



# Employee Reviews

## Establish policies & procedures; build a stronger team

by: Robert C. Goldberg, BTA General Counsel

Creating a positive and motivated team of employees requires many factors. Communication, mentoring, training and feedback allow employees to recognize their strengths and weaknesses while improving everyday performance. Establishing definite policies and procedures for employee reviews will help create the positive environment dealers are seeking. Employee reviews are often scheduled prior to the busy end of the year. Both managers and employees can be stressed by pending reviews — which should not be viewed as corporate necessity but, rather, as an opportunity to build your team. There are several best practices to consider.

Reviewers should be trained on how to be objective, clear, honest and timely when conducting employee performance reviews. Reviewers must learn how to: communicate the employer's goals and expectations; answer questions commonly raised by employees on topics like compensation, training, promotions, attendance, job duties and responsibilities; and ensure objectivity and consistency during the evaluation process. An employee may be overly emotional, stressed, sarcastic, disrespectful or inappropriate during a performance review meeting and reviewers should be trained on how to properly respond. By training reviewers to be sensitive to these issues, dealers can ward off litigation down the road.

Even with the trend toward remote workers, performance reviews should be conducted in person. An employee's performance review should be based on objective performance indicators or metrics that can be reduced to writing in a uniform document. If there is room for improvement or deficiencies noted, the reviewer should include the path to success, including additional training or specifically defined expectations.

Performance review meetings should be attended by two individuals in addition to the employee. The supervising manager and another executive would be appropriate. The second individual may also serve as a note taker, allowing the manager to maintain a conversation-like discussion with the employee.

It is important to conduct reviews on a consistent schedule (biannually or annually), and adhere to any written policies and/or practices addressing the schedule for employee performance reviews. Conducting late, untimely or incomplete reviews may give the perception that a dealer does not take performance reviews seriously or that they are pretextual.



The reviewer should also provide an opportunity for the employee to provide any comments or feedback. This is a key opportunity to address any problems or concerns the employee may have about his (or her) performance and overall feelings about his job. If an employee refuses to sign his performance review, the reviewer should note the date the review was issued on the form and that the employee refused to sign the document.

All performance review forms, notes and any other supporting documentation should be preserved in the employee's personnel file. Reviewers should promptly report complaints of unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment, retaliation or other workplace grievances aired during the performance review.

Compensation is always an issue that employees wish to discuss. Do not avoid a compensation discussion and be prepared to explain any adjustments, goals for adjustments and disappointments.

Employee performance reviews serve a vital role in the employer/employee relationship. They provide an opportunity for managers to address performance issues or praise an employee for his work, and discuss promotions, training, and other opportunities for professional growth. Establish set policies and procedures for employee reviews and build a stronger team. ■

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