

Must-Do Tips No 39: To Appraise or Apprize?

appraise [15th century. Alteration of apprize, *after praise*]

Alright yes, appraisals are not directly a Business Development (BD) or Client Relationship 'thing'. But indirectly, the quality of how the performance of your professionals is assessed goes to the heart of how BD-successful (or not) a firm is. There are those appraisers who forget the origin of the word, embarking solely upon a ruthless dissection of just what is wrong with the individuals they assess. **If** they ever get around to conducting them, there are others who just treat the process as an annoying, time-consuming distraction from fee-earning. Either way, the result can be dysfunctional to job and personal improvement.

From the archive of "appraisal systems we have known", this month we offer three observations to help your firm's go better.

Tip 1 – the scoring 'own goal'

Let's start with a modest assertion of opinion, shall we? Any appraisal system that has a detailed method of scoring people performance (one to 5, one to 10, one to 100 etc.) is probably doomed to failure. No doubt someone somewhere thought it was a good idea to put numbers on it, to make this touchy feely stuff more concrete, to have a 'real' basis for salary or bonus awards etc. In practice, all it does is highlight the essential subjectivity of people assessing other people - in a way that can be fundamentally divisive ("Why did she get 3.5 and I only got 3? I'm much better than her at it!"). There are better, more productive ways...

Tip 2 – no BD specifics

We are astounded more often than should be by the number of appraisals that don't cover business development, marketing, or client relationship building. What is the message to the recipient? It's not important. But nowadays, firms do have competency frameworks that appear to force these issues to be covered; except that participants can then fall prey to the phenomenon known as *Woolly Aims**. To succeed, any BD development aim must at least be *specific* and *measurable* enough. It's the difference between these two:

"Attend more seminars and networking events"

"Attend at least six networking events over the next six months to generate at least nine new meaningful contacts"

*As described in Must-Do Tips No 32.

Tip 3 – remember...it's apprise

It is what happens **after praise** that is as important as the appraisal itself – maybe more so. Too many appraisers in the professions treat appraisals like the drawing up of business or marketing plans – once a year phenomena that are left to gather dust until the 'season' comes round again. Even if your system contains review stages built in, they are ignored. The best appraisers can see (or are shown!) the consequences of their inaction in this respect, and build in an interest in their staff and what specific aims they have been set on a frequent, regular basis .

People Scope helps professional firms to apprise better. For more information, hit 'Reply' and type **Apprizals not Appraisals**.

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