

The Value of an Employee Appraisal

In the workplace the responsibilities of the employer to their employees extend way beyond that of the payment of wages and salaries. It is standard that beyond compensation, employers assume responsibility for the health and safety, the general welfare of the employees, providing job training and education, ensuring that good workplace practices are observed and for the promotion of a workplace which is free from discrimination and intimidation. These are ideals which are supposed to be followed. Chances are that responsible and caring employees understand what is expected of them, while others are forced to act because the law dictates how there are required to behave.

In addition to the list of widely accepted responsibilities, it is expected that employers would want to accept that, to conduct an employee appraisal is a responsibility which should be exercised as a matter of course. This ought to be a routine exercise which is seen as mutually beneficial to the employer and employee. Employers/management arrange performance appraisal meetings for the purpose of having a constructive and objective discussion on the employee's work performance. The purpose of the employee appraisal is best described as a means of evaluating the performance of the employee based on the requirements of the job, and for the information gained from the assessment to be shared with the employee in order to help the individual to improve their performance as necessary. It would be expected that employee appraisals would be a norm for all workplace. This is however wishful thinking as most employers are well aware that employee appraisals are not mandatory, as there is no legal requirement to do such.

Employers who do not have an employee appraisal tool in place can be accused of being short sighted. It begs the question as to how they will go about making a constructive and objective assessment of the employee's strengths and weakness, identifying performance areas which require improvement and making a determination of what action should be taken to improve the employee's performance. These are the primary objectives of the employee appraisal which cannot be ignored. The bottom line is that the employee appraisal is valuable to the organization in more ways than one. It provides the human resources management personnel or management with insights of the knowledge, skills and competency gaps of the individual employee, helps to determine training needs, and provides useful information that will lend to general and succession planning in the enterprise.

Putting this into context, employers ought to extend their scope of the value and significance of an employee's appraisal. There ought to be the understanding that the exercise is useful to the employer in making a determination on promotion and demotion, allocation of incentive awards, determining transfers, determining termination, layoffs or the retrenchment of employees and in identifying employee training needs. What needs not to be lost on employers, is the fact that

when they are engaging the appraisal exercise, they must at all times be fair, objective and productive. Those who choose to tie performance to wages and salaries, commissions paid or other performance schemes, might find that the employee appraisal tool makes the job determination all the easier. However, for this to be an effective measurement tool, employers must understand that there must be key performance indicators which have been developed and agreed upon with the employees or their representative trade union.

At the management level, it is important that there is an understanding of the importance of the employee appraisal exercise. Employers, managers, chief executive officers and human resources managers who come up short of knowing that the performance appraisal system is intended to motivate employees and to help the organization to achieve its vision and goals, are certainly missing the boat. This brings us to these questions, should an employer dictate the scope and limits of a performance appraisal? Is it wise or right that the employer or management should predetermine that no employee should go beyond a specific rating? The employer or manager who does that is making the cardinal sin of demotivating his employees. Any employer or manager who is guilty of this is running the serious risk of setting back the organization. As an outcome from the folly of limiting the credit given to the performance of an employee can do more harm than good. The real possibility will exist of lower level of productivity, a disgruntled staff, poor staff morale, poor employer–employee management relations, turn over in staff and problems in recruiting quality staff.

Employers or managers who are guilty of such behaviour ought to take time to seriously review their action. It is recommended that a good starting point should be that of engaging the staff members in dialogue and consultation of the how the staff appraisal tool should be structured and implemented. Failure to do this, gives staff members a sound reason in undertaking its own appraisal of management that its Decision Making/Problem Solving and Independent Action, both fall below expectations. For clarity on these, **Decision Making/Problem Solving** relates to measuring effectiveness in understanding problems and making timely, practical decisions, while Independent Action, **concerns itself with Independent Action** the measurement of effectiveness in time management; initiative and independent action within prescribed limits.