

Benefits of Self-Evaluations

In addition to being an opportunity to highlight your accomplishments to your manager, self-evaluations are also a powerful tool for employees for the following reasons:

- They allow you to identify areas for growth and demonstrate your value to the organization in a matter-of-fact way. Because you'll be drawing on metrics and examples from over the course of the year, you'll be able to paint a clear, concrete picture of your value to the organization. Additionally, since self-evaluations are a time to reflect on opportunities for improvement, within this framework employees can advocate for themselves and the resources they need to expand their skills and knowledge.
- They prepare you for the scheduled conversation with your manager that will likely comprise a substantial portion of your performance review. The “no surprises” rule — that an employee should always expect what's coming during their performance appraisal — is commonly taught to managers, but is equally important for employees to remember. As you review your notes from the past 6-12 months in order to write your self-evaluation, you'll brush up on what went well and where you can improve, which will equip you to discuss both wins and areas for improvement with your manager — and ensure that you won't be caught off-guard.
- They give you the chance to remind your manager what an asset you are, to both the team and the organization as a whole. Managers are in charge of a lot and do their best to keep track of their direct reports' successes. But, they also have to keep day-to-day operations afloat, and make sure that the team stays on track with bigger-picture goals, too. Meaning that your accomplishments won't always be top-of-mind for them. Over the course of 12 months, people's memories fade and managers shift their focus to the most current fires that need to be put out. Luckily, you can use your self-evaluation to remind your manager of what you've accomplished and how you've contributed to your company's success.

4 Tips for Writing an Effective Self-Evaluation

Writing about ourselves can be uncomfortable — it can feel boastful at times, or awkward at the very least. Here's what you need to know about writing a comprehensive, accurate, and effective self-review that demonstrates your strong performance while also touching on areas for growth.

1. Be specific and provide examples.

Specificity helps contextualize claims. Vagueness robs you of the opportunity to tout your hard work and strategic approach to your everyday tasks and projects. It's not only natural ability that's responsible for your success, though that may be a part of it. Most likely, it's a combination of several factors that has contributed to your success. Own that! If you're struggling to get specific, try brainstorming a list of behaviors, skills, expertise, and/or abilities that you possess. Then, select the ones you want to highlight in your review, and elaborate on them with specific examples that illustrate each quality.

2. Back up your contributions with metrics.

Numbers are powerful because they make a clear connection between performance and results. Quantifiable figures help our brains put things in perspective, so to the extent you can wrap your accomplishments into metrics, do so. Metrics are useful for providing evidence to support claims and highlight your successes. And you'll be able to refer to your measurable progress and achievements when writing your self-review.

3. Frame weaknesses as opportunities.

While self-evaluations are an opportunity to highlight your stellar accomplishments, they're also a time to self-reflect and assess where you can improve. Be honest about your shortcomings, but be sure to frame these areas for improvement as opportunities for growth.

4. Keep track of your accomplishments throughout the year.

Avoid recency bias, the tendency to focus on the most timely or recent events — or forgetting certain achievements altogether — by keeping track of your accomplishments and the impact they've had throughout the year. Trying to remember the details of a project from January can be difficult when you're preparing for your review at the end of the year. You'll have a much easier time writing a comprehensive but concise review if you can quickly refresh your memory on all your successes in one, easy-to-reference document. Keep a running Word doc (or a log in a notes app on your phone) with the important details about your achievements. Or, if you prefer pen and paper, designate a notebook specifically for this purpose and keep it handy at work.