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Demonstrate your value with self-evaluations

Even the best managers may find self-evaluations challenging. Perhaps there are echoes of parental chiding for “tooting their own horns” lingering in memory! But whether a self-evaluation is required for performance reviews or not, it is a key exercise in highlighting your value to the organization.



Getting started

Here are suggested steps for preparing your self-evaluation:

1. First, review your job description and the organizational expectations for your role.
2. Next, read any guidelines for the self-evaluation and/or performance review. Following those guidelines and meeting the deadline is critical.
3. Now review the definitions provided for the rating categories, ensuring you understand what each truly means.

4. Finally, review your list of achievements, compliments, awards and trainings. Don't have a list? Your first tip for the upcoming year: begin to document these things on an ongoing basis. It makes the performance review process much easier!

Putting it together

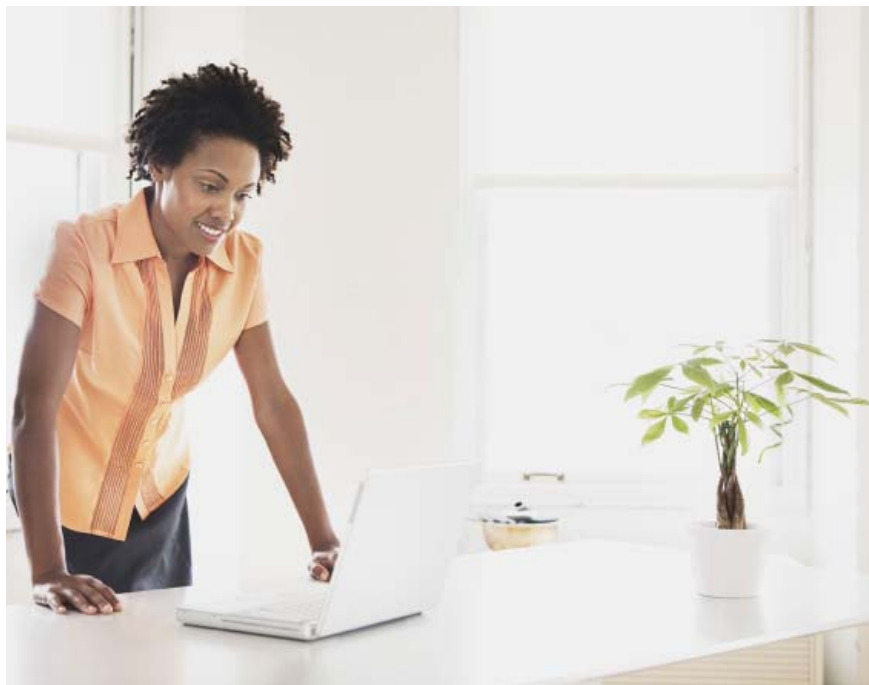
The preparatory work should provide you with plenty of “grist for the mill” as you document your performance. Business writing expert Lynn Gaertner-Johnston suggests structuring your report using the “STAR” system.¹ Begin by writing about your major accomplishments. Describe each **situation (S)** or **task (T)**, document the **action you took (A)**, and write about the **results (R)**. Include kudos or awards you received. And be sure to make note of any training or coursework you completed to improve your knowledge or skills. You are almost there!

Handling areas of improvement

Provide an action plan for addressing areas identified as needing improvement. Flag your calendar to follow up within a few months to discuss your progress with your supervisor. This tactic shows you have initiative and are serious about your contribution to the organization.

¹Gaertner-Johnson, Lynn. *Writing About Ourselves: Bragging Without Blushing*. Available at: http://www.syntaxtraining.com/articles_biz_writing4.html. Accessed October 14, 2010.

Goals: The good, the bad... and the not likely to get done!



Managers plan, lead and motivate. But if they aren't leading and motivating toward clear, well-designed and meaningful goals, much of their energy — and that of their employees — can be mis-spent. That's why it's helpful for managers to set SMART goals.

What's so smart about SMART goals?

"SMART" is an acronym for a type of goal setting endorsed by many management specialists.¹ SMART goals help ensure all of your meetings, e-mails and other directives really translate into getting things done. Here is a brief explanation of SMART goals:

- **Specific.** SMART goals are clear. They state exactly what needs to be done — with no ambiguities. When goals are specific, everyone is on the same page regarding what the team is striving to achieve.
- **Measurable.** How can you and your employees know when goals are achieved? It's important to have milestones to mark progress along the way. There should also be specific outcomes that let everyone know the goal has been reached.
- **Attainable.** SMART goals motivate because they require the team to "stretch" a bit, but are not out of reach. When goals are set too high or too low, employees can become uninterested or discouraged.
- **Relevant.** Goals are an important part of your organization's overall vision. SMART goals should have meaning in the context of what your organization is all about.
- **Time-bound.** Goals should start and end at specific times. When goals are open-ended, they tend to be "put on the back burner" at every crisis (or perceived crisis). Deadlines and due dates help employees stay focused, committed and motivated.

Remember: The purpose of setting goals is to achieve them. Set SMART goals to help give your team members a sense of organization, accomplishment and self-worth in their day-to-day roles.

¹*Setting Smart Management Goals.* Available at <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/setting-smart-management-goals.html>. Accessed October 18, 2010.

The P's and Q's of e-mail etiquette



There are no hard-and-fast rules about e-mail, and no “online police” to check on e-mail behaviors. But in business, there are e-mail courtesies that are important for managers to know and follow. Why are they important?

- Your e-mails show your staff, peers and superiors how you handle yourself.
- Your e-mails need to be effective in order to communicate clearly.
- Your e-mail conduct sets an example for your entire workforce.
- Your external e-mails are also representative of your organization as a whole.

E-mail “rules of the road”

Here are some of the basics:

- **Be concise in your e-mails.** E-mails are meant to be a quick and easy means of communication. If your reader must scroll down to finish your e-mail, it may be too long.
- **Deal with one topic per e-mail.** This is a good rule of thumb. Also, make your major point at the beginning. If you do need to make several points, consider using bullets to make your e-mail visually more direct and easy to read.
- **Don't write in all CAPITAL letters.** In the world of e-mail, capital letters are equivalent to screaming at someone.
- **Use the “Subject” line.** Let your reader know in a few words what the e-mail is about.
- **Don't say “Urgent” unless you really mean it.** If you send too many e-mails that say “Read immediately” or “Urgent,” your recipients may not respond quickly when it is truly urgent.
- **Use a signature on your e-mails.** It is professional, polite and useful to use a signature with your name, title, company, phone, fax and e-mail address.
- **Never e-mail when you're upset.** Remember that your feelings may change, but e-mails are permanent. Once you put something in writing and send it into the ethers, it will always be there for anyone to read.
- **Give people a reasonable time to respond to your e-mails.** E-mails travel quickly, but that doesn't mean your recipient is available when you send it. Many people receive hundreds of e-mails each day. So just reading them — much less responding to them — takes time.
- **Use the auto-reply feature when you will be out of the office for any length of time.** It is good business to let people know when you won't be receiving their e-mail for a few days or longer. You may want to include an alternate means of facilitating a response if the sender's need is urgent.
- **Respect the “Send” button.** Until they invent an “Unsend” button, the “Send” button is final. Be sure your message is respectful, clear and says what you intend before you launch it.