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How regular feedback feeds employee morale

By TimesJobs.com on Apr 11, 2016

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Increasingly, companies are moving away from annual performance appraisals to more regular 'check-ins' that capture data and offer real time, valuable feedback from employees

Neha Singh Verma, TimesJobs

While the raise in paychecks still happen once a year, companies are moving to a system where they 'check-in' with their employees on a regular basis, sometimes as often as weekly, for just 15 minutes at a time.

Annual performance review or employee assessments are fast becoming passé. From traditional practices where appraisals happen just once a year, employees

now want their accomplishments and achievements to be understood and recognised often. Employers also want regular engagement with their workforce.

As organisations are in the phase of understanding and implementing this change in a phased manner, Niketh Sundar, senior vice president-HR, QuEST Global, listed key factors that tend to impact employees and organisations in an annual cycle that can be improved by frequent check-ins:

Anxiety

The traditional annual performance review has become a cause of dread and anxiety among most employees. It is seen as their single chance in the year to impress upon their managers that their contribution has been valuable and worthy of a raise. A year's worth of great performance could often be marred by a lull in performance closer to the review.

Real-time feedback

A frequent check-in clears the air immediately, allowing employees to offer real-time feedback about organisational issues. It also gives employers a chance to fix problems before they snowball into systemic flaws or patterns.

Accuracy

Several polls show that high levels of employee disengagement or low satisfaction are not captured when the assessment is done once a year. However, a frequent check-in allows employers to get a more accurate sense of employee morale and engagement as well as of productivity.

Commensurate rewards

A frequent check-in allows organisations to collate more reliable data which can be used to determine pay hikes at the annual pay review. This means employee rewards are commensurate with their performance and they're more likely to feel happy with the results.

Going beyond bell curve: 6 questions

Sundar also told TimesJobs that while there has been a lot of talk about reforming the performance review and moving away from the bell curve and ratings altogether, there are several questions that need addressing:

1. When and how do we decide that we are ready as an organisation to make the change?
2. If we don't provide ratings or rankings, do we have a fair idea of how we are going to differentiate?
3. How will fairness be ensured, when differentiation is done without numerical ratings?
4. Do managers have the maturity and trust of their teams?
5. Are they capable of taking decisions like pay-increase differentiation and promotions that will come directly to them with little or no intervention from the corporate centres?

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6. Is the leadership and the management prepared to answer all the questions that employees, will have for them?

These questions need to be answered before we move forward. But it is clear that change is imminent.

Gradual step by step change is probably the way forward. One thing is sure – regular and frequent feedback and feed forward can never be a bad thing in the world of talent engagement and retention, particularly as more and more millennials join the workforce, he said.

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