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Examples of annual review questions for managers

Asking the right questions at an annual review is critical. Standard questions such as, “How would you rate your performance this year?” or “Are you happy with your current role?” may be too general and make it look like you haven’t put much effort into finding out about your employees. Instead, ask questions that make employees consider their strengths and weaknesses and what they bring to the role. Try questions like:

- Are there any accomplishments this year you’re most proud of?
- How can I improve your job satisfaction?
- What working conditions make you most effective in your role?

When looking at your employees’ strengths, here are a few examples of good questions:

- Which of your personal strengths help you to perform your job more effectively?
- Why are you the best person for your role?
- Do you have any skills that our organization could use more effectively?

When identifying areas of improvement, try these questions:

- Identify two or three things that will help you improve performance in the coming year
- How can I help you reach your goals more effectively?
- Are there any parts of your performance you were not proud of this year? If so, why, and how will you improve this over the next year?

Most annual reviews contain a section on the employee’s future outlook that will ask questions such as, “Where do you see yourself in five years?” or “What are your goals for the future?” Most employees will probably have a stock answer that they think you want to hear, so instead try questions along these lines:

- What do you consider to be your most important goals over the coming year?
- What would you like your next position in this company to be and what responsibilities would you like to take on?
- Are there any professional growth opportunities you would like to take advantage of?

As you can see, one of the keys to asking the best questions in your annual reviews is to avoid questions that have too broad a focus. Focus on specific goals, strengths, skills and areas for improvement and the annual review will be more useful for both sides.

Examples of useful comments on annual reviews

When completing an annual review, the comments you add are vital to the usefulness of the process. Feedback that's motivating and constructive for the employee is essential, so choose the right words. For example, "fails to meet expectations" is negative, doesn't give details and could be demotivating. Better comments would be:

- Her excellent performance this year was driven by her ability to reflect, plan and act effectively
- He uses his seniority to dominate team meetings, reducing the opportunity for others to contribute
- When working alone, her performance is superb, but she finds working collaboratively a challenge.
- She is able to consistently meet deadlines and effectively prioritize her workload
- He prefers traditional approaches over more creative ones, leading to a tendency to be overly risk-averse
- Their creative thinking is often a key element in meeting team goals
- He always gives his team the resources and training they need to achieve their goals and targets
- Their risk-averse tendencies lead them to concentrate on lower-value work

Although some of these comments may appear to be negative, they highlight a problem, indicate its cause and provide an opportunity to improve.

Common annual review skills

Knowing what areas to review is an essential part of the process, and some areas are more important than others. For example, problem-solving or innovation are not high-value skills for someone working on a production line, but quality of work and reliability are essential. Here are a few examples of employee skills you might want to cover in an annual review. However, this is not an extensive list, and you may think of more.

- Quality of work
- Communication
- Interpersonal skills
- Teamwork
- Punctuality and attendance

- Accountability
- Problem-solving
- Adaptability
- Innovation
- Growth
- Self-education and learning

Simple annual reviews

There may be cases, especially with low-level positions, where you want to conduct a simplified annual performance review. However, these should still always include some basics, such as:

- The employee's strengths and weaknesses
- Areas where the employee can improve
- The employee's contributions to your organization's core values and goals and how they can grow and evolve

You can accomplish this effectively through the use of a simple form. If you prefer a more visual presentation, [a skill map](#) can be beneficial.

However you choose to conduct your performance evaluations, the key is to keep it useful and engaging for employees and yourself. We hope the above annual review examples prove useful to you, your organization and your employees.

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