

## **Performance Review Systems** **By Janis Von Culin, President, Von Culin Associates**

**Q:** We are thinking about putting in a performance review system for our employees. Can you give us some pointers about what to do and not do?

**A:** We've learned a lot about what is necessary for an effective performance management process. Firstly, a generic review form doesn't cut it: tailor the evaluation criteria to the specific function or department. Even more effective is to develop specific performance goals and measures at the start of the performance year and involve the employee in the process to increase his/her buy-in.

Secondly, it's not a once-a-year event. Managers need to have periodic one-on-one sessions with each of their direct reports – monthly or quarterly – to talk about performance. Then there shouldn't be any big surprises when the formal "year end" evaluation is completed. These periodic sessions allow the employee to address concerns and make "course corrections" along the way. And, if circumstances and priorities change in the organization, performance goals can be modified to fit the new realities.

Thirdly, treat employees like adults. Ask for their views of what they've done best, and how they'd like to improve. If you identify a performance gap, describe it clearly, clarify why it matters, and explore with the employee the reasons for the gap. (Has he been afraid to say he has too much work on his plate? Does he not recognize how important the task is? Does she lack the ability to handle the work?).

Finally, remember that most of us are not born with supervisory skills. Managers may need to be trained on how to set goals, how to coach their employees and how to give feedback that works.