

"Your staff are your most valuable resource..." Whether your company employs two people or two hundred, this key item should be at the top of every manager's priority list. Yet, keeping up to date with changing employment legislation - especially with added European Community Directives - becomes more complex and costly every day. In these Fact Sheets, we have tried to provide basic guidelines and ideas to help you adapt or improve your personnel procedures. Please remember the advice given is general and not intended to be legally definitive. The Fact Sheets on various employment and human resource matters can be accessed at www.aslrecruitment.co.uk/useful-resources

APPRAISAL

Whilst there may be daily or regular contact and exchanges between a manager and staff, how often is time allowed for an in depth review and discussion? Every employee has a part to play and regular and effective communication will not only provide important feedback, but ensure a greater understanding of an employee's current performance and future prospects. You may wish to appraise new employees at the end of every month for the first 3 or 4 months whilst they settle in. Otherwise, appraisals should be six monthly.

Employees should not see appraisals as being demotivating or demeaning and managers should not hide behind the appraisal procedure as an opportunity to air their dissatisfaction! Appraisals should be well thought out and planned by both parties. Employers are advised to produce a document that ensures all employees are judged fairly on both subjective and objective matters. The appraisal document should allow for both parties to provide written comments and it should be signed, dated, reviewed by senior management and retained on the individual's personnel file. It is also good practice to allow the employee to retain a copy. Employees should give thought to what they have done, what they are doing and what they want to do and make sure their manager is aware of their desires and ambitions. Managers should be reminded the appraisal covers a period of time and performance and comments should reflect this. The objective is for both parties to understand each other better and for a future action plan to be agreed - if the appraisal doesn't achieve this then something is wrong!

Helpful Hints

1. Provide a standard document with relevant headings such as SALES PERFORMANCE, INITIATIVE, TEAM WORK, ATTITUDE, PUNCTUALITY etc.
2. Suggested ratings are EXCELLENT, ABOVE AVERAGE, BELOW AVERAGE. Avoid the use of AVERAGE or GOOD as human nature will often select the easiest route, thereby creating a business full of average people!
3. Give the employee notice of appraisal date, an uncompleted copy of appraisal form and set aside a reasonable period without interruptions to conduct the appraisal.
4. Have a copy of any previous appraisal available to compare progress.
5. Discuss each heading in detail and explain the reasons behind your judgement.
6. Give and record praise where it is due as well as raising any difficult issues.
7. Agree and record any matters that need to be actioned and by when and by whom.
8. Both parties should record their overall comments, the employee after employer!
9. Whilst a six monthly appraisal should become part of normal procedures, they should also be undertaken at other times e.g. promotion, relocation, change of manager, or change of job function.
10. A contractual clause may be advisable to ensure employee participation.