

UGH!

The Dreaded Performance Self-Evaluation

Making the most of this annual task can propel your career forward.

BY MONICA TANKSLEY

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN— you can hear the sighs and the moaning and groaning among the troops as you go down the hallway. It's annual self-assessment time! Eyes are rolling, smirks are on employees' faces, and the dread in the office is so thick you can cut it with a knife. It's almost worse than going to the dentist! (In fact, the dentist might be more pleasurable.)

Many parking and transportation departments are asking their employees to complete self-assessments or self-evaluations to highlight their key job responsibilities. These include comments, examples, and sharing how they feel they rate in categories such as professionalism, service, resourcefulness, personal accountability, and leadership. These self-evaluations are then reviewed by a manager and often included in the staff member's annual performance appraisal and personnel file.

Making the Most of It

While many of us whine about this lengthy process and don't feel like anyone reads it, cares, or takes our comments or accomplishments seriously, it really can be a great opportunity to increase communication between ourselves and our managers. It also improves career development. Performance self-evaluations help all of us recognize where we stand and how well we are performing (or not performing). Best of all, it gives us bragging rights.

Looking in the mirror and summarizing our work in an objective way is often difficult. While some of us don't scrutinize ourselves enough, others of us are very self-critical. Below are some tips to assist in making your self-evaluation a success during your upcoming annual performance review.

Give yourself ample time to write your self-

assessment. Although you could try to take time out of your busy schedule at work to complete the assessment, there will be numerous interruptions throughout the day that will affect your focus. It's better to set aside some time in the evening or on a weekend, outside of work, with a clear mind so you can really focus. We all hate taking work home with us, but completing a self-evaluation in the quiet of your home, at the neighborhood library, or even at your favorite coffee shop will increase your focus and drive you to complete this very important project. Take time to do it well and do yourself justice—after all, your self-appraisal is all about you and you're worth it!

Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses.

Self-evaluations aren't just about singing your own praises and pointing out your triumphs. Let go of your ego and emotions and take an honest look at the tasks you enjoy the most and areas where you could improve. Improvement areas could include such things as speaking in front of other staff members, leading projects, or improving time-management skills. Look at areas you struggled with during the year or where you felt you could have done better. It's important not to be self-deprecating in this area of assessment, but use language that accurately conveys the areas you want to work on, what you learned, and what steps you will take to move forward.

Ask yourself where you would like to be in five

years. Once you have answered this question, look into the steps necessary to get that next job or promotion.



Research what skills, education, and experience will be necessary to obtain that goal. Do you need any additional training or skills? Write these down as they can become action steps within your career development plan. Within your plan:

- Identify and cultivate a relationship with a mentor or role model.
- Read material relevant to your industry.
- Engage in training and education.
- Keep a journal.
- Attend seminars relevant to your job.
- Take on special job assignments or job rotation.
- Receive coaching from a skilled co-worker.
- Increase customer contact.

Define what support you would like from your manager.

Brainstorm how your manager could assist you with your career development plan, such as having you lead projects, give you presentation opportunities, or pay for classes to improve your skill sets. Continuously strive for growth and never stagnate. Always adapt, learn, and change, whether you have had a good year or a fair year or have fallen short of some of your expectations. Stay hungry to improve and educate yourself.

Track your accomplishments. Don't downplay your organizational contributions. Stand up for your work in your self-assessment by having data to show what you've done throughout the year. Data are highly beneficial and strengthen the validity of your self-assessment.

Be professional. Always be professional when writing your self-assessment. Avoid using the assessment as an opportunity to criticize managers or co-workers. Use examples to support your assertions and please make sure to spell check your documents. These small but crucial steps are signs of how important the performance evaluation process is to you.

Showcase your accomplishments. The main goal of any self-evaluation is to highlight your accomplishments. Be proud of all you have accomplished within the year and point to specific projects or tasks that highlight your best work. Let your manager recognize your critical role within the organization. Make room for growth and don't become fixed on your perceived failures or too attached to your triumphs. Approach your self-evaluation with the same planning, determination, and effort you put into your daily parking and transportation projects and assignments.

Stand out. Prepare a self-evaluation that stands out! Showcase your accomplishments in a straightforward way, with authenticity, pride, and enthusiasm. Demonstrate the unique value you have contributed to your corner of the parking and transportation industry. For example, if you increased sales, created new marketing strategies, earned a CAPP designation, published articles in parking and transportation trade journals, or received any awards or recognitions, include these. Spotlighting these key accomplishments demonstrates how you differentiate yourself performance-wise.

Avoid accomplishment laundry lists. Make sure your annual goals align with the annual goals of the organization and lead with a discussion of larger projects or more important assignments. Include unexpected projects that popped up during the year you may have taken the lead on. If you have a large volume of accomplishments for the year, categorize them into smaller bullet points to make it easier for your manager and HR to review.

Incorporate feedback. Step into the spotlight! Inserting quotes, kudos, or positive testimonies from your manager, customers, and colleagues showcases your management of relationships and meeting or exceeding expectations. Show off a little! Consider attaching emails and letters that praise your work, turnaround time, or other areas you excelled in.

The Don'ts

Just as there are Do's for self-evaluations, there are also Don'ts. The below list should give you food for thought before you write your self-evaluation. Don't:

- Turn your self-evaluation in late!
- Rush through your self-evaluation.
- Attempt to complete it in one go.
- Assume your manager knows your successes.
- Use emotional words such as "I hope."
- Be afraid to take full credit for your accomplishments.
- Exaggerate.
- Blame your company or manager for your weaknesses.
- Wait until the last minute to begin writing your self-evaluation.
- Forget to bring a copy with you to your performance review meeting to use as a reference!



Whew! Now that you have finished your self-evaluation take a deep breath, take a bow, sit back, relax, and enjoy the praise of a job well done! Don't be afraid to even give yourself a standing ovation! 🎉



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