

# A Process for Self-Appraisal

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Arguably, one of the most patriarchal and controlling rituals in which organizations engage is the annual performance appraisal, typically written by the manager and then hesitantly signed by the employee. One major step organizations can take to increase the levels of personal accountability, engagement and learning is to institute **self-appraisal**. Here's how it works. The individual simply writes a letter, one to two pages, to his /her manager reflecting on his/her performance and behavior over the past year. Below are several recommended questions that can help provide structure to the letter. If the letter seems reasonable, i.e. is not completely out of touch, (in which case there are other more serious problems to deal with), and it is clear that the individual has sincerely reflected on the year, then the manager should simply sign the letter as a gesture of approval. This letter is the performance appraisal.

Naturally, the review meeting should also include comments from the manager, that is, validation, inquiry or dialogue relative to the points made in the letter. And certainly coaching and counsel on identified problem areas is appropriate.

The benefits of this approach are obvious. Self-appraisal lessens the manager's workload and saves him/her from writing repetitive and all too often hollow phrases across appraisal forms; it fosters more employee commitment to the development process; reduces fear of judgment because the employee has already identified weak spots; it puts more emphasis on learning; and finally, it enables the employee to give the manager feedback, which does not happen often enough in most organizations.

## Appraisal Letter Questions:

1. What do I believe I have done well this year? What were some of the successes and achievements of which I am proud?
2. What could I have done better? What were some of my frustrations and disappointments in terms of my performance?
3. From both the success and frustration experiences, what did I learn (or confirm) from last year? What have I learned or confirmed about where my talents lie?
4. What are a few areas (behavior and performance) I will focus on for improvement in the coming year?
5. What learning or development programs or experiences would help me become more effective in my role and professional relationships?
6. In order for me to become more effective in my work, what do I recommend my manager (or other key persons who influence me at work):  
Start Doing  
Stop Doing  
Continue Doing