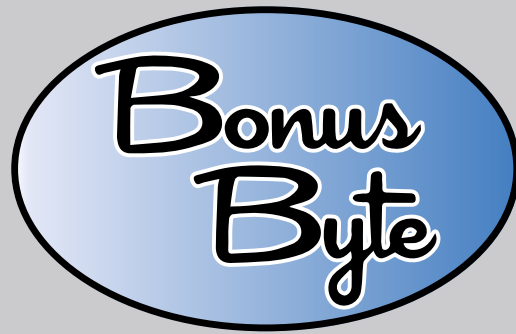


BUD

TO



BOSS

The Fallacy of the Performance Review

THE FALLACY OF THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

by Kevin Eikenberry

Every year the dance begins.

Supervisors and managers know they'll soon have to do the annual performance review for all of their employees. They get the notice from HR reminding them of the deadlines. They get copies of the forms that will be used. They may even get some training on how to use the forms or conduct the reviews more effectively. Every few years the process will change – either in a small administrative way or in some more substantial way – at least from the perspective of those revising the process.

But to the supervisor, it is all the same. Once a year they have to have a performance conversation with their “direct reports.”

While the employee doesn't get the memo from HR, they know the time is coming too – they know that at some point they'll get an email from their boss, or the topic will come up in a staff meeting. “Performance Reviews will be soon, look at your calendars and let's find a time to do this.”

Most supervisors make this proclamation with a serious tone – they know that they represent the organization's interests, and that even if they don't like doing these reviews, they know they are a part of the job. Most employees with more than a couple of years on the job know what their bosses are thinking as well – and the dance continues.

And so it goes – supervisors do performance reviews because they are expected to. And employees participate because they must. Far too infrequently does this conversation lead to meaningful changes in performance – either taking a high performer and making him or her a star or taking a person with some performance challenges and helping to make significant strides of improvement.

Of course these are the goals of the performance review – to provide people with feedback on performance, compare that to the expectations of the job and provide an opportunity for conversation on how to improve (regardless of the current level of performance).

These goals are wonderful. Unfortunately, in most all cases, a performance review, no matter how well done, no matter the intentions of the participants or the skill of the supervisor, won't achieve these goals.

In other words we do the performance review in our organizations because these goals are valid and “everyone does them.” Then when they don't reap the desired results, organizations look to update the forms, improve the feedback skills of the supervisors or otherwise improve the process.

Here is the best way to improve the process: eliminate the performance review. That's right, I said **get rid of performance reviews!**

The Fallacies of the Performance Review

Imagine that a dancer had a personal coach. That dancer would expect their coach to provide them with a clear picture of what excellent performance looked like, expect ongoing encouragement, positive feedback when appropriate and correction when needed. The dancer wouldn't be very happy if the coach only watched once in awhile throughout the year during occasional performances or practices, then scheduled an annual meeting to discuss progress.

In the same way, a golfer would want a coach to provide feedback frequently and timely.

We read these examples and nod our heads in agreement. Then we go to work and do exactly the opposite.

In the most fundamental ways our work is no different from the dancer or golfer – in our work we perform (do our work) all the time. In order for us to benefit from coaching it needs to be in context, and in the flow of our work. Unfortunately the performance review process is set up to look at our work as a snapshot, rather than a running video recording.

Stated simply, while performance is an ongoing process, a performance review is an event (and usually a far too infrequent event at that).

What You Can Do as a Leader

There are several things you can do as a leader to work within your current performance review process and still make it work significantly better. Everything suggested is within your control and won't violate any of the tenets of your existing organizational process.

1. Stop thinking of the annual event. Yes, you may have to do the forms each year, but you can meet and discuss performance as often as you want.
2. Turn it into a process. Regular conversation, perhaps informal, will make for a much better outcome.
3. Remember the key purposes. Clear expectations, discussion of progress and feedback for continual improvement. These three guideposts will make your conversations more useful to every one.
4. Explain the change. Let your people know what you are doing and why. Once they know why you are doing this, they likely will love it!
5. Improve your skills. Yes, you can get better at giving feedback, building rapport and all those things (we all can!). And when you are having regular conversations you will get better faster!
6. Use your review process as a culmination. You can fill out the forms and paperwork anytime. And if you are having ongoing conversation, it should be quite simple!

What You Can Do as an Employee

As an employee you may be thinking that, while you agree with everything you've read, there is really nothing you can do to change your situation. While you don't hold all the cards in this game, you can be proactive in asking for more of a process approach.

1. Ask for a clearer picture of success. It is your success you want to create – it is only appropriate that you know exactly what is expected.
2. Ask for feedback regularly. Even if it looks very informal or if your boss doesn't recognize this as "reviewing your performance," you can create something that is more like an ongoing process, and less like an annual event.
3. Share successes and challenges regularly. This will help you get the feedback you need to continue to improve.

Final Thoughts

People often ask me, "How can we improve performance reviews?" I surprise many people by saying "The best thing you can do is eliminate them." Hopefully this article explains why I feel this way. I do recognize that many aren't in the position to eliminate them completely, and so my secondary advice is to take the focus off of the annual review and put it back on performance. Since performance is ongoing, so should the conversation about it.

Turn your review event into an ongoing conversation and you will have taken the most important step you can in making your process relevant and useful to everyone.

ABOUT BUD TO BOSS

Bud to Boss provides new leaders and organizations looking to develop new leaders with insight, resources and powerful learning opportunities designed to specifically address the challenges of successfully transitioning from peer to leader.

To speak with someone about how we can help you or your organization, send a note to **info@BudtoBoss.com** or call the number on this page.

You can learn more about us at:

BudtoBoss.com

Our products and services include:

- Books & Learning Resources, including the best-selling book *From Bud to Boss*
- Classroom & Virtual Workshops
- The Bud to Boss Toolkit eLearning Course
- A Variety of Enterprise Solutions including Onsite Training and Certification



@BudtoBoss



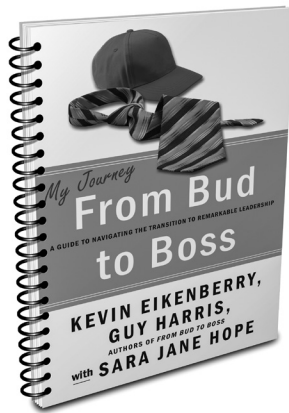
@FromBudtoBoss



/ BudtoBossOfficial

The Kevin Eikenberry Group
8021 Westover Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46268

(317) 387-1424

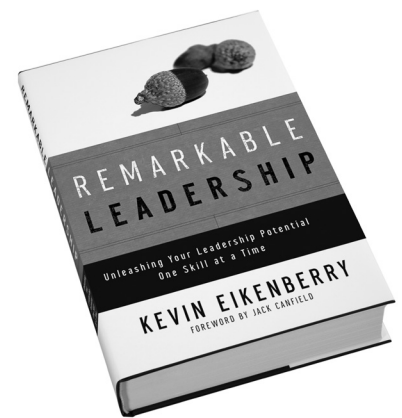


My Journey From Bud to Boss

A companion volume to the From Bud to Boss book, the Journey is a workbook designed to help you apply the knowledge gained to actual work experiences. It includes activities, questions, and exercises designed to take you beyond the concepts introduced to you during the Workshop or the book. And while this book is completely designed to be written in, all of the templates and tools are available in both PDF and Word document form so that you can use them over and over.

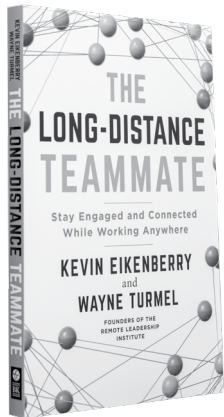
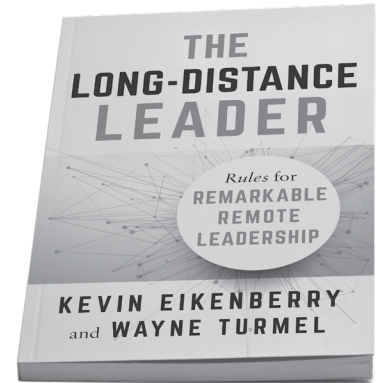
Remarkable Leadership

is a practical handbook written for anyone who wants to hone the skills needed to become a remarkable leader. This book outlines a framework and a mechanism for both learning new things and applying current knowledge in a thoughtful and practical way. It explores real-world concerns such as focus, limited time, incremental improvement, and how we learn.



The Long-Distance Leader

is a practical, candid look at what it takes to lead people, projects and teams in today's dispersed workplace. The book showcases 19 rules for being a remarkable remote leader, and offers practical models, tools, and best practices to tackle the real-world challenges from how we work and communicate virtually.



The Long-Distance Teammate

Written by the founders of the Remote Leadership Institute, this book is the most authoritative single resource for helping remote workers get work done effectively, build relationships that are both productive and satisfying, and maintain a career trajectory when they are not in constant close contact with their leader, coworkers, or the organization in general.

Check out our website for additional leadership resources including our free video training series, blogs, newsletters, podcast and more!

[BudtoBoss.com/resources](https://budtoboss.com/resources)