

# Performance appraisal success depends on frequent feedback and good standard setting

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Appraisal of employees often gets a bad press, but recent research suggests if it involves frequent feedback between the formal appraisal and good prior planning and communication of standards then it can be successful and appreciated by employees.

The research, conducted by Stephen Wood at the University of Leicester and Shaun Pichler and Gerard Beenen, both at the California State University, Fullerton, is based on a meta-analysis of existing research. It shows that acceptability of appraisals is enhanced when [feedback](#) is frequent and standards are set and clear to employees but also that these two things have a synergistic relationship, so feedback has a greater effect when standard setting is good.

Professor Shaun Pichler commenting on the results said: "People like receiving feedback, yet all too often employees do not get it. The research suggests that appraisal is unlikely to motivate employees, without frequent feedback throughout the review cycle and their being given meaningful performance standards."

The implications for practice are that rather than abandoning appraisals or continuing to treat that as an annual ritual, more attention should be paid to feedback and standard setting than is all too often the case. It is important that in standard setting and feedback the potential trade-offs between goals is acknowledged. And the existence of multiple or conflicting goals is not used to justify a fatalistic approach to appraisal, that it can never really be much use. Standards make appraisal and

feedback easier so the appraisal does not need to focus on the person; and they can be defined as ideals and not obligations so the appraisal can focus on development and not ensuring obligations have been fulfilled.

Professor Stephen Wood, of the University of Leicester School of Business, said: "All too often appraisal is treated as a once-a-year ritual or conceived as monitoring people's performance, but with well communicated expectations and good quality feedback, it can be transformed from a tool of performance management to a potentially vital high-involvement management practice."

Just as feedback transforms the traditional attitude survey to a high-involvement management practice - the survey feedback method - so feedback transforms appraisal.

Provided by University of Leicester

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