

## GROWTH CONFERENCES

There are few management tasks more difficult than sitting down with another human being to discuss his or her strengths and weaknesses. Most practices don't use growth conferences (performance appraisals) at all because of this very reason.

Our experience shows that, of the few who do utilize growth conferences, most do a very poor job - resulting in very poor results. This is unfortunate because growth conferences can be valuable tools in establishing a healthy, successful practice in which all team members, including the doctor, can grow and mature. Growth conferences can be one of the best tools a practice has for motivating team members and increasing their effectiveness.

Growth conferences are usually based on numerical rating systems, qualitative assessments, or combinations of the two. Although these systems are supposed to be objective, they are really quite subjective. Differences in job content and evaluators can often make an enormous difference in the way an employee is evaluated.

We strongly encourage the use of a goal-oriented growth conference system. In this way, the doctor and the team member agree on objectives at the time of the conference, then evaluate the progress made toward those objectives at the following appraisal.

There are several advantages to this system:

- A) By allowing the team member to participate in establishing objectives, they more enthusiastically accept the responsibility of meeting these goals because they feel a sense of ownership in them.
- B) This system is very clear about precisely what is necessary to achieve these goals, making it easier for the team member to achieve them.
- C) Even though this method is largely qualitative, it eliminates the subjectivity problems inherent in numerical rating schemes. The objectives are either met or they are not.

As these growth conferences are performed in your practice, keep the following points in mind:

1. **Maintain consistent frequency** - growth conferences should be regularly scheduled on an annual basis and performed more often on an as-needed basis.
2. **Use your growth conference form as a guide.**
3. **Start with the positive** - Avoid statements such as, "I think you're doing a fine job, but ..." followed by a long list of negatives. Issue praise freely, using specific examples and avoiding generalities.

4. **Always be impeccably fair -**
- a) Be consistent. Don't criticize a deficiency in one team member while accepting it in another.
  - b) Always use specific examples to support your conclusions.
  - c) Base your conclusions and use only examples from the current appraisal period.

5. **Avoid accusations -** Use more questions. For example:  
"You're doing the same thing all over again. You're all bogged down and nothing is getting done on time."

VS

"How do things get so bogged down? What do you think can be done to correct the situation?"

6. **Establish as much agreement as possible, as early as possible in the evaluation.**

7. **Set goals together.**

8. **Allow other team members to anonymously participate in the growth conference process -** This allows co-workers who may work more closely with the team member to contribute valuable information to the doctor, both positive and negative. All information should be objectively filtered through the doctor prior to the conference.



**GROWTH CONFERENCE  
(EMPLOYER FORM)**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Conducting Appraisal: \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT IS YOUR EMPLOYEE DOING WELL?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**IN WHAT WAYS SHOULD HE/SHE IMPROVE?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
Specifically, this person will have to:

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Specifically, this person will have to:

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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Specifically, this person will have to:

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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
Specifically, this person will have to:

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**ACTION PLAN:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**NEXT REVIEW PERIOD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

# GROWTH CONFERENCE (EMPLOYEE FORM)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT DO YOU FEEL YOU DO PARTICULARLY WELL?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**IN WHAT WAYS SHOULD YOU IMPROVE?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Specifically, I will have to:

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

Specifically, I will have to:

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

Specifically, I will have to:

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4. \_\_\_\_\_

Specifically, I will have to:

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**AS A LEADER AND EMPLOYER:**

**1. YOU DO THESE THINGS PARTICULARLY WELL:**

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**1. THESE THINGS WOULD HELP ME BE A BETTER EMPLOYEE:**

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**ACTION PLAN:**

**NEXT REVIEW PERIOD:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_