Greenhouse:

Performance management drives engagement at a Best Place to Work

greenhouse + zugata

ABOUT GREENHOUSE

Greenhouse is a New York-based tech company offering an enterprise talent acquisition suite that helps companies make hiring a competitive advantage. With forward-thinking customers like Airbnb, Pinterest, and Dropbox, it's also an award-winning workplace. Greenhouse is currently Glassdoor's #1 Best Place to Work for SMB companies.

Growth is core to the Greenhouse culture. On the company's Glassdoor page, one former sales rep writes, "Tons of opportunities for growth, great compensation and perks, a sense of purpose at work, and good managers—Greenhouse is the real deal."

THE PROBLEM

A new need for performance management to engage employees

ABOUT THE PROBLEM

Being recognized as a Best Place to Work was a particularly notable accomplishment for Greenhouse's People team, which was tasked with talent management in a time of hypergrowth—growing from 45 to 200 employees in one year. As Cheryl Roubian, Greenhouse's Director of Talent, says, "a company of 200 employees works together completely differently from a company of 45—from the physical space you fit in to how you communicate and how you collaborate on cross-functional projects." While there hadn't been a need for more formalized performance management processes at 45 people, by the time they reached 200 people, employees were hungry for it.

THE OLD PROCESS

- No existing framework for performance management

- Organic development conversations on small, intimate teams that didn't scale

- The organic need to "wear a lot of hats" and stretch into new skills was transitioning into more specialized roles with subtler opportunities for growth

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"Depending on what part of the organization you were in, you might have had a lot of time talking about development with your manager or very little. You might have had a very clear path for growth or none at all.

CHERYL ROUBIAN
Director of Talent at Greenhouse

Roll performance management out with highest value activities first

To roll out performance management for the first time, Greenhouse conceptualized Performance Management in three parts: Development, Expectation-setting (goals), and Evaluation. Cheryl says, "it felt important to focus on development and expectation-setting first. If people don't know what's expected of them and how to improve, the evaluation piece becomes a lot less important. By focusing on expectation-setting and development, a) your employees get more immediate benefit from the process, and b) you have a clearer picture of what you're evaluating." To do this, Cheryl started by rolling out what Greenhouse calls "Lookback/Outlook".
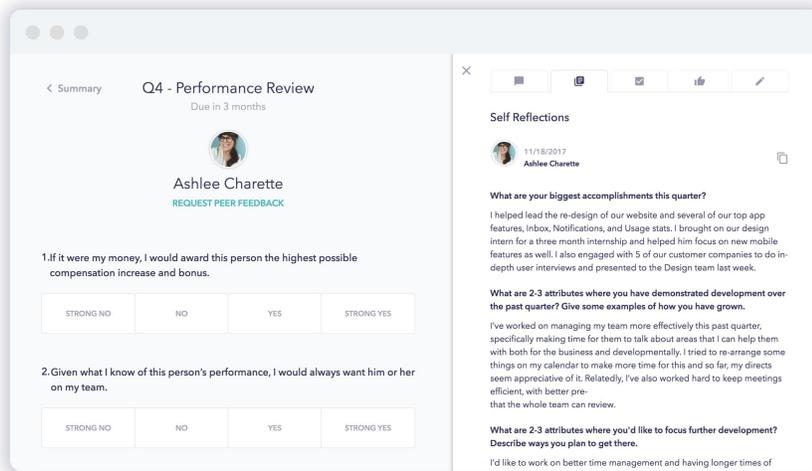
Lookback/Outlook is a quarterly touchpoint between managers and their direct reports. The activity provides a framework for employees to drive a conversation both about the previous quarter's accomplishments and obstacles and also about expectations for the upcoming quarter. It's also an opportunity to discuss the employee's plans for development and how the manager can support them.

Greenhouse uses Zugata's Self-Reflections module both to enable these conversations and to document the conversation so that employees and their managers can reference them during future Lookback/Outlook cycles. Using Zugata also gives Greenhouse's People team visibility into participation both from staff and from managers.

LOOKBACK FOCUSES ON THREE TOPICS

A reflection on the previous quarter, with questions like:
- What did you accomplish? What are you most proud of?
- What are 1–2 things you feel like you could have done better this past quarter and why/how could they have been better?

Goals for the upcoming quarter, with questions like:
- What are you trying to accomplish next quarter? What are your goals—learnings, projects, targets you want to hit, etc.?
- What are 1–2 skills or traits you want to learn or develop this quarter? What specific actions or tasks will you take to get there?

How the manager and employee work together, with questions like:
- What are some things about the way we work together that help you be successful?
- How do you think we could work together better?

- How would you prioritize the impact of the accomplishments your person has listed?

- How you would prioritize these projects/goals/initiatives? Are these things reasonable to accomplish In a 3-month period? Should some of these be stretch goals?

- Do these skills/traits make sense in the context of what the person is trying to accomplish this quarter? Does it look like the actions/tasks will start this person on the right track to get there?

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"Performance management is a pretty crowded space. There are a lot of options out there that all do very similar things. We chose Zugata for two reasons: 1) Zugata was philosophically in lock step with how we think about performance management and it shows in the way they've built their app, and 2) working with the Zugata team has always felt like working with the Greenhouse team. They're smart, thoughtful, and were great partners to us long before we ever signed a contract."

CHERYL ROUBIAN
Director of Talent at Greenhouse

THE RESULT

A direct correlation between participation and employee engagement

Participating in the Lookback/Outlooks isn't a mandatory activity. "If your employees and managers don't want to participate in these kinds of activities, they're not going to get value out of them and it becomes a waste of everyone's time. So we try to make our process as useful as possible so people want to participate," Cheryl says. While Greenhouse had already run three full Lookback/Outlook cycles, it wasn't until they implemented Zugata that they had enough visibility into participation across the organization that they were able to assess the impact on engagement and learning and development.

The results showed a very strong positive correlation between employees who completed a Lookback/Outlook cycle and sentiment across almost every other factor in the survey—most notably sentiment around opportunities for learning and growth. That correlation was even stronger for employees whose managers commented on their Self-Reflection. "We included Lookback/Outlook participation as a demographic in our engagement survey. The results weren't really unexpected, but it was awesome to be able to validate the positive impact of participating in this activity with data."

RESULTS

85%
Participation from staff

75%
Active participation from managers

+20%
Increase in sentiment around development

Zugata is Performance Management Software for high-performance cultures

Zugata is Performance Management Software for high-performance cultures. It is the only solution that enables both performance evaluation and performance development, driving performance forward and impacting your company's bottom line. Our robust platform accelerates employee performance by using sophisticated algorithms to gather continuous feedback, enabling meaningful check-in conversations, and delivering personalized resources to help employees advance their skills.

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Empowering employees to reach their potential