



# 15 Best Questions

for effective employee evaluation  
during Performance Reviews

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How'd you like to have a look at the most effective questions to evaluate employees during performance reviews?

(I have compiled a long list over 12 years of interactions with HR leaders across industries)

Well consider yourself very lucky...

...because today I'm going to open the treasure trove and share with you 15 of the absolute BEST questions to evaluate employees performance.

But let's go back a step & understand why we are here.

# What's wrong with Performance Reviews?

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*51% of employees question the effectiveness of performance reviews.*

Employees hate reviews. Managers too.

On the other hand, Managers comment that performance reviews are their second most hated task.

Second only to firing someone!!!

That's the sorry state of affairs on employee evaluation.

At the centre of this disgust is the performance appraisal form.

Employees believe the review questions are vague & not connected to their work and aspirations.

## **So, what's the problem with the Review questions?**

In most cases, employees feel that review questions are completely irrelevant and are directly picked up from a generic template without personalizing it as per individual needs.

Some of the common complaints about the review questions are

**1. *Not relevant to current job***

Many times employees don't understand how a review question is relevant to the work they are doing or the project they are in. It's like reviewing a Technology Developer on performance in Financial Accounting!!!

**2. *Does not recognize career aspirations***

Since review questions are generic in nature, they tend to miss the individual's ambitions within the organization, thus promoting a feeling that the organization does not care about the employee's future.

**3. *Short term focused***

Since employee development discussions rarely happen independently & are clubbed with performance reviews, a very short term approach is widely observed in the questions asked to employees.

**4. *Unclear linkages to organizational objectives***

Employees don't realize how their work impacts the company's performance. Neither, how soft skill aspects like attitudes & values at work are critical.

**5. *Doesn't address diversity***

Same review template form is applied to a large group of employees. All review questions are treated with equal importance



# 8 Hygiene Factors of performance appraisals

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## *Problems galore but solutions, where art thou?*

Before I give you the 15 best review questions on employee evaluation that I have carefully collected after 12 years of interaction with industry leaders, let me first tell you what I have learnt from the mistakes that our performance reviews commit. Appraisals should be -

1. **Personalized** for each employee.
2. Focused on **long term employee career aspirations** too
3. Described by **how actual performance will be measured/evaluated**
4. Allowed for both **Descriptive & objective assessment** with free flow of qualitative inputs
5. **Weighted according to priority** as per employee's job responsibilities
6. **Mutually agreed** upon by employee & manager before the review
7. **Evaluated independently** by employee & manager to allow unrestricted inputs
8. **Open for disagreement** by employee after Managers have given their inputs

# The 15 Best Employee Performance Review questions

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## ***Problems galore but solutions, where art thou?***

Yes, as with everything if we try hard, solutions are waiting for us. And review questions are no different.

These 15 review questions are categorized in the following groups

1. Performance
2. Competencies
3. Development
4. Commitment
5. Feedback



## CHAPTER ONE

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# Review Questions on Performance



# 1. KRA Achievements/ Misses

Type: Objective/ Subjective

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What has the employee actually achieved or missed against what was committed or planned for each of the Key Responsibility Areas (KRA)?

## Review Methods

- 1) Comparison of the actual performance against planned using the performance measures or the key performance indicators (KPIs) agreed prior to the review
- 2) Identification of the root causes for both success and failure. This again is a critical step to better prepare for the future. & provides opportunities for feedback for the employee, manager & the organization

## Is this a popular practice?

Yes, this is widely used across organizations as the template to compare plan vs. actual, expectations vs. achievements of an employee's performance over the review period.

# 1. KRA Achievements/ Misses

Type: Objective/ Subjective

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## Keep in mind

Most managers & employees get too hung upon the numerical ratings for each KRA or OKRs. While ratings are a matter of debate on its actual relevance, there are 2 very important things to keep in mind.

- a) For each KRA, the employee should be absolutely clear on how the performance will be measured & what the key performance indicators (KPI) are. This discussion between the employee & manager should happen at the beginning of the review period.
- b) Root cause qualitative assessment for each KRA performance is the primary necessary & sufficient condition for this aspect of employee evaluation.

## 2. Going the Extra Mile

Type: Subjective

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Since the whole is always greater than the sum of the individual parts in the context of a business, each employee's stretch for the extra mile is a critical differentiator for organization success.

So, this review question requires a subjective evaluation of how the employee has supported an Internal Stakeholder - Senior, Peer or Junior or an External Stakeholder - Customer, Vendor or Partner to achieve business benefits for the organization.

### Review Methods

Feedback should be sought from sample stakeholder groups by the employee & manager. There should be option to give feedback anonymously to let the feedback respondent air his/her views without worrying about reactions.

After collating the feedback, employee & manager needs to identify what has been done right, what went missing and ways to improve in the future.

## 2. Going the Extra Mile

Type: Subjective

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### Is this a popular practice?

In some form or the other, “Going the extra mile” is popularly covered to be rated or discussed but not widely as an independent review question.

### Keep in mind

The focus should be to look for opportunities to go the extra mile after taking care of one’s own KRAs. It should not be such that employees start underperforming on their primary responsibilities or commitments for the sake of getting favorable reviews on this.

## 3. Handling Opportunities & Blows

Type: Subjective

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Beyond the employees own KRAs & helping others' along the way, there is this world of surprise where unanticipated opportunities or blows arrive. Sudden Opportunities can be a new project/business, in skill development or even partner relationships. On the other hand blows can range from personal losses to a project being scrapped or a business unit shut down.

How did the employee respond to these while staying focused & delivering on one's primary duties?

### Review Methods

The Manager & Employee should first sit together & agree on the opportunities & blows that came along during the review period and the professional & personal context in which these appeared for the employee.

Then, they should independently assess how the employee responded to the situation against what could have been an expected response, the quality of decisions taken & how the organization supported the employee and what impact this had to the organization in the end. Also, identification of key learning & recommendations to help improve the employee's response to similar incidences in the future is very important.

Finally, there should be a closure discussion where the employee & manager exchange notes, discuss and agree on the key leanings and recommendations for the future.

## 3. Handling Opportunities & Blows

Type: Subjective

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### Is this a popular practice?

Rarely! Very few organizations actually help employees improve responsiveness to sudden opportunities or blows while staying focused on their key responsibility areas.

### Keep in mind

There should be an understanding for both the Reviewer & the Reviewee of what qualifies as an opportunity or a blow relevant to the professional context of the employee. Further, there should be an agreement on these just prior to the review.

## 4. Drive for Improvement/Quality

Type: Subjective

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Quality is a continuous journey & the drive to improve, to do & be better is what helps individual employees grow & eventually contribute more to the purpose of the organization.

This review question requires a reflective assessment on aspects that the employee has improved in significance as compared to the past & its impact on the job.

### Review Methods

The Manager & Employee should first check back on the areas of improvement identified in the last review & assess their relevance in the context of the current job and whether there should be any more added to the list.

Then, they should independently assess the employee's progress and recommend rectification strategies if any.

Finally, there should be a concluding discussion where the manager & employee exchange their assessment and conclude on a future plan for continuous improvement.

## 4. Drive for Improvement/Quality

Type: Subjective

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### Is this a popular practice?

In some form or the other, “Drive for Improvement/Quality” is popularly covered to be rated or discussed but not widely as an independent review question.

### Keep in mind

Since every individual’s drive towards quality cannot be expected to be same, there should be an agreement on what would be considered better quality for the employee in the context of each of the area of improvement, how the employee can work towards it and the support expected from the organization.

## 5. Innovation & New Ideas

Type: Subjective

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Innovation as an expected output is quite controversial. None really knows what it exactly should stand for. But in simple words, if quality stands for “how can I do my job better”, innovation stands for “can I do my job differently or can we do something different too?”

This review question does not end with a plan as none can plan to be innovative, but rather develop a better understanding of how to be innovative & ideate effectively.

### Review Methods

The Manager & Employee should independently assess the contributions of the employee towards being innovative & bringing new ideas to the table as well as the organization’s openness to accept and adapt to the employee’s initiatives.

There should be a concluding discussion on the possibilities in the context of the job for the employee & the organization’s expectations in any new areas of focus.

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