

## Recovering from a Poor Performance Review

*By Accountemps*

You went into your annual review feeling confident — but walked out deflated because your boss's critique was unfavourable. You had no idea prior to the meeting that she was dissatisfied with your performance. What's worse is that you also believe some of her perceptions about your work are off-base. But what can you do?

Even constructive comments can sting initially, but unexpected or unfounded criticism can be downright demoralizing. While your first instinct following a less than stellar review is to defend yourself — or perhaps even resign — it's important to take a step back before you create an un-mendable situation. Here are some dos and don'ts to keep in mind:

**Do ask for documentation.** Your manager's comments should echo what's in the written version of the review, so be sure you obtain a copy. Ideally, this should happen before the meeting ends. Many employers provide this documentation automatically as part of the evaluation process, but not all, so you may need to ask for it. (Also, you should've taken notes during the review so you can compare what you heard with what was said and/or written.)

**Don't broadcast.** If you feel your boss has given you an unfair assessment, you may feel compelled to "rally the troops" to come to your defense. But you shouldn't share the results of your unflattering performance review with other employees. By essentially asking them to take sides, you'll be placing your colleagues in an awkward position. Also, there's no guarantee a coworker won't share your comments with the boss — inadvertently or purposefully.

**Do weigh the feedback.** A natural reaction to criticism is embarrassment— as well as discomfort. These feelings can prevent you from applying a rational ear to what your boss is telling you. After you've had time to compose yourself, carefully consider your boss's concerns and determine which are justified — and which you consider inaccurate. If you do believe your manager's evaluation isn't on target, just be sure you can back up your claims with facts should you decide to take some sort of action.

**Don't fail to schedule a follow-up meeting.** After you've had a few days to process the feedback, request another meeting with your supervisor to discuss next steps and if needed, talk through any criticisms you feel were misplaced. If you were taken aback by your manager's assessment, you may want to request regularly scheduled meetings to receive more timely feedback and reduce the likelihood of any further surprises.

**Do make positive change.** Although a poor performance review doesn't mean you're on the fast track to unemployment, you should be proactive about adjusting your work habits and demonstrating the value you can provide to the organization. Uncomfortable as it may be, it's likely you'll be "under the microscope" until you can successfully address any concerns.

Lastly, don't be too hard on yourself. No one is perfect, and most people will receive a poor performance review at least once in their careers. Consider it a learning experience — and an opportunity to improve. And, after careful consideration, if you truly believe the concerns your boss has raised cannot be resolved, take it as a sign it's time to move on.

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