

# 5 Rules of Employee Reviews: Assessing Performance Is a Collaborative Effort

## Part 2

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How do I start?” That is the dealer question I answered in part one of my story on assessing employee performance (August, *Modern Tire Dealer*). Once all job descriptions, standards and expectations are defined, and employees know what is expected of them, an assessment form must be created.

“What’s next?” you ask. Here are the five rules of implementing, or carrying out, successful assessments once the process is in place.

1. **Assessments are never, ever a surprise.** Employees should always know when an assessment is happening and what the contents are about.

After setting a date to do a formal assessment, provide the employee with the assessment he agreed to last time about a week in advance.

If you are just starting to do assessments, your first sit down with an employee will be a collaboration on goals and objectives. Both of you must add and contribute.

Even if there are a few things you don’t agree on with the employee, you should cede some ground in areas that are a little flexible. Then set up a review time six months later, and allow for adjustment.

2. **Assessments are about the employee’s performance during the assessment period, period.** This has nothing to do with tenure, bloodlines, friendships, being neighbors or bias (see No. 3.)

3. **Assessments are about you listening.** If it’s not a surprise, and you’ve had a few informal conversations about the targets and goals along the way, it’s time to listen and try to solve problems.

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We can still hold people accountable and help them at the same time. After settling on why last year's performance happened, good or bad, discuss what the expectations for this upcoming year will be.

4. **Assessments are not tied to wages and raises.** Reviews are done at the end or right at the beginning of the year, every year, for every employee. Wages should be discussed separately. I liked to review wages on anniversary dates to spread them out and keep people from gossiping on the day marked as "Raise Day." If you combine wages and assessment reviews, two bad things happen: 1) the above mentioned gossip, and 2) the employee doesn't listen to any coaching or help during the assessment; they just sit and wait for the cha-ching moment (or lack thereof).

5. **Assessments are scheduled and prepared.** If the above rules are kept, assessments are 20 to 30 minutes, tops. Schedule them privately in a quiet room where you can have a personal conversation. Maybe you can't do that in the shop, so go across to Burnt Toast or Taco Bell when it's slow and do one a day.

### **Dealing with the aftermath of the assessment**

Sure, there will always be the one employee who feels the system is rigged and creates drama. That type of employee should not be enough reason to make the other employees suffer. He's already caused enough suffering.

Ask this person if they agree with your assessment findings. If not, why? Ask if they would like to collaborate on next year's assessment.

If they come up with goals and objectives that you find unacceptable, document this and then tell them it looks like the two of you can't find an employment agreement. Pull the assessment form away and hand them a severance form (a form that simply communicates the end the employment). Ask them to sign.

Trust me, your shop will be better off for it.

### **Why assessments help**

Assessments help simplify the complicated legal universe in which it is so difficult to terminate an employee or indemnify a business from problems stemming from unemployment, retaliation, promotions, wage increases and decreases, and many more situations.

They also help in correcting unwanted behavior before it becomes an ingrained habit. This can prevent emotionally charged confrontations.

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