



*focus first* is our way of staying in touch with our colleagues and friends who are interested in Competency-based Integrated Performance Management & Development and *focus Software*, an employee success system.

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**Hats Off to Neumann Homes:** Congratulations to Gerry Post, Vice President of Team Member Growth and to his whole staff on their recent selection by Training Magazine and the Leadership Alliance as one of the **2002 Top 100 Training Functions**. In fact, they were rated in the top 50 - a remarkable achievement as Neumann University was launched just two years ago. Their achievement will be recognized in Atlanta in mid-February. Neumann University has been a user of *focus* software for the past 18 months. A new *focus* module, Training Registration and Management, was developed in conjunction with Neumann Homes where it is being currently used and it will be made available to other *focus* users soon. Nice work!!!

## ISSUES AND REFLECTIONS

### Using Performance Appraisal To Help Your Employees Succeed

by Carolyn B. Thompson, TRAINING SYSTEMS, INC.

**Performance appraisal is a process, not an event.** Performance feedback begins with the communication of expectations from the organization to the employee. This happens first in the recruiting and interviewing stage and then carries on into new employee training and orientation. From there, performance appraisal becomes a *daily process* of constructive feedback on both positive aspects of performance and areas for improvement. "*Daily performance appraisals?!?*" you're thinking. Relax! This is the way to change performance appraisal from a meaningless paperwork exercise that causes discomfort for both you and your staff into a way to improve employee performance and *your own performance*. All it takes is practicing performance management year round.

Year round performance management **removes the surprises** at the end of the year, thereby removing the discomfort. It also **removes the meaningless paperwork** – the paper becomes simply an action plan between you and your employee reminding you of the goals and actions you've both agreed to.

Another benefit is ongoing, job-related feedback. A lack of job-related constructive feedback—both positive *and* in areas of

A second result of not receiving feedback is the development of poor work habits. Poor work habits can begin in very subtle—often unintentional—ways. Waiting until the magic day of the performance appraisal allows a performance problem to become both a habit and a bigger performance issue than it needs to be. It will be difficult to affect change by this time, and the relationship between you and your employee will be less than productive!

The other big benefit is **no surprises** at the yearly "official" performance appraisal. It should simply cover everything that you and the employee have already discussed and worked on throughout the year, including how they've performed the functions in their job description, how they've met the goals set at the last formal appraisal, and any goals that have been

Provide informal, ongoing feedback to the employee regarding his job performance by communicating the specifics of their good (and poor) work performance. Although most supervisors would much prefer not to discuss a shortcoming in job performance with an employee, it is much better to deal constructively with a small problem at the time that it surfaces, rather than allow it to become a more serious concern that must be dealt with for the first time on evaluation day. This doesn't guarantee that the employee will like the feedback you give. But when the employee sees that you use the evaluation process as a mechanism for **helping them to succeed**, you strengthen your relationship, opening doors for all kinds of productivity improvement. Why? **Because the employee knows what's expected, they heard it immediately, you worked with them, and they trust and respect you!**

*Carolyn B. Thompson is the President of TRAINING SYSTEMS, INC., a customized training and HR consulting company that helps organizations enhance their ability to recruit, inspire and retain quality employees and improve performance through training. She is a noted source for Business Week, Small Business Computing and Working Woman and the author of "Creating Highly Interactive Training Quickly and Effectively". Visit*