

HOW TO LEARN FROM A PERFORMANCE REVIEW



Summary: *Are you ready for your yearly performance review? Here's a quick rundown on how to prepare for it and what you can learn.*

Preparation

- Do a little introspection. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Think about your experiences over the course of the year. Evaluate your effectiveness during the review period. Were you satisfied with your performance?
- Be prepared to accept constructive criticism. Understand that learning from constructive criticism can enhance your own marketability.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. What are the employer's performance expectations? What are your suggestions for how these expectations can be met?
- Prepare a thorough self-evaluation allowing sufficient time to do a complete job. If you set goals for yourself the previous year, review them and determine which ones were achieved, which were partially achieved, and which ones remain to be accomplished.
- Do your homework in advance. Prepare a list of questions of interest and importance to you prior to the interview. Also be prepared to discuss your non-billable contributions to the organization, including firm committees, client development, community activities, published articles or papers, speeches, and so on.

Receiving the Message

- Listen carefully and actively to make sure you understand what is being said. Don't be defensive. Do your part to keep the review directed and focused.
- Understand the message. Hear what is being said by the evaluator. Ask for specifics and guidelines. Ask clarifying questions and follow up.
- Have an open mind and think about the meeting as a "career development" session. Ask for suggestions regarding outside training and/or on-the-job training opportunities.
- Ask the evaluator what the firm expects of you and share the goals you have established for yourself. Discuss any other issues that are on your mind. Don't leave the meeting without asking the questions on the list you prepared prior to the meeting.

After the Evaluation Meeting: Follow-up

- Discuss the review later if you need more time to reflect on what has been said. Don't just react. If you think of anything you should have raised during the meeting but didn't, schedule a meeting to talk further about the issues.
- Work to correct both actual and perceived problems that were identified during your review.
- Develop performance goals for the upcoming year and a timetable for achieving them. Review your goals periodically so you'll stay on track.
- Remember: You are not alone. Your employer wants your review to be productive. The review process should assist you in achieving your professional goals.