

How to bounce back from a poor performance review

by Jane Middleton, HR Partner, The Middleton Partnership

We all know it can hurt. A less than positive or a negative performance review can be like a really nasty slap in the face. It's not pleasant.....go ahead and cry if you need to (in private). Now, once you're able to sit back and look at things rationally, how can you take the necessary steps to redeem yourself?

Let's see what we can do to get you back on track.....

Think about what Was Said

First off, take some time to truly examine the exact details of what was stated on the review. Try to remove the emotion and look at the facts. What were the main areas of weakness? What examples were cited? Look at your performance honestly, through an outsider's perspective. Are these things completely shocking or are they somewhat expected? Do you think this is a fair analysis?

Don't Argue

It can be tempting to make excuses and deny any wrong doing. After all, no one goes to work each morning intending to do a bad job. But trying to justify your actions and behaviours usually won't get you anywhere.

I learned a lesson when I worked in the hotel industry as a graduate trainee nearly 20 years ago which might possibly help you understand my thought process here: In my role as a guest relations officer, we had "mystery guests" who would come in to the hotel and pose as authentic customers< to test our skills and customer service. They would then report back to management and give us a score. One day, I was "caught out" and I ended up getting what amounted to a B+ on my performance review report card. As a straight A student, I was appalled! Looking at the mystery guest's notes, I saw that I got points deducted for not standing up to greet her. Well, I immediately wanted to pull the hotel's security camera videotape for that day. Of course I stood up to greet her! I remembered the lady in question like it was yesterday. I was going to fight this injustice if it was the last thing I did! Then my manager said, "The truth doesn't even really matter. It's about the customer's perception. If she perceived that you didn't stand, you didn't. Case closed."

The point is this: how others perceive you and your actions is often more important than the reality. If others see you as "not being a team player," there's no point trying to argue emphatically about it. If you honestly do not agree with what was said, make a written statement of defence and leave it at that. If you have some kind of paper trail that proves an inaccuracy on the review, by all means provide this to management or your HR representative immediately. But don't spend too much energy fighting. Take that energy and use it to improve your performance.

Improve

Use this as an opportunity to show your ability to accept feedback and adapt your performance. In today's workplace, flexibility is an essential trait. Show that you can rise to the challenge. Create concrete ways to improve your performance and share these goals

and objectives with your line manager. In your next performance review, you'll be able to cite specific things you did to avoid making the same mistakes. An individual who has the ability to hear criticism and take action to improve is an enormous asset in any business.

Get Over It

Reviews are meant to help employees. Don't get wrapped up feeling like management is "picking on you". Honest, constructive criticism is intended to help you grow. Don't let this get you down or de-motivate you. One poor review is not the end of the world. Yes, it's a wakeup call. But you can get back in the game, and back on track, in no time. Give it some effort and really show that you're trying. That's the most important thing.

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She set up The Middleton Partnership in January 2011 having spent 17 years working in senior HR business partner roles in for Citi, Cazenove, J.P. Morgan and IHG hotels.

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