



Summary

Evaluation and performance reviews

Contact

serv@serv.be

The figures which are available on evaluation and performance reviews reveal that these official meetings have become almost common practice in Flanders. At the same time it is clear that employees, their superiors and personnel managers are not particularly satisfied with the evaluation and performance reviews in their businesses and institutions. This was the starting point for this study by Foundation Innovation & Work into evaluation and performance reviews in Flanders.

Evaluation and performance reviews

Evaluation and performance reviews are a way of monitoring and supervising the performance and achievements of employees. In fact, a system of evaluation and performance reviews turns on “good management”, so that :

- every employee knows what is expected of him/her ;
- employees are monitored and supervised in this ; and
- the performances delivered and evaluated and appropriately valued.

Therefore evaluation and performance reviews are not only part of the personnel policy but also form the basis for other fields of personnel policy such as the compensation and benefits systems.

Following up and supervising employees is often proposed in the literature on the basis of a cycle of three stages: (1) first planning, (2) then monitoring and supervising, and (3) finally evaluating and valuing. There is an official meeting for each of these stages, viz. (1) a planning meeting, (2) a performance review and (3) an evaluation meeting.

Evaluation and development objectives

Evaluation and performance reviews are not a goal in themselves, but a means of achieving other objectives. For example: motivating employees, increasing the performance of employees, allocating payments and tracing development needs. Usually two large groups of objectives are distinguished :

- Evaluation objectives: assessing the performance of the employee or what the employee has achieved;
- Development objectives: developing and improving the work or how the employee carries out his/her tasks.

Some organisations make a strict distinction between evaluation and performance reviews on the basis of these objectives. In that case, evaluation meetings are only about assessing the performance of an employee. Performance reviews focus only on development objectives. In other companies, the link between objectives and meetings is not so clear. In that case, evaluation and development objectives are considered both during the evaluation and during the performance reviews. The difference between both meetings then depends on the stage of the cycle at which it takes place: performance reviews are part of monitoring and supervising employees, evaluation meetings are part of the evaluation and valuing of their performance and work.

The situation in Flanders

A Survey of representative sample of more than 1.700 employees in Flanders revealed that 66.4% of employees in Flanders have official evaluation or performance reviews. For the majority of the employees these are evaluation and performance reviews, either at the same time (31,5%), or at two different times (17.0%).

The data of the survey show that evaluation and performances reviews are more common for a number of groups of employees, viz:

- employees with a higher degree,
- employees in a higher job,
- employees working in the government sector, education or not-for profit sector,
- employees working in larger companies or institutions, and
- employees who have a job description.

It is striking that the type of evaluation and performance review differs depending on the employee's job. Labourers more often only have an evaluation meeting than executive employees and management members or professionals.

The survey provides a lot of information about the characteristics of evaluation and performance reviews in Flanders. For example, it appears that 66.2% of employees who have evaluation and performance reviews have a meeting at least once a year. For 18,5%, the evaluation or performance review lasts less than a quarter of an hour. The survey also provides information about the preparation of the meetings, the subjects of discussion, drawing up a report, etc.

Satisfaction with the evaluations and performance reviews: the characteristics of the meeting make a difference

The results of the survey show that some of the characteristics of the meeting are positively related to the satisfaction of employees with their evaluation or performance reviews. On this basis we can formulate some of the peripheral conditions for conducting these meetings.

During the evaluation and performance reviews, concrete agreements should be made about the employee's performance and career.

Employees are more than their performance. When this is expressed in the official evaluation and performance reviews, employees are more satisfied with their meetings.

It is not necessary to completely separate evaluation and performance reviews.

In contrast with what is often said in the literature, the results of the survey show that completely

separating the evaluation of the performance and discussing the work does not result in any added value.

Evaluation and performance reviews should be postponed as little as possible.

By not postponing evaluation and performance reviews the management communicates to the employee that these meetings are important: time is provided for them.

Evaluation and performance reviews should be conducted in a quiet room.

Providing a quiet room to conduct the evaluation and performance reviews shows that the meetings are important; space is provided for them.

Employees are given sufficient time to prepare their evaluation and performance reviews.

This is a condition for conducting an honest and open discussion about the employee's performance and/or work.

The manager prepares the evaluation and performance reviews.

An evaluation or performance review can only really be about the performance and/or work of the employee if the manager has thought about this in advance. Furthermore, by preparing for the meetings, the manager communicates to the employee that the meetings are important; time is taken out for them, and the manager makes an effort.

Official evaluation and performance reviews can take place when the employee and/or the manager feel there is need for this.

Feedback both from the official and unofficial meetings between the employee and the manager can only be effective if attention is devoted to this on a permanent basis. In addition, official evaluation and performance reviews are most productive when the manager and/or the employee feel the need for this.

In the workplace, the manager is available for feedback.

A manager who is available in the workplace for feedback on a daily basis ensures that an employee always has the opportunity to ask for feedback if he/she feels the need for this, also outside the official meetings. This can also ensure that the meeting of the performance and the work not provide any (unpleasant) surprises for the employee during the official meetings.

The manager encourages the employee to ask for feedback in the everyday working environment.

A manager who encourages employees to ask for feedback about their performance/work contributes to a culture in which both the manager and the employees feel good about asking for, giving and receiving feedback. Together with the aforementioned condition, the type of management makes an important contribution to the effectiveness of the official evaluation and performance reviews.

Motivation and work pressure: what is the connection with evaluation and performance reviews?

The survey shows that there is no connection between the work pressure which employees experience and conducting evaluation and performance reviews can motivate employees.

However, the characteristics of the meeting play an important role in this. Employees are more motivated when their evaluation and performance reviews comply with the abovementioned peripheral conditions.

Liselotte Hedeboom (2007), Beoordelings- en functioneringsgesprekken. En enquête bij werknemers in Vlaanderen, StIA/SERV, Brussels, July 2007