

Performance Appraisals

Among the six requirements that The Society of Human Resources Management urges be required for a comprehensive ethics and compliance program are:

Orientation or training on ethical workplace conduct.

Evaluation of ethical conduct as part of regular performance appraisals.

Discipline for employees who commit ethics violations.¹

Performance appraisals are an integral part of regularly and responsibly evaluating employees. In good times, they are critical to pay raises and promotions. However, in bad times, they may well be critical to decisions as to who gets laid off and who continues working in a reduced work force.

If the employer's expectations for employees are to be met, including expectations for ethical conduct, performance appraisals must meet basic standards of fairness. Here are some ideas, all of which involve evaluation of ethical conduct:

The appraisal must be based on a job description and/or a statement of agreed upon objectives that have been worked on, updated, and agreed to by the manager and the employee to be evaluated.

If possible, the person doing the appraisal should base the evaluation on his own assessment of the employee's performance. If that is not possible, the manager should speak with those who do have knowledge and ask for examples of the employee's performance, including whether the employee has done his work in an ethical manner.

Problem areas should be identified specifically and the manager should define her expectations for required improvement.

All areas needing work, including ethical behavior, should be identified; anything left out will be presumed by the employee as not needing work;

If failure to improve an area of performance, including ethical behavior, will mean disciplinary action, that should be stated.

The person doing the appraisal should seek verbal feedback from the employee;

Follow up with the employees on identified issues should take place. Waiting a year to discuss issues is not productive.²

¹ *A New Survey of HR Professionals*, Ethics Resource Center, June 16, 2008

² Beth O'Neal, *The Law at Work: Performance appraisals*, <http://capebusiness.net/article/1446>.