

Hiring to Firing* Podcast — Performance Reviews: Lessons from *Severance

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Guest: Tara Favors

Recorded: March 31, 2025

Aired: June 17, 2025

Tracey Diamond:

Welcome everybody to our latest episode of *Hiring to Firing*. In this episode, we're talking about performance reviews, and what better TV show for that than season two of the TV show *Severance*. As most of our listeners must know by now, *Severance* is really about a company where employees agree to have their brains literally severed so that they don't remember what's happening outside of work when they're in work, and they don't remember what's happening at work when they're outside of work.

So, Emily, what do you think? Do you think if you had that opportunity to undergo the *Severance* procedure, that you'd take them up on it?

Emily Schifter:

Such a good question. On the one hand, I can definitely see how it would help with productivity. But on the other hand, especially in the kind of work we do, I think it's so important to have your whole self that comes to work, and the good and the bad of your personal experiences can sometimes help you relate to people and to clients and employment issues. So, I don't know that I would. What about you?

Tracey Diamond:

I feel like my work life and my personal life are so intertwined, since we're always working, that it would be pretty hard to switch it on and off like that. But dude, it is sort of tempting to think that I could just turn off work and be an outie and not an innie. But unfortunately, the technology has not caught up to this yet. Anyway, listen into our episode where we talk about *Severance* and all things performance reviews.

[INTRO]

Tracey Diamond:

Welcome to *Hiring to Firing*, the podcast. I'm Tracey Diamond, partner at Troutman Pepper Locke, and I'm here with my partner and co-host Emily Schifter. Together, we tackle all employment law issues from *Hiring to Firing*. Today, we have a special guest Tara Favors, Chief Human Resources Officer at Mutual of America Financial Group.

Welcome Tara, thank you so much for joining us.

Tara Favors:

My pleasure.

Tracey Diamond:

Why don't you tell us a bit about your background and about Mutual of America.

Tara Favors:

Sure. I am one of the unusual people who is actually doing what I studied as my career, which means that my background is pretty boring, but interesting. I studied human resources in undergrad at Syracuse University. I was a psych major and an HR minor, and then I got my Master's in Science from the New School, also in human resources. Since I graduated, I've been in the field of human resources, primarily in investment banks. Most of my roles have been at large global investment banks, mostly doing an HR business partner type role.

Although, I did do leadership development, I ran leadership development for a large investment bank for a few years, and about three and a half years ago, I joined Mutual of America as their Chief Human Resources Officer. Mutual of America has been in existence since 1945 and our primary client group is providing nonprofits and small businesses with their retirement services, investments, management, and needs to ensure that those who, in particular in nonprofits, have the ability to retire in a financially secure way.

Tracey Diamond:

How many employees do you have, and where are they all located?

Tara Favors:

So, we are just based in the United States, hence, Mutual of America. We have about 800 employees. Our biggest offices are in New York City and in Boca and in Phoenix, but we have branch offices all around the country, working and living, really where the nonprofits are, so we can help them with their educational needs on site.

Emily Schifter:

That's great. I love that you have a background in psychology. I feel like that is so underrated in human resources.

Tara Favors:

We could joke about that, but I won't.

Emily Schifter:

But it comes in really handy.

Tracey Diamond:

It kind of plays into our topic for today, since the show *Severance*, which we're about to talk about, has such a psychological component of workplace issues.

Emily Schifter:

Yes, absolutely. So today, we have pulled clips from season two of the show *Severance*, and for those who have not seen it before, *Severance* is an Apple TV sci-fi, psychological thriller, as Tracey previewed, created by Dan Erickson and executive producer Ben Stiller. The show follows an employee named Mark S., who works for a biotech company called Lumon Industries. Mark's work is so classified that he has agreed to undergo a medical procedure literally severing his brain so that when he's at work, he has no memory of his personal life at home, and when he's not at work, he has no memory of anything that happens during his work day.

So, this results in a split personality, and any who exists solely at work, and an outie who exists solely outside of Lumon.

Tracey Diamond:

I have to say, I've said this probably almost every episode on our podcast that, "Oh, this is my favorite movie or this is my favorite TV show." But I think this truly is my favorite TV show because it is just so unlike any other TV show that I think I've ever watched. As an employment lawyer and Tara, I'm sure, as a Human Resources executive, you see so many examples of workplace issues being played out on the screen here. We could really go on for hours. But for today's episode, we're going to focus on a few scenes between Lumon's manager, my favorite character, Mr. Milchick, and Mr. Drummond, who appears to be a Lumon executive. Lumon, or at least Mr. Drummond, is unhappy with Mr. Milchick's performance as evidenced by the following clip setting the stage for Mr. Milchick's performance review.

[CLIP 1]

Mr. Drummond:

Welcome, Mr. Milchick. Today, I will be conducting your monthly performance review. This review can take anywhere from two to six hours, depending on the number of atonements and approbations required. If the review is to take longer than four hours, there will be a break for lunch with the order taken in advance.

Mr. Milchick:

Well, I hope that won't be necessary.

Mr. Drummond:

Here is the lunch menu.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

Emily Schifter:

So, Mr. Drummond mentions atonements and approbations, which are not words we typically tend to hear when discussing the purpose of a performance review.

Tara Favors:

No.

Emily Schifter:

What, in fact, is the purpose of a performance review?

Tara Favors:

Well, your timing is quite perfect. One of the things that I did when I joined the organization is really try to strengthen the human culture, the human part of human resources of the organization. And so, I'll quickly give a plug to what I called our mission for our HR organization, which is to ensure that our employees feel empowered and fulfilled. And everything that we try to do, I look at it under the umbrella of it's whether, it's empowerment and infilling, and some of that is around just ensuring you understand what your job is.

Just last week, we did a webinar for our company around goal setting, which is the very beginning of the performance management process that runs through the year, helping us to understand the beginning of the year what we're trying to accomplish, so that at the end of the year, when you have your review, you have something to measure against. So, I would say that the goal of a performance review is number one, just what did you say you were going to do, and did you do it, right? Understanding that things change. So, it's not a one-and-done, but it's all throughout the year, and as things change in your responsibilities, whether you have more or less, get resources or don't, then it obviously changes. So, it's a multi, kind of multi-month process, but it really is around assessing what did you do.

It's around the opportunity to be able to give people specific and tangible feedback about what their strengths are. So, what did they do really well, and you can do that in a multitude of ways with a multitude of input. So, what's your strengths? And then people call them weaknesses, but I like to call them opportunities. Where are your opportunities for growth and for learning? At the end of the year, also, what's next for you? So, it might be at the end of the year, you start to have a conversation around, do you imagine that this person is ready for promotion? So, at the end of the year they might be promoted. Or at the end of the year they may not be ready for promotion, and what does that look like? It's really kind of a broad summary of what you accomplished in a year.

Emily Schifter:

I think it's so important the point you raised about goals, because that's so helpful, both, as you pointed out, for assessing, kind of, what did you do, sort of historically? How are we measuring that? But then also to your point, what are you looking to do moving forward? What are the guideposts that we're measuring you against, as opposed to, sort of, do I think this person did a good job or not?

Tara Favors:

Yes. Which is what it was kind of like when I got there was, it was very much, "What'd you do?" But you did this thing, but were you supposed to do this thing? How do we kind of set that as a benchmark? And I'll back up to say one of the things that we do at our company, and we are at a point of transformation and change, and so we're doing a lot of new things, which is what's really been fun for me coming into this job. But we're talking today about personal goal setting or personal performance reviews. But as an organization, we've just put in place a proper kind of scorecard as an organization.

Ultimately, while we talk about what someone should do in their day-to-day job, it all is supposed to kind of ladder up to what the goals for the organization are. We've, this year, put in place some metrics that are quantifiable. Now, not everything can be quantifiable, but we put in some quantifiable metrics that help employees to understand how they should be focused, and that should really trickle down into the goals, which then trickle down into how someone's evaluated over the course of the year.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, I think you've hit on a couple of buzzwords that are sort of my favorite buzzwords when we're talking about performance reviews. Metrics and quantifiable, I think are really important to the extent you can, like you said, Tara, like you're not always able to quantify performance, when you're talking about things like attitude or empathy or management skills. There are certainly softer pieces of performance, but to the extent you can objectify it and quantify it as much as possible, it's really much more fair for the rest of the employees that you're comparing people to, and it at least attempts to take out some of the subjective factors.

Tara Favors:

Yes, we did kind of to that point again. You picked the right topic, because, like, I've done so much work on this, like three years. But one of the things that I often noticed, too, when I was reading them, people didn't really have developmental goals, which I was like, "That is not true. Everyone has developmental goals." But we so we also had to change the culture around, like, it's okay to not be ready, right? And what does that mean?

But the other thing that we did when we put in the reviews was we kind of split the review into two pieces, the what and the how. So, what did you do? Are those kinds of tangible objectives, accomplishments that are typically seen in a review, but we also put in the how and when we thought about the how, we thought about what are the qualities that we wanted our employees

to be, kind of living and breathing in their job, innovation, a love for learning, people, inclusion. So, we put in four different behaviors. Not only do we ask managers to rate, how did you do against the goals that you set, but how did they go about doing them? Because it doesn't matter if someone is achieving everything top of their results, but they're doing in a way that's breaking glass and beating people up and all this kind of stuff. We don't want that. So, we've now kind of separated the two out so we can have two kinds of conversations about the what and the how.

Emily Schifter:

Yes, that qualitative and quantitative mixture. I think that's important.

Tara Favors:

Mm-hmm.

Tracey Diamond:

One of the pitfalls I sometimes see with performance evaluations is that the managers tend to focus on what happened very recently, rather than on the entire performance evaluation period. How do you avoid that pitfall from happening?

Tara Favors:

Well, the recency effect is real, so part of what we try to do is, when we set the goals, we have managers write, kind of give feedback throughout the course of the year. We do a mid-year review, and so that also helps to be able the mid-year, to be able to set us based on how you're doing, kind of to date, and then that helps them to think about where they've progressed since there. But there's different ways of thinking about reviews, and my team, as we were just getting ready to launch the goal setting, there's so many ways of doing this. There's the people who do reviews once a year.

You also have companies that might do kind of just-in-time or in-time reviews, so that you are kind of giving people developmental feedback across the extent of the year, which helps to minimize what you're talking about, the recency effect. But I mean, I think, one is the manager's obligation to think holistically. That's your job. Two, we put in place which we didn't have before a self-evaluation. So, if the managers didn't remember, as an employee, your obligation to remember what you did, because your manager is holding you accountable to that. And then we personally haven't yet gotten to a full 360, but we did this year launch colleague feedback. So, if a manager is working with the employee to be able to give an expansive and representative list of people who they've worked with, hopefully, again, it's not just on the manager to remember what you did back in January or in February, but across all those different data points, you should be able to come up with a holistic view of what your employee did.

Tracey Diamond:

Let's talk about frequency. Mr. Milchick's performance review is monthly. Do you think that's not frequent enough? Too frequent? Is there a point where it's maybe not efficient to – you got your overperformance reviewing, or is it sort of never, too much is not a thing?

Tara Favors:

Well, monthly feels like a lot right. Monthly feels like a lot if you're going to do it well. Now, should you have a conversation with your employee monthly? You should have a conversation with your employee more than monthly. That's not a review, that is a check-in. That's all those kinds of things we have settled on twice a year. So, doing a mid-year review and a yet, end-of-the-year review, and that feels to me like an appropriate amount of time to spend. And it also gives you enough information to not talk about a blip, but rather to talk about trends, which is really what a performance review should be.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, I could see how one blip could be sort of making a mountain out of a molehill, if you're constantly on top of the employee for every little thing, right?

Tara Favors:

Yes.

Emily Schifter:

I definitely see something that you mentioned, the failure to talk about employees between performance reviews as a pitfall for employers, too, because it can be so easy to have all these thoughts and you put them in the review, and the employee is like, “Well, where was this this whole time? I've been misperforming and didn't know, and it could have been cleared up in a short conversation.”

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, ideally, there's no surprises at the time of performance reviews, because they've been having those conversations in real time, even though they're not formal performance reviews during that feedback time.

Tara Favors:

That is the goal. That's what I and my team, try to help managers on.

Emily Schifter:

It's hard though, right? It's hard when you're on the front line and have to give sometimes bad news to employees.

Tara Favors:

Yes, it is. It really is. I get it. I am an HR professional, but I also have to do reviews myself, and so I get the anxiety of them. And actually, I'm also an employee, and one of my old managers used to say that I always look so nervous. I really didn't. I've never had a really bad review. I've had elemental reviews and not bad reviews. Also, fun fact, I have every review that I've ever received from, when I started working as a professional.

Emily Schifter:

Wow.

Tracey Diamond:

Wow.

Tara Favors:

But reviews scare me. I feel very scared about them. But it should not be that way, because there should be nothing in a review that is surprising.

Tracey Diamond:

Right. Well, the question about frequency kind of bleeds into the question about length. What's particularly funny about the clip we listened to is that Mr. Milchick was told that the review could take between two and six hours, depending on the number of atonements and approbations, as Emily mentioned earlier. Wow, right? In real life, how long should a performance review go for?

Tara Favors:

Definitely not two to six hours. I know that's definitely not right.

Tracey Diamond:

With the lunch menu.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, that seems a little much. I mean, again, they really are supposed to be a recap of what you've done. So, my suggestion is that when you're doing a review for someone, both the manager and the employee, find a time that works for them where they can turn off their phones and turn off their computers and just be focused on each other. So, that for sure, has to happen.

One of the tips that I always do is I always send my team member who I'm reviewing the review in advance, not far in advance, because that can make people nervous, but I typically send it an hour in advance, so that way they've had a chance to react to it without having to me to see the reaction, and we could have a much more kind of consequential conversation about what they

read, versus me having to tell it to them. So, I think if you do that, the review shouldn't take that long. I don't know. It shouldn't take, I mean, really 20 minutes, 15, 20 minutes, no more than a half an hour, certainly not two hours.

But in the event that you have to give someone a review, and it's a difficult review, which all of us have had to do too, and you give it to the employee and they don't agree with it, and they want to kind of contest it. It still shouldn't be two hours. I always think it just takes time for someone to digest it. So, if the review is going half an hour or 45 minutes, and we're literally going round and round in a circle, I think the best thing to do is just pause, let that person go home, let them digest it, and then set up time separately for us to kind of recap and talk about whatever needs to be next steps. So, it just feels like I always recognize, people are very sensitive about information about them and how the world sees them, and it can't always be done in one sitting. To be fair, you need to allow people to digest. So, my advice is, if it's taking longer than it should, and it's kind of like, "Tell me more. And what about this? And what about that?" Just kind of hit pause, go home, breathe, and let's reschedule for a different time.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, I would add to that, if it's spiraling and getting argumentative, in particular, I think it's really important to summarize that meeting in an email, it's back to the employee, so that you've now created some documentation of the issues, both so that you're documenting for various legal reasons, but also because if the employee was getting argumentative, I worry that they didn't really hear you, and I want to have it in writing so that they can, hopefully, when they're calmer, review it very clear bullet points of what the expectations are, so there's no misunderstandings whether they agree with it or not.

Tara Favors:

Completely agree with you.

Emily Schifter:

Well, moving on from duration and to content of performance review, in our next clip, Mr. Milchick, is cited for, among other things, using too many big words and attaching paper clips from back to front. Let's take a listen.

[CLIP 2]

Mr. Drummond:

Let's start with the positives. You have received the gift of clear paintings with grace. Your attendance and your analysis are both in the excellent range.

Mr. Milchick:

Wonderful.

Mr. Drummond:

Alternatively, and sadly, there have been three contentions reported anonymously, which have been investigated and confirmed. One, uses too many big words.

Mr. Milchick:

Well, for chance I may colloquially employ –

Mr. Drummond:

Anti-deflections will be heard after the lunch break.

Mr. Milchick:

Yes, sorry.

Mr. Drummond:

Two, on several of your daily logs, the paper clip was installed back to front, which led to a confusion as to where in the document to begin reading. Here are the incidents.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

Tracey Diamond:

So, what do you think? Are Mr. Drummond's comments fair?

Tara Favors:

I think he's a little harsh. Maybe this is the right time to remind the listeners that employees don't leave companies, they leave managers.

Tracey Diamond:

Absolutely.

Tara Favors:

So, in this instance, they can't really leave because they don't really remember where they are. It's a whole another dynamic that's very interesting about the show. But reviews are intended to be balanced. One you have to have a relationship with each other, right? So, kind, we should be kind to each other as colleagues, but they're intended to be fair, and that's why you love to have different points of view. I think you have to honor, if it's a 360, you have to honor the confidentiality, if necessary, of the people who wrote it. But I think if it is a 360, that's the importance of making sure you have a diverse group of people who add to the review, so that

it's actually, as a manager, it's not just your words, but you could talk about, again, trends and themes and kind of what matters to the work that's at hand.

There are things that are like little nits about people that you have, but I think as a manager, you have to determine we're all adults, right? And there's the kind of frame of thought of whether or not you should try to just strengthen a strength or strengthen a weakness. And it's easier to strengthen a strength than it is really to radically change a weakness. So, it's about giving people examples. It's about giving people real-time examples. If there's a nit that someone has, you can't tell them six months later, but you have to, after the meeting, say, hey, I just heard you say this. This is how you could do it differently. And that feels like that's in kindness and not in, gotcha.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, it's funny that you just said, "We're all adults," because in the show, there's this young, really young girl, Miss Huang, who probably was the anonymous complainer about the paper clips and about the use of too many big words. So, maybe they are not always adults, or they're not always acting like adults, anyway.

Tara Favors:

Back to my psychology review, my degree that you mentioned, yes.

Emily Schifter:

I feel like I more commonly see the opposite, where people are afraid to be mean, and so they're almost too nice.

Tara Favors:

That too.

Emily Schifter:

And then we get that question of, "Hey, well, we want to terminate this person," and they say, "Oh yes, they're a bad performer." And we say, "Let's see the reviews." And they're practically glowing. What is your experience with that situation? How do you manage that?

Tara Favors:

Oh, my gosh. I mean, that's real and in real talk, we have performance issues that arise and managers are ready to make termination decisions, and they come to me or my team, to say, "Hey, this person's been awful for six months a year, even more so this person's been awful for three years." And we go back and we say, "Okay, well, let's look at the reviews. Let's look at the mid-year reviews. What did you tell them?" And they didn't tell them anything. Or they may mention this as a problem, but they certainly don't mention it as a problem. That's kind of being

terminable, right? And then when that happens, managers can't stand it, but we go back and we say, "You got to performance manage someone."

But you have to do it in a way, again, it's not supposed to be a gotcha moment. So, I don't think if you haven't done it for six months and now you're ready to fire them, you put them in a situation you're beating someone up all the time, right? Really, performance management is really intended to help to manage people up first, right? That sometimes we have to manage people out, but you have to manage them up. So, if someone is performing not to your specifications or not in a way that's helpful, it's really on you to help them through that first.

Feedback is a gift. It's not easy, but feedback is a gift. So, if you haven't done it, I'm going to make you go back and do it as much as it may annoy you, because you've already been doing it for months, or whatever the case. But kind of to your point, if you don't document stuff, then you don't have any way of really knowing that someone digested it, and you have to make sure people digest it.

Tracey Diamond:

I mean, you're really doing a disservice to your employees if you're not giving honest feedback. I don't think we can emphasize that point enough. I say that all the time in my training of managers as well, because at the end of the day, if the employee is not performing and you're going to have to move determination, if nothing else, for legal reasons, you really have to have good documentation in the file and that's sort of, we hear sometimes that, "Well, they're an employee at will." Uh-uh. If they're in any kind of protected category, and particularly these days, anything is a protected category, or doesn't even matter from a reverse discrimination point of view, you need to have a legitimate business reason for moving to termination. And if it's going to be performance, if that's your legitimate business reason, it better be documented, and not just in the weeks leading up to termination.

Tara Favors:

Exactly, exactly.

Tracey Diamond:

One of the issues Mr. Drummond has with Mr. Milchick's performance is that he had instituted, "kindness reforms", on the severed floor. Mr. Milchick is like your quintessential middle manager, and he was giving hall passes to employees and looking the other way at intra office romances, stuff like that. Do you think this is an issue if a manager leads with kindness?

Tara Favors:

I mean, you just have to be appropriately kind to everybody. I think that's the answer. I'd like to believe I'm a kind manager. I'd also like to believe I tell you the truth, and you really should know that you have a relationship closer to one person than another, and it's hard, because sometimes you become a manager and you're promoted amongst your peers, and there's those relationships, but there is a saying that leadership is a lonely job, and I don't know how true that

is. I don't feel that lonely, but it is true that you have to really kind of watch your words. Everything you do is being watched, and if you are treating one person better or worse than another, they're going to go see you guys, right? Someone's going to come visit you and say, "I'm not being treated equitably or fairly." So, kindness for all you know, Bagel Fridays for everybody, and you can still do that and still give people honest feedback.

Tracey Diamond:

And maybe kindness isn't the same thing as looking the other way, because looking the other way is just ignoring the problem, which is not doing anybody any good.

Tara Favors:

Right. Ultimately, we're all here to serve the company right? So, we all need to be making the right decisions and making sure that we're keeping the company out of harm, and that is to get people to be empowered and fulfilled, but it's also to ensure that you're minimizing the risks and the risks that you can take on as a manager are higher, and so you have to be able to balance all that.

Tracey Diamond:

So, you talked about this a little bit in the context of a 360 review, but it appears, as we kind of mentioned, that part of Mr. Milchick's negative review is based on an anonymous complaint, probably coming from this younger employee, Miss Huang, who may or may not be gunning for his job. So, what are some kind of best practices for including co-worker feedback, and what happens when it's a co-worker complaint?

Tara Favors:

Wow. I mean, I think if someone's going to complain, it's the same thing that I say someone comes to talk to me about a complaint, whether it's about an employee or a process or something like that. We can keep things anonymous, but we also, in the course of being able to explain or investigate, we're going to need to be able to get details. So, I always say, "If you're going to come talk to me about something, be very clear, I don't keep secrets." So, if someone has a complaint about the employee, I think the thing that you need to do is be able to say to that person, are you comfortable with me sharing examples and or you need to understand? And typically, if someone has a complaint about someone, it's not a one-person thing. We are pretty consistent with who we are, and so if there's a complaint that someone has about this particular employee, there's probably someone else that has it, again, looking for trends and themes.

But to the extent that you can try to keep someone's view safe, we also need to make sure that we're giving someone some feedback that's going to be negative feedback. You have to be able to give examples around them.

Tracey Diamond:

It's only fair. Yes. Well, in our last clip, we hear a conversation between Mr. Milchick and Mr. Drummond, where Mr. Milchick pushes back on Mr. Drummond's complaint about his use of too many big words. Let's take a listen.

[CLIP 3]

Mr. Milchick:

I have followed protocol, Mr. Drummond, but I thank you for your remonstration.

Mr. Drummond:

A needlessly complex word for a simple idea. Apologize for the word.

Mr. Milchick:

Sorry?

Mr. Drummond:

Apologize for the word.

Mr. Milchick:

I apologize.

Mr. Drummond:

Shorter.

Mr. Milchick:

I'm sorry.

Mr. Drummond:

Again.

Mr. Milchick:

Mr. Drummond –

Mr. Drummond:

Again.

Mr. Milchick:

Devour feculence. It means, “Eat ****”, Mr. Drummond.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

Tracey Diamond:

So, is Mr. Milchick justified in pushing back here, or is he being insubordinate?

Tara Favors:

Look, your review is your review, and you have every right to be able to say where you disagree with something that's in there. It's really hard when you disagree with what's in a review, because sometimes people will say you're being defensive, and maybe I am being defensive because I actually am defending who I am. So, I think there's appropriate means to be able to go back to a manager if you feel like they've sent something that's unfair. Again, that's one of those moments where you take a deep breath and you gather what you do, and you gather what you've accomplished, and you go back and you say, “This is my version of the truth.”

Of course, the manager, you have to listen to your manager, but you have every right in doing that. And if you really do feel like you're being unfairly evaluated, because unfortunately, not all managers are great, right, then there's always another path of escalation, and so sometimes it's that manager's manager, but I also will give a plug for the importance of having mentors in an organization and having someone who can be a voice to help you to think about how you translate the feedback that you got back into actionable steps for you. That's not always your manager, because sometimes there's just not a trust there.

If you're getting feedback that you don't think is fair, one go back and have a conversation and find a way to do it. That's kind of, I don't know, hard to give advice on how not to be defensive, but try to do it in a way that's not defensive. Good advice about doing that. Two, when you get a review, there's always a section that you can write in where you disagreed with someone, and ultimately the review is just saying that you got a review, it doesn't say that you agree with it. So, you can always do that. And then three, I think you try to throughout the course of the year or even after, it's always good to be able to have a mentor who you can run these things by, or have a relationship with your manager's manager who you can run things by. You also have to be very be careful with that too, sometimes if you're going over someone's head.

But I guess in the end, you don't have to kind of take everything as gospel, but you do need to hear what they're saying. And somewhere in between, there's a balance that all of us as employees have to kind of bring to these kinds of conversations.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes, and I guess also is how you say it, right? Even if you're not happy with the review and you're pushing back, you can't do it in a way that's insubordinate. You shouldn't be saying, "Devour feculence," as Mr. Milchick said.

Tara Favors:

Exactly. That is true.

Emily Schifter:

But getting that context for your feedback, I think, can be so important. I think you're right, it's not always from your manager, being careful politically with who you're going to but understanding where do I fall among my peers, or people who are looking to be elevated, or things like that. I think that can be a really valuable way to process feedback, especially if you don't agree with it.

Tara Favors:

For sure, for sure.

Tracey Diamond:

And maybe it's a question of just saying I'm a little confused, or I'm not sure what to take away from this and how to improve, and so I really want to understand this better so that I can meet your expectations going forward.

Tara Favors:

Yes, hopefully as a manager, you've thought about that, right? So, your job isn't just to go in there and blast someone. Your job is like, "Okay, here's the point, here's how we make it better." Part two of that as a manager is also your job too, and you owe someone that if you're going to give them that developmental feedback, your job is to be in there with them, helping them to improve.

Tracey Diamond:

Absolutely. Well. Tara, this was super fun conversation, and I'm so glad that we found you for this episode, because it's exactly a topic right up your alley, clearly. And thank you to our listeners for listening in. Please don't forget to check out our blogs, shoot us an email, let us know what you think, and keep on listening to our episodes as we send them out. Thanks so much for listening.

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