



15

Performance

Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about staff appraisals
- Discussing and evaluating performance
- Making people feel relaxed
- Talking about hypothetical past events using third and mixed conditionals
- Pointing out alternative courses of action using *could have* and *should have*

Case study

- Overcoming business setbacks

Starting point

- 1 What criteria could you use to measure the performance of 1–3?
 - 1 a company
 - 2 a project
 - 3 an employee
- 2 Which criteria are the most important for each one?
- 3 Which criteria are the easiest to measure?
- 4 How is performance measured where you work?

Working with words | Staff appraisals

1 Read the article about one company's approach to staff appraisal. Match these headings to paragraphs A–G.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Sharing the responsibility ____ | 5 Don't rush it ____ |
| 2 A worthwhile effort ____ | 6 How we conduct the appraisal ____ |
| 3 Developing an appraisal system ____ | 7 Discussing targets ____ |
| 4 Monitoring performance ____ | |

Use appraisals to manage performance

Sea Zoo is Wales' largest marine aquarium, which attracts over 75,000 visitors a year. Director and partner, Alison Lea-Wilson, describes how the company introduced an appraisal system that has proved to be a key motivator for its 25 staff.



A When we started, our appraisals were more of an informal chat. As we grew, we decided to implement twice-yearly formal appraisals. We wanted to make sure that employees' contributions fitted the goals of the business and we also wanted to have the chance to recognize good performance and address any issues.

B We invite staff to appraisals in writing, including a copy of the appraisal form to fill in. The completed form is discussed during the appraisal itself, with an emphasis on giving constructive two-way feedback.

C The majority of our performance objectives aren't as easily quantifiable as, say, sales targets, so we use a scoring system to monitor performance. The manager and employee rate each objective on a scale of one to four and compare the results, which can be very helpful.

D Appraisals also provide an opportunity to set performance objectives. We base ours on each employee's job description. We talk to staff so that we can agree the objectives with them and they know what to expect.

E I used to think that it was my responsibility to conduct all appraisals. I've learnt that delegating to line managers is equally effective and demonstrates trust in their abilities.

F In the early days, we also underestimated how long a thorough appraisal takes. It's counterproductive if the appraisee feels their manager has one eye on the clock. We now allow a minimum of an hour and a half for each employee.

G Providing an opportunity for staff to express their views and address any issues is a real morale booster, as is giving praise where it's due. It does take time and hard work, but it enables us all to have real communication and really motivates people.



2 Read the text again and answer questions 1–3.

- 1 What were the three aims of having formal appraisals?
- 2 What things are discussed in the appraisal and what style of feedback is preferred?
- 3 How do they deal with performance objectives which aren't easy to measure?

3 Match the verbs in A to the noun phrases in B to make phrases used in the text.

A		B	
monitor	give	issues	performance
conduct	rate	views	objectives on a scale
agree	express	objectives	constructive feedback
address		an appraisal	

4 Match the phrases in 3 to these definitions.

- 1 carry out an assessment of how well someone is doing at work: _____
- 2 talk about your opinion of something: _____
- 3 think about a problem / situation and decide what to do about it: _____
- 4 tell someone in a positive way how they are doing at work: _____
- 5 give points to measure how well someone has been doing at work: _____
- 6 check regularly how someone is doing at work: _____
- 7 decide with someone else what you hope to achieve at work: _____

5 Using four of the phrases in 3, make questions to ask your partner about appraisals in their company. Then ask and answer the questions.

6 58▶ Listen to a human resources manager describing a system of 360° feedback.

Work with a partner and answer questions 1–3.

- 1 What is the central idea of 360° appraisals? How do they work?
- 2 What do raters comment on?
- 3 What two important things do you need to consider if you use 360° feedback?

7 Complete the phrases in *italics* from audio 58▶ with these words.

criteria appraisal judgement tool management rating

- 1 How does 360° differ from a more traditional top-down *staff* _____?
- 2 In what ways is 360° a *development* _____?
- 3 What sort of *assessment* _____ might be used for 360° appraisal?
- 4 Who would carry out the *peer* _____ in your situation?
- 5 As a rater, how honest would you be in your *value* _____ of your peers?
- 6 Do you have a role in *performance* _____ in your company?

8 Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions in 7.

9 Match the phrasal verbs in **bold in audio script 58▶ (page 165) to these definitions. Then make a sentence with each of the phrasal verbs.**

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 get as a result: _____ | 4 distribute: _____ |
| 2 give an impression: _____ | 5 look at very carefully: _____ |
| 3 stop doing one thing and start another: _____ | 6 continue: _____ |

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 15** on page 130.

10 Choose one of the jobs below or another job you know about. Think of any job skills (e.g. knowledge of medicine) and any other abilities (e.g. ability to talk to patients) that could be used as assessment criteria. Then discuss the usefulness of top-down and 360° appraisals for the job.

- doctor
- teacher
- salesperson
- accountant
- human resources worker

Business communication skills

Context

Thomas works in the back office of an international car rental company. His team undertakes a range of administrative duties including working with the call centre shift rota. The company's policy is to carry out annual staff appraisals with all its personnel. Its philosophy is that appraisal involves staff in their personal development, allows them to take some responsibility for their work and provides an opportunity for two-way feedback.

Meetings | Discussing and evaluating performance



- 1 59▶** Read the *Context*. Listen to Thomas having his annual appraisal with his superior, Angelina, and complete this table.

	Appraisee feedback	Appraiser comments	Action to be taken
Positive achievements			
Areas for improvement / development			
Areas of concern			
Resources required			

- 2** Work with a partner. Read these phrases. Who said them: the appraiser, Angelina (A) or the appraisee, Thomas (T)?

- 1 I must say, we're very happy with your overall performance ... ____
- 2 Can I identify that as a personal goal for the coming year? ____
- 3 You shouldn't have been expected to take on so much. ____
- 4 Are there any areas you feel you need to improve on? ____
- 5 If I'd known that ... I might have done it. ____
- 6 You certainly need to focus on gaining some more qualifications. ____
- 7 Were there any constraints that affected your performance? ____
- 8 What's the best way to solve this? ____
- 9 We could do with some training on the new program ... ____
- 10 If there's enough money, I'd also like another software program. ____

- 3 59▶** Listen again and check your answers.

- 4** Put the phrases in **2** into these categories.

- a Asking about performance: _____
- b Giving feedback on performance: _____
- c Setting goals: _____
- d Requesting / Giving advice to improve performance: _____
- e Justifying / Explaining results: _____
- f Negotiating time / resources: _____

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 15** on page 130.

Tip | really, certainly and I must say ...

Add emphasis to what you are saying by using words such as *really*, *certainly* and the structure *I must say*.

You **really** should have done that course.

You **certainly** need to focus on gaining some more qualifications.

I must say we're very happy with your overall performance ...



5 Work with a partner. Student A, turn to File 31 on page 145. Student B, use the information below. (+ = positive, - = negative)

Student B

1 You are the appraiser. Conduct the appraisal interview. Comment and ask questions as appropriate to complete this form.

Achievements / Failures	Explanation / Comments	Requests for resources / Advice
+ Presented new office procedures at Europe-wide meeting - v. good!		A presentation skills workshop?
+		
- Dropped out of company English course - we're disappointed		Try again - we can help with some self-study ideas
-		

2 Change roles. You are the appraisee. Discuss your team's performance over the past year with your appraiser, using this information.

Achievements / Failures	Explanation / Comments	Requests for resources / Advice
+ Organized successful kick-off meeting for international salespeople	Enjoyed it, real change to normal routine	
+ Reduced overall overtime hours	Job-sharing scheme and better delegation	More staff would help - is this possible?
- Rejection of trainee mentoring scheme	If more money for mentors - scheme been implemented	
- Slow response time to internal emails	Not 'cc-ed' into everything - could see which were important faster	Help / advice to change this?

» Interactive Workbook » Email

Key expressions

Asking about performance

What do you consider were your successes and failures?
Are there any areas you feel you need to improve on?
Were there any constraints that affected your performance?

Setting goals

Can (I) identify that as a personal goal ...?

Let's put ... on your list of goals ...

Giving feedback on performance

I must say, we're very happy with ...
You demonstrated ...
You should have ...
You shouldn't have ...
You've managed to ...
One area I'd like to mention is ...
On a less positive note ...
You could have ...
Feedback from ... has been (positive / satisfactory / poor).

Justifying / Explaining results

If (Katy) hadn't (left), I probably would have (done the course).
If I'd ... I might have ...

Requesting / Giving advice to improve performance

How can I improve my chances of ...
How should I do this?
What's the best way to ...?
You ought to ...
(I think) you need to ...

Negotiating time / resources

We could do with ...
If there's enough money, I'd (also) like ...
While we're talking about money, could we discuss ...?

» Interactive Workbook
» Phrasebank

Practically speaking | Making people feel relaxed

- 60▶ Listen to three conversations. What themes / topics are being used to make the second person feel relaxed?
- 60▶ Listen again and tick the phrases you hear in the *Useful phrases* on page 135.
- Choose one or two phrases you would like to practise from each section in the *Useful phrases* on page 135. Work with a partner. Take turns to make each other feel relaxed in these situations.

You've been performing badly at work and have arrived for your annual appraisal with HR.
You've been invited to head office to explain why your team isn't performing very well.

Language at work | Third and mixed conditionals | Perfect modals

1 Read these extracts from audio 59▶ and answer questions 1–4.

- a If you'd **started** a language course then, you'd **be** quite proficient now.
b If Katy **hadn't left**, I probably **would have done** the course.

- Which sentence describes
 - an imagined past action and an imagined past result? ____
 - an imagined past action and an imagined present result? ____
- Which conditional is used in each case?
- What verb forms are used in each conditional?
- What other modal verbs besides *would have* are possible in the result part of the sentence? How does each verb affect the meaning?

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 15** on page 131.

2 Work with a partner. Discuss what you might say in each of these situations. Use the third conditional and at least one mixed conditional.

- You took the company car without authorization. You drove to the project meeting and arrived on time. There was a possibility of losing the contract. Present result: company is expanding its business.
- You ordered some office equipment from your usual supplier who always delivered on time. A new supplier offered a discount on the same order. The new supplier did have a good reputation for delivering on time. Present result: you have enough paper for the current mailshot.

3 Read these extracts from audio 59▶ and answer questions 1–2.

- a You **could have thought** a bit more about the call centre rota.
b You really **should have done** that course.

- In which sentence is the speaker
 - pointing out what someone has done wrong? ____
 - pointing out what it was possible for someone to do? ____
- Which modal verb could be replaced by *might have* and which one by *ought to have*?

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 15** on page 131.

4 Work with a partner. Discuss how you could respond in the following situation using *could have* or *should have*. Your colleague

- invested savings in a company tipped on the Internet and eventually sold them at a very small loss
- arrives an hour late for an appointment without bothering to phone you
- offers discount to a customer without checking with the manager first
- forgot to let you know that a meeting had been changed
- made a very costly mistake but did not get the sack
- wrote an angry letter to an important customer.

5 Work with a partner. Talk briefly about some of the topics below. Say what actually happened to you in the past. Then say what might or would have happened in different circumstances, or how things would be different now.

Example: I decided to become an artist because I loved painting. If I'd followed my father's advice, I would have become an accountant or might have become a banker. I'd be richer but I'm not sure I'd be any happier.

- why you chose your current career
- a good or bad financial decision
- a narrow escape or lucky break
- a mistake or misjudgement



Overcoming business setbacks

Background

Maximuscle – Sports nutrition

- The owner wrote a best-seller about which products help build muscle and burn fat – 24,000 copies were sold and this capital was used to finance the company.
- The owner's knowledge in gym instruction, nutrition and health led to his own-brand products being created, focusing on quality and not price (approx. €75 per Maximuscle product). Food technologists and doctors were consulted so it was ensured the product worked, tasted and looked good. The company was so confident in the brand that a money-back guarantee was offered to customers.
- After highly successful trade and Internet sales, the company opened its own retail outlets but too much time and money was spent on running shops and managing personnel, and not enough on promoting the brand. This idea was later scrapped.
- The next important step was finding a reliable, trustworthy supplier. A small health food chain was chosen which was able to build a trusting and loyal customer base.
- Steady growth took place but problems arose when athletes started blaming the product for poor performance and positive drug tests.

Innocent Drinks – Fruit smoothies

- The idea for fruit smoothies came from the owners realizing they had a bad diet and there was no time for healthy eating in their busy lives.
- They had no experience in the drinks industry. They created the drinks themselves, mixing different fruits together and trying their concoctions out on friends.
- They started their business unconventionally: offering free smoothies at a jazz festival and getting customers to put their empty cups in buckets labelled 'yes' or 'no'. 'Yes' meant they should quit their well-paid jobs and produce smoothies for a living. The 'yes' vote won and they left their jobs in the same week.
- After many months of no income and increasing costs and debt, they managed to secure funding from a business angel.
- It wasn't easy to convince people about the product: it was made from fresh juice (not concentrated), contained no preservatives (so was difficult to distribute efficiently) and was therefore relatively expensive (€3 for 250ml).
- The biggest argument against the drinks was their high cost and short shelf life, and distributors were not interested. The biggest argument for the drinks was their freshness and packaging – clever slogans, 'cool' looking bottles.

The Expert View

Two broad ways of evaluating and improving performance are inside-out and outside-in evaluation. Inside-out evaluation answers the question, 'How well do I think I am doing?', and requires you to set benchmarks for performance drawn from industry standards. Performance must be measured against these benchmarks in a formal and regular way, and as frequently as is appropriate. Outside-in evaluation answers the question 'How well do they think I am doing?', and requires you to seek 360° feedback from customers, suppliers, and any other significant stakeholders in the value chain. This feedback is best obtained through a formal questionnaire, which should be administered regularly.

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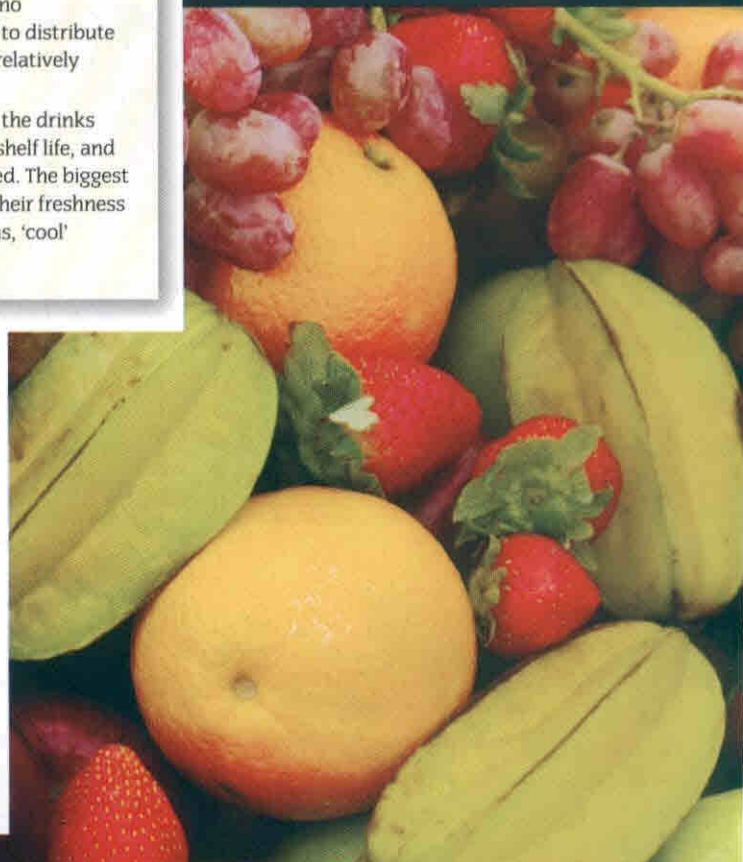
Discussion

- 1 What are the main strengths of each company?
- 2 What is the biggest challenge each company faces?

Task

Work in two groups. Choose one of the companies. You are going to discuss how the company can improve its current situation.

- 1 Evaluate the performance of the company and its approach and decide what you would advise the company to do now.
- 2 Present your evaluation and suggestions to the class.
- 3 Turn to File 34 on page 146 to find out how the two companies improved their situation and compare this with your suggestions.



Case study

File 31 | Unit 15

Business communication skills, Exercise 5, page 93

Student A

1 You are the appraisee. Discuss your personal performance over the past year with your appraiser, using this information.

Achievements / Failures	Explanation / Comments	Requests for resources / Advice
+ Presented new office procedures at Europe-wide meeting	This was my first presentation. Very nervous.	
+ Organized a regular office meeting - brought great results: more communication and cooperation in office	If management attended regularly - been even better	Ideas for ensuring management attend
- Dropped out of company English course	Stayed if teacher spoken my language	
- Turned down PA job offer	'Better' job, but not much more pay	Other chances for promotion?

2 Change roles. You are the appraiser. Conduct the appraisal interview. Comment and ask questions as appropriate to complete this form.

Achievements / Failures	Explanation / Comments	Requests for resources / Advice
+ Organized successful kick-off meeting for international salespeople - v. happy with this		Offer: to get more work like this, possibly a transfer to international department?
+ - Rejection of trainee mentoring scheme - extremely disappointed		Could look at budget again for next year
-		

File 32 | Unit 14

Case study, Task, page 89

Student A

The biggest problem was time-wasting. When PCR arranged teleconferences and called at the scheduled time, only half the participants had been there. PCR employees regularly had to wait 30 minutes or longer until they all turned up. Occasionally PCR employees were called and put through to teleconferences which hadn't been scheduled. They didn't want to refuse as these conferences provided an opportunity to follow up on unanswered questions, and any direct contact was very important. However, these unscheduled calls often meant the PCR employee was participating in a teleconference on the way to work and being bombarded with questions which they hadn't prepared for.

File 33 | Unit 5

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 35

Student B

1 **Situation:** you work in Graphics in an advertising agency. There are a lot of campaigns starting at the moment. You receive a call from a customer. Make a note of the problems and clarify any information that isn't clear.

Action: decide which course of action you can promise.

- You promise all changes can be made in time for the deadline.
- You need to check details with the magazine publishers and try to change things with them - ad has already been sent! Will get back to customer by the end of the week.
- It's too late to make any changes as the ad has been sent; the ad was sent for proofreading to your client weeks ago so it isn't really your fault.

2 **Situation:** your company is decentralized, so every department is responsible for its own office area and finances. You are the PA for Marketing and you coordinate the booking of meeting rooms, equipment, etc. and issue offers and invoices for use of the rooms by other departments. It's a busy time of year. You receive a call from a colleague in Lisbon. Make a note of the problems and clarify any information that isn't clear.

Action: decide which course of action you can promise.

- Check everything's free, but also check options from other departments and send new quote by the end of the week.
- Deny giving the original quote and ask for the information again in writing. You'll reply some time next week.
- Check all rooms and equipment are free and send a new quote by this afternoon.

3 **Situation:** you work in Denmark in the PR department of a confectionery company. You've been invited to a local school to talk about nutrition. Call Marketing in France.

Problem: none of your PR literature is suitable for children. You need

- 350 free merchandise, e.g. hats, pens, badges
- 400 free sample products - chocolate / biscuits, etc.
- 450 information folders with recipes, quizzes, etc.

Deadline: talk in two weeks' time

4 **Situation:** you work in a company PR Department. You have received a press release which needs to be translated into Urdu. Call your translation agency.

Problem: 1,000 words approx. over 5 pages - some graphs which need titles translating too / financial text - need translator who is familiar with this type of text / need an offer before work can commence

Deadline: by tomorrow

File 34 | Unit 15

Case study, Task, page 95

Maximuscle

Zef Eisenberg didn't hire an expensive PR agency to deal with the bad press. He invited journalists to the company and spoke to them – showing all the necessary certificates and documentation about his product. This led to him getting a few million pounds of free advertising through the newspaper articles and, as a result, his company took off again. The only negative effect of this was that he didn't have enough stock to cope with the demand. Maximuscle grew exponentially and Zef soon had to find a strong management team to lead the company through the fast expansion. A couple of years later, Zef decided to make his product more appealing to a wider range of consumers. He relabelled the product, making it clearer and less technical. He then did some brand advertising and finally began securing good relations with national chains.

Innocent Drinks

One holiday weekend, they loaded up a van and took the drinks round 50 delicatessens and health shops in their local area. They gave four boxes free to the companies and told them to contact them if they sold. Forty-five of these shops called to order more. The Innocent team then went back to the distributors and gave them a box, telling them how many retail outlets had requested the product. Five years on and 10 million sales later, Innocent drinks are in shops across the country and word is spreading. But despite the overwhelming growth, until last summer, Innocent hadn't spent a penny on advertising. An effective marketing ploy is to distance itself from the big corporates and provide an alternative, 'student' image.

Innocent also gives away drinks to the homeless, plants trees, encourages recycling and donates to the third world, while its entire staff are treated to a snowboarding trip every year, awarded £2,000 for the birth of each child and invited to apply for a £1,000 scholarship to achieve something they've always wanted to do.

File 35 | Unit 13

Case study, Task, page 83

Student B

Myspace.com

Founded: 2003 Users: 100 m

What is it?: Social networking site / friend-making shop

Who started it?: Tom Anderson / Chris DeWolfe

Approximate statistics / facts:

- More page visits in UK than the BBC website
- Growing by 240,000 a day
- 4th most visited website in the world
- Many attractions: adverts, events and chance to upload music
- 2.2 m new music bands have used site
- 2005: website bought by media tycoon Rupert Murdoch for \$580 m

File 36 | Unit 5

Business communication skills, Exercise 4, page 33

Student A

- 1 You work in the Communications Department and receive a call from an internal customer.
Action to promise: look into problem / call back tomorrow.
- 2 You work in the Customer Services Department and phone the Logistics Department.
Problem: a customer needs its goods earlier than expected.
Further information: a loyal customer has asked if their goods can be sent a week earlier – is this possible?
Deadline: need to let the customer know by tomorrow afternoon at the latest.

File 37 | Unit 3

Language at work, Exercise 4, page 22

- 1 **Student A:** You were unexpectedly called away from the office and left a list of tasks for your colleague to do. It is now 4 p.m. and you are back in the office. Ask your colleague about the tasks on the 'To do' list.
Student B: Decide which two tasks you have done on the 'To do' list, when they were done and what exactly you did. Decide which two tasks you haven't done and think of an explanation why.
- 2 **Student B:** Your colleague has asked you attend a conference in Madrid on his / her behalf. This morning you gave your PA a list of things to organize for the trip. It is now 4 p.m. Ask your PA about the tasks on the 'To do' list.
Student A: Decide which two tasks you have done on the 'To do' list, when they were done and what exactly you did. Decide which two tasks you haven't done and think of an explanation why.

File 38 | Unit 10

Case study, Task, page 65

Student B

Favour

Help me with next year's budget – I don't have much time.

Contact the IT company to set up the internal network – I don't have time.

Borrow your secretary until I've appointed a new one for myself.

Name of person agreeing to favour

Favours you must refuse to do:

- Lend one person from team to move to another department – on a temporary basis.
- Give two of your offices to your colleague.
- Buy a pool of software licences.

2

Gaby ... I was responsible for finalizing the new office building in Warsaw along with my manager in the Netherlands. While I was liaising with both the Polish employees and my manager I discovered our two cultures had quite different approaches.

Nico Go on ...

Gaby Well, for example, when we were finalizing the plans for the office space. My manager wanted glass partitions but the Polish employees hated the idea.

Nico Oh?

Gaby Yeah ... but then I realized they hadn't actually told him this – they told me and hoped I'd tell him on their behalf!

Nico So what did you do?

Gaby I told him! It seems that none of them wanted to question an authority figure. So that was the first problem solved.

Nico There were more?

Gaby Oh yes. Another situation occurred when I was mentoring a recent IT graduate, Magda. While we were developing a new database, I gave her the job of asking staff for their views on the database ... I even put together a few sample questions.

Nico What happened?

Gaby Well, she came back with very little information. I was extremely disappointed ... What's more, the information she had only related to the questions I'd written. She hadn't written any questions of her own to get useful information for us. I didn't know what to do. All in all it was a difficult situation.

Nico So what did you do?

Gaby Well, in the end I asked Anna, a Polish colleague.

Nico What was her view?

Gaby Well, despite Magda's qualifications, she was still the most junior person in the department, so apparently more senior people would be unwilling to answer her questions.

Nico Oh, a hierarchy thing?

Gaby Yes. It came about because of the lack of information about why we were questioning them. It seems that Magda also wasn't comfortable with the task, so she didn't add to the questions I suggested.

Nico So how did you solve the problem?

Gaby Well, I sent out a memo explaining what Magda would be doing and why. I also noted Magda's qualifications and wrote the memo in English. The reason being that Magda needed to be respected by her colleagues and English gave the note neutrality.

Nico And ...?

Gaby It really surprised me, but it worked.

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1

A Have you read any good books recently?

B Well, I don't get much time to read, but I've just finished a novel called *Shadow of the Wind*.

C I read that – I really enjoyed it.

A What's it about?

B It's about a boy's quest to find the truth about an author who's mysteriously disappeared. It's set in Barcelona just after the Second World War. It's very atmospheric – I'd definitely recommend it.

C Absolutely. It's very well written and it's a real page-turner too. I took it on holiday with me and I couldn't put it down!

2

A ... and I must admit I'm completely hooked on it. I've watched this soap opera since it began ten years ago and I can't miss an episode!

B Sounds like you're addicted. I don't really have a favourite programme. But sometimes I just like to unwind in front of the TV, you know, after a bad day at work. The problem is I tend to channel-hop ... there are so many channels available.

C I don't have much time to watch TV. So much of it is just so bad. The live sport is good though.

A Yes ... When the World Cup was broadcast I recorded every match so I didn't miss any!

B Me too! What I really can't stand is all this reality TV. You know, like *Big Brother*.

A Oh ... I quite like that.

3

A ... It sounds great ... I mean, listen to this review ... 'A blockbuster of a movie which became a box office hit overnight. It's full of brilliant special effects with a star-studded cast and a gripping storyline that will have you on the edge of your seat from the beginning!'

B Well, I've seen it and it was really good. The whole thing is set in the future and it's about a group of historians who look back to the twenty-first century and analyse what we're doing and how we're behaving now.

C And were you 'on the edge of your seat'?

B I was, actually, yeah. I mean, OK, it's basically a science-fiction film, but it's very well done. It's very entertaining – there's quite a lot of humour in it. I don't want to spoil it for you, but there's a really surprising twist at the end – you must go and see it.

Unit 15

58

Interviewer Is it right that you've moved on from top-down staff appraisals to what you call 360° degree appraisals?

Manager No, we still have the more traditional top-down appraisals, but we're introducing 360° appraisals as well because they have different functions ...

Interviewer In what way?

Manager You have to think of 360° as a development tool basically ... a trigger for change ... rather than a way of deciding if anyone deserves a raise.

Interviewer So how does it work?

Manager Well, in 360°, instead of just your boss appraising you, you have several different people giving feedback ...

So ... we hand out a feedback form to everyone you come into contact with – your manager, your colleagues, people on your team, your customers, contractors, suppliers – obviously it depends on the type of job and the organization, but we try to involve as many different people as possible ... and with this kind of peer rating, you end up with a more complete picture of how someone is doing in their job.

Interviewer And what do you ask them?

Manager We use a feedback form, with a scoring or value judgement system, asking them to comment on various different assessment criteria – job skills, abilities, attitudes, behaviour. Then you assess yourself using the same form to see how the two compare. ... There are two important considerations with 360° appraisal. First, it has to be completely confidential ... that way you get much more honest answers from people. And secondly, you need to make sure suitable counselling is available when you go through the feedback results.

Interviewer So, at the moment, you don't actually use it for appraising performance?

Manager No, it works better as a development tool. We use it as part of our overall performance management, a way of bringing about change, rather than assessing performance.

Interviewer Right. And does it really help change?

Manager Yes ... I had a new member on one of my teams recently ... I thought he was very communicative, very open, always said what he thought and I liked that. But when we did a 360° appraisal, the staff feedback was all negative, and he came over as domineering and forceful. As a result of this, he did change his behaviour ... and became more accepted by the team. And that's what I mean about it being different from top-down appraisals – in that example, a top-down appraisal from me would have told him to carry on speaking his mind ... but it was the 360° feedback that made us aware of the need for change.

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Angelina ... I must say, we're very happy with your overall performance this year. What do you consider were your successes and failures?