

Delivering Appraisals Training

Appraisals processes can deliver significant improvements in morale, skills and staff retention, but to do that everyone involved needs to understand how to conduct effective appraisals and be aware of what appraisals can, and can't, deliver.

This practice note guides you through the stages of implementing a training programme to support the appraisals process and covers:

- Why appraisals training is required
- Who the training needs to be targeted at
- What the content of the courses should be
- How the training should be delivered
- The timing of the training delivery
- Feedback on training and support

Why is appraisals training required?

Appraisals can cause a great deal of anxiety for many employees.

Managers are typically concerned about:

- The time taken to complete them
- How to give less than positive feedback
- The feedback they may receive from their team and other colleagues
- Adverse reactions from an appraisee (tears, anger etc.)
- Completing the paperwork appropriately

Appraisees main concerns are:

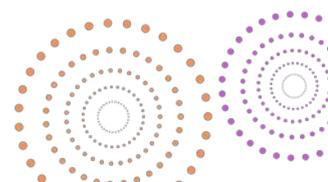
- Fear of hearing where they are underperforming
- Concerns about pay and reward (if appraisals are linked to financial incentives)
- Cynicism about the effectiveness of appraisals
- Not having the opportunity to put forward their version of events
- What to do if they feel they have received an unfair appraisal

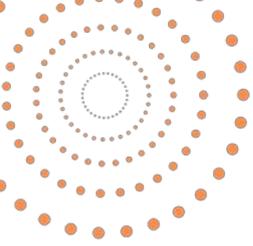
Appraisals training is need to address these concerns and respond to any other questions or worries those involved in the process may have.

Who needs to attend the training?

If you are implementing a new appraisals process or making significant changes to an existing programme ideally everyone involved in the process will need to attend.

Compulsory training programmes are rarely popular with those required to attend but they are an effective way of ensuring everyone receives the same message.





Two tiers of training are required:

- Training for those conducting appraisals
- Training for those receiving appraisals

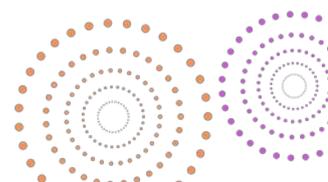
Within the firm you may wish to divide this further and deliver separate training for fee earners, secretaries and support staff, particularly if their appraisals paperwork is significantly different.

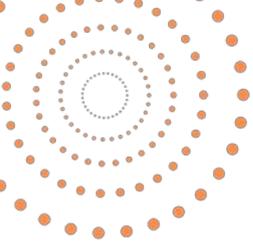
It is also essential that all the senior partners are fully aware of the appraisals programme, what is involved and what it hopes to achieve. Whilst separate training course or presentation will achieve this, it can be most beneficial for them to attend one of the general courses to publicly demonstrate their buy in to the process and hear any concerns and issues raised.

What Does the Training Need to Cover?

Appraisals training courses need to cover 4 main areas:

Subject Area	Content for Appraisers	Content for Appraisees
Why Are We Conducting Appraisals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the anticipated benefits for the firm, the clients and the staff• Clearly explain how training will benefit each individual• What their role in the appraisals process is	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the anticipated benefits for the firm, the clients and the staff• Clearly explain how training will benefit each individual
The Appraisal Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A guide to the format of an appraisal meeting• How to give appropriate feedback• Questioning and listening skills• Managing emotional responses from appraisees• How the appraisal process fits with the performance management process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What to expect - a guide to the format of an appraisal meeting• Dealing with positive feedback and improvement• How to “make your case” and demonstrate your achievements
The Overall Appraisals Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will happen before and after the appraisal meeting• What happens to the documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will happen before and after the appraisal meeting• What happens to the documentation





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will objectives and training plans be monitored throughout the year • What is your responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will objectives and training plans be monitored throughout the year • What is your responsibility • How to build your personal development plan and manage your career and development
The Paperwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A guide to the paperwork • What is expected within each section • Setting appropriate objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A guide to the paperwork • What is expected within each section • Setting appropriate objectives

Because many managers will be appraisees themselves as well as having to deliver appraisals, their training sessions may need to a little longer to ensure they have all the information and support they require.

It may also be necessary to provide additional training or support for new or inexperienced managers who are conducting appraisals for the first time.

How Does the Training Need to be Delivered?

It is best if the sessions are as concise and interactive as possible and ideally groups should be no larger than 12 – 15 delegates.

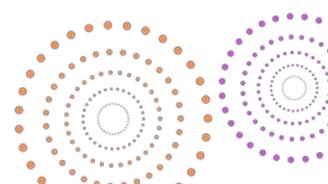
A series of informal workshops work well with appraisees sessions lasting no longer than 90 minutes and sessions for appraisers not exceeding two hours.

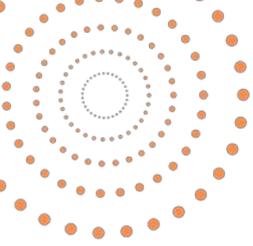
To ensure they are as accessible as possible for everyone they should be scheduled at different times of the day and on different days of the week wherever possible.

Most firms have a meeting room which could be used for this purpose, though it is important to make sure rooms are not overcrowded as this will impact on the comfort of delegates and their ability to take on and retain information.

Delegates will need clear line of sight to the presentation being delivered and some means of making notes.

Any training should be supported by online materials; making training presentations and/ or workbooks available online via intranet systems will allow delegates to look through them prior to attending.





It is also a good idea to make all the materials available to everyone. Appraisals often generate suspicion amongst those being appraised who are usually very keen to know “what are the managers being told?” By making all the materials available online the process remains transparent and messages remain consistent.

When Should the Training Take Place?

Most firms have a window of time during which appraisals are expected to take place. Any training delivered needs to start two weeks before that window opens and be available through until the final deadline.

Many employees will attend in good time but an element of “strong encouragement” may be required for those less keen to attend and those who have a tendency to leave things until the last minute. Making “attendance at appraisals training” and “completion of appraisals” measurable objectives on the appraisals themselves can often help.

In addition to the training, online support and access to one to one support should be available for those seeking clarification on a particular point or requiring additional guidance when conducting a more challenging appraisal.

Feedback on Training and Support

The effectiveness of each training session should be monitored by use of evaluation forms distributed at the end of each session. The overall effectiveness of the training and support cannot be properly measured until after the appraisals have been completed and people are able to evaluate how well the training equipped them to deal with the process and any issues raised.

For that reason, it is important to seek additional feedback, perhaps by using an online survey site, to determine what levels of training and support will be required in the future.

