

Build a Successful Talent Review Process



Here is an example of how talent reviews might work in a typical organization:

All employees in the organization are reviewed annually at the end of the calendar year. Employees are evaluated on goal accomplishment and the use of relevant competencies. The goals for the next review cycle are discussed and finalized. The employee's career interests and development needs are also discussed. Once performance reviews are finished, managers complete a one-page talent review profile for each employee. The profile summarizes the employee's:

- Performance evaluation.
- Developmental needs.
- Career interests.
- Strengths.
- Readiness for promotion—possible next steps.
- Rating of potential.
- Development action plan.
- Suggestions for special projects and assignments to develop needed skills.

Managers meet with their bosses to review the talent review profiles. About ten minutes is spent discussing each employee's talent profile. The agenda covers the following areas:

- Content of the profile.
- Questions for clarification.
- Insights, suggestions, and challenges from the boss.
- Resources.
- Ideas for special projects, assignments, and suggestions for next steps.



Imagine your CEO gave you the power and resources to implement one HR program. The only outcome expected by the CEO is that every position in the organization is filled with a skilled, dedicated, and motivated person and that a qualified individual is ready to fill unexpected vacancies. What would your choice be—a performance management program, succession management program, or mentoring program?

Some HR professionals might choose to institute talent review sessions. The purpose of talent review sessions is to discuss the current performance and future potential for each employee.

Within a week after the boss/manager discussion, the manager meets with each employee to review the profile and any important items that resulted from the boss/manager discussion. The employee's development plan is revised, if needed.

Managers provide their bosses an update on progress and any changes to the employee's profile halfway through the review cycle.

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There are a number of values, policies, and beliefs that must be in place for a comprehensive talent review process to be successful. The most critical factor is that senior management must support the process, actively participate, and hold managers accountable for effectively administering the talent review sessions. Senior leaders must view talent reviews as an important management responsibility.

Some additional elements that need to be in place to ensure robust talent reviews include:

- A policy that all employees should complete a yearly development plan.
- A belief that employees deserve ongoing and honest feedback.
- A policy of transparency relative to performance and potential ratings.
- A belief that all employees should have the opportunity to fully develop their talents.
- A belief that employees are ultimately responsible for their own development.

This suggested structure is based on the principle that all employees should be involved in a talent review process. Many succession planning programs reserve formal talent reviews only for high-potential employees. Utilizing the all-inclusive approach yields many benefits.

Including all employees increases the likelihood that hidden talent will be discovered and developed. Also, highly talented employees can be identified and developed early in their careers, reducing the possibility of unwanted turnover of valued employees.

Effective talent reviews place a continual focus on development. This focus sends a strong signal to both employees and managers that uncovering and nurturing employee abilities is critical to the success of the organization. The process helps keep managers engaged in employee development throughout the review cycle.


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The employee discussions and feedback also results in employees feeling that the organization and their managers have an interest in their careers. This interest is a major driver for employee engagement.

The information that is generated from talent reviews becomes the fuel for other HR systems such as succession management, leadership development, coaching, and training. Therefore, the talent review process becomes the infrastructure or foundation for a business-centric talent management system.

A robust talent review program needs to evolve over several years. The level of honesty and the degree of transparency develop with experience and training. It is better to begin talent review sessions with limited scope and expectations. Start by only discussing performance, goals, and development plans. As managers and employees begin to trust the process, future potential and career interests can be added to the talent reviews. It is more important to start the process than to wait for all elements to be in place.

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