

Ask the Career Coach: Performance, Relationship, Reputation

What should you do when you receive a poor performance review when previous ones were strong?

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

I just received a poor performance review from my new manager after being reorganized under him approximately three months ago. I am trying to figure out how to handle this situation as all of my previous reviews were strong. The lower rating will impact my bonus significantly. I feel like this was done to save on the bonus payout versus truly reflective of my performance this past year. What can I do?

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If your new manager is new to the company, think about how he has been integrated to the company and to your group. Have you and your group introduced him to the goals and agenda of your functional area? Did the team review the goals set by your previous manager with him? Were the goals modified? Try to discover what changed and how you may or may not have adjusted to these changes.

Open the dialogue with your new manager. Ask him what he expected during the last few months. Ask him what criteria he used to evaluate your performance during this time. Ask if he received input from your previous manager and others, such as peers, subordinates and clients you served during the performance evaluation period.

Understand your company's policy regarding the performance review process. What is the protocol for replying to a review you disagree with it? Consider writing a non-emotional response that demonstrates your accomplishments and acknowledges where you can continue to improve. Consider why your previous performance reviews have been strong if this is your first review that doesn't follow. Is there any consistent pattern of comments over the years that you can reflect on to learn from? Has the job changed recently?

According to Clarence Darrow, "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." This is a valid statement, especially in this marketplace. Learning to adapt to the changes around you be they market driven, environmental or changes in attitude and perception is a must. You may choose to stay the course and ride out some changes and at other times you may need to shift with the market.

Think about who you want to spend time with — people you enjoy or people who resist every suggestion made? Think about your new boss. What is his style, how have you begun to establish your relationship with him?

What is your reputation? Are you perceived as a team player or a high maintenance player? What are you known for in your company, in your functional area and in your group? Have you conveyed or have your colleagues expressed the value you bring to this position? Relationships are a key component of maintaining one's position just as networking is when you are in a job search. Think about how you manage your reputation and your relationships.

About this column: "Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to

CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com. Lisa Chenofsky Singer is a Millburn-Short Hills resident and the founder of Chenofsky Singer & Associates LLC. She offers Executive and Career Management Coaching and Human Resources Consulting, writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her web site is www.ChenofskySinger.com.