

## Are your annual performance reviews a sham?

Last week I listened to a short story on NPR titled "Annual Job Review...Total Baloney". NPR interviewed UCLA business professor Samuel Colbert who recently authored a book titled *Get Rid of the Annual Performance Review*. In this short interview, Mr. Colbert expressed his views that performance evaluations were "dishonest and fraudulent" and "plain bad management". I also read an excerpt from his book and some of the words he used to describe annual performance reviews were "insidious", "pretentious" and "damaging". In the interview, Mr. Colbert stated that managers focused on successes only in performance reviews and stayed away from discussion about lapses in performance...basically making the process a sham. Wow!

I DISAGREE with most of what Mr. Colbert had to say on this particular topic. Written performance reviews are important and provide a foundation for continuous employee development. This "challenge" from Mr. Colbert is healthy for all managers and supervisors. It's a great reminder that performance evaluations MUST be truthful and include candid commentary about performance gaps and areas requiring development to be effective.

As we turn the corner on the first half of this year and look toward year-end, it's a good time to reflect on the performance of your individual direct reports during the past 6-8 months. I've found it extremely helpful to add notes to individual files about performance issues as well as successes throughout the year so that year-end evaluations will include specific examples. Many managers find it difficult to discuss performance weaknesses. Specific examples will make those discussions accurate, easier and more productive.

Here are some common examples of performance lapses and successes:

### Lapses:

- Teamwork failures and conflict
- Lack of accountability for expected results
- Time and attendance issues
- Inability to follow directions and guidance
- Unexpected project results specifically scope and timing errors

### Successes:

- Exceeding goals based on individual and team expectations
- Extra effort relative to job responsibilities
- Process improvement suggestions that result in healthy discussions
- Leadership and contributions to company-wide initiatives
- Volunteering for projects, committees, and events inside and outside the office

There's no room for "baloney" when it comes to developing your employees and identifying less than acceptable performance. Year-end performance reviews that "surprise" staff in a negative fashion can and should be avoided. By documenting and discussing along the way, your expectations will be transparent to all. In our experience at Palmer Group, that's plain GOOD management.

As always, please call anytime to discuss the employment services we provide to many of Iowa's finest organizations. Thank you.