



Redefining Employee Roles Can Increase Performance

How well do your employees understand what's expected of them, and how well do you or they manage those expectations to increase performance and meet company goals?

Effectively managing staff and communicating each employee's role are perhaps two of the most difficult tasks you will face as an entrepreneur or executive. Performance expectations based on performance may appear bipolar depending on whether the employee knew what was expected of them. Many good-hearted managers are well-intentioned professionals who advanced into management based on their own job performance. As a result, unless they receive proper training or coaching, these managers lack many of the skills required to skillfully manage employees and positively impact performance and productivity. To add fuel to the fire, many companies lack the tools necessary to adequately address an employee's work performance because job descriptions are either dated or may not exist at all.

Lack of both job expectations and the knowledge it takes to communicate the expectations can take its toll on properly managing employees because employers constantly must redefine employee roles. In a perfect world, the astute employee would know what's expected, and would turn those expectations into increased performance, and, ultimately, an increase to your company's bottom line.

So how can you redefine employee roles to increase performance? Perhaps it's best to follow Stephen Covey's advice and begin with the end in mind. However welcome or dreaded, a well-delivered performance review is a good indicator of not only expectations, but how well the employee is progressing within his or her role. The evaluation also is a good time to set next year's goals and expectations.

Here are five ways to establish expectations and align employee roles with performance.

1. **Maintain an Updated Job Description With Written Expectations.** It is difficult for you to create an evaluation without a benchmark. It is even tougher for an employee to self evaluate on an ongoing basis if s/he has only a vague idea of what results s/he should achieve. A job description and a statement of written expectations provide the criteria to perform the employee evaluation while leaving the employee with a clear set of job expectations.
2. **Meet One-to-One With the Employee.** Periodic (monthly or quarterly) meetings can help you and your employee monitor progress and performance. For example, a short, scheduled meeting provides the time to review past objectives and professional development. You become more aware of the employee's strengths, accomplishments and areas to develop, while the information focuses the employee's performance on key behaviors.
3. **Provide a Monthly Progress Report.** Continuous reports help you gather information on employees' performance and allow them to track their progress. At the end of each month, ask employees to submit a short report stating their accomplishments, major tasks in progress, any training received and areas identified for improvement. Your job is to review this report, discuss it during the one-to-one session, and keep the reports as a reference tool for annual and semi-annual performance evaluations.
4. **Conduct a Self-Evaluation.** Most employees welcome the opportunity to provide constructive input. Ask each employee to draft a self-evaluation. These personal insights will help you immensely with setting performance goals and aligning your expectations with employee competencies.
5. **Other Forms of Feedback.** Without being too intrusive or sly, solicit feedback from customers and co-workers about each employee's performance. Concentrate on behaviors, not subjective ideas about a person's motivations. For example: Johnny attends to customers in a slow manner vs. Johnny is lazy and isn't concerned with attending to customers. A word of caution: Be sure the information you receive is accurate and sources stay protected.

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CFO Plus, LLC

Ted Hofmann - Principal/Senior Consultant

John Morre - Principal/Senior Consultant

Linda Panichelli - Principal/Senior Tax Consultant

Jim Chamberlain - Senior Consultant

1450 Grant Avenue, Suite 102

Novato, CA 94945-3142

Home Office: 415-898-7879

Toll Free 866-CFO-PLUS or 866-236-7587

Email: thofmann@cfoplus.net

jmorre@cfoplus.net

lpanichelli@cfoplus.net

jchamberlain@cfoplus.net

Web: www.cfoplus.net

Redefining Employee Roles Can Increase Performance (cont.)

What can a job description do to help define roles? A good job description will:

- establish, communicate, and document management expectations and employee understanding and acceptance;
- form a basis for establishing employee goals and for conducting employee performance evaluations;
- communicate and document changes in employee responsibilities during the course of a performance year;
- identify training needs;
- help determine employee job classifications;
- inform job candidates about prospective positions; and
- assess employee workload so managers can make strategic staffing decisions.

Most employees want to hit the target; often, they just don't know what the target is. Taking these points into account can help ensure performance meets expectations, but more than that, it helps produce skilled, knowledgeable employees who will work even harder to produce your desired results. If you are interested in learning more about how incremental improvements in performance can significantly impact your company's bottom line, gives us a call today.