their team member's professional goals and share advice for what it will take to accomplish them.

Post-review action items

Performance reviews aren't quite finished after every manager and employee get together for their meetings. The organization should act on the results of reviews and learn how to improve the process for future review cycles. The following post-review action items will wrap up the annual review process until next year:

Implement performance improvement plans

Performance reviews will help your organization identify employees who aren't meeting their potential. When this happens, implement a performance improvement plan (PIP) that sets clear expectations for the employee going forward.

Give promotions and raises to deserving employees

Performance reviews will also bring to light employees who are exceeding expectations and have the potential to do more. Reward your top performers by promoting them and increasing their compensation, if possible.

Develop succession plans

Sometimes you identify a successful employee but need a senior-level role available for them to step into. Use the results of performance reviews to develop a succession plan that outlines employees who will be promoted in the event a position opens.

Accept employee feedback and make improvements

HR should always strive to improve the performance review process. Collect feedback from staff after each cycle and make positive changes for future cycles.

Preparation is key

Effective annual reviews are valuable to everyone involved. Be sure your HR team lays the groundwork for a successful process so employees, managers, and the company experience all the benefits.



ANNUAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

About Trakstar

Trakstar supercharges employee performance around pivotal moments in talent development. Remove your manual processes with our innovative software and world-class support. Make smarter decisions to attract, retain, and engage your workforce.

To achieve your talent development goals, there's no better partner.

[Schedule a Demo Now](#)

