

Get A Room! Rethink Conducting Employee Reviews Over Lunch

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The other day while visiting my dentist, the oral hygienist told me about her prior job, where her supervisor took her out to lunch to discuss her performance review – and frequently did the same with other employees. She thought this was great, especially since the supervisor had a penchant for really good, high-priced seafood. While that all sounds tasty, one has to question how effective a performance review can be when attempting to crack open crab legs. This brings me back to a point discussed before and which bears repeating: If a supervisor is going to go to the trouble of evaluating an employee’s performance, they should consider paying attention not only to the substance of the review, but also how and when the review is delivered. Ideally, an employee’s feedback should be given in private – in a quiet location free from distractions and eavesdroppers. Performance reviews can be very stressful for employees – particularly those who know or suspect they have a performance problem. Review-time also can be stressful for supervisors – at least those who take the process seriously or are worried about how an employee will react. Typically, an office provides the best setting and a closed-door meeting is even better. If the supervisor is concerned about how the employee may react, he or she may invite someone from HR to sit in on the process. This is not the time for a supervisor to show others how “tough” they are or to publicly shame a worker. Instead, the idea should be to put both parties at ease so they can have a candid discussion. Both the reviewer and the employee should be free from outward factors, humiliation or embarrassment. Performance reviews should be taken seriously both by employers and employees. A serious and thorough discussion of an employee’s performance is difficult, if not impossible, in a public setting while selecting appetizers or going over the wine list. Private, quiet settings where real feedback can be given and true discussions can be had should be the gold standard. Leave the fancy restaurants for the party celebrating what a great year the team had. Besides, let’s be honest. Is a supervisor really going to give an employee a negative performance review when the employee is holding a steak knife?

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