

Crabby's guide to surviving performance reviews



Crabby Office Lady

Chances are that if you work for a living, you're going to experience the joy of being reviewed on the work you do. There are ways to make performance reviews — for the giver and the receiver — a little less overwhelming.

[Crabby Office Lady columns](#)

[Crabby's blog](#)

[Crabby's podcasts](#)

Yep, it's that time of year again, the dreaded season when every conversation with your coworkers and your manager is laden with innuendo and suspicion, causing your paranoid tendencies to bubble to the surface...

That's right: It's time for performance reviews. And whether you're the fly-under-radar type of employee, the show-off star performer, or the manager who has to deliver bad news, reviews can be scary and downright nerve-wracking.

Let's see if Office and I can't share some of your burden and ease your troubled mind. (Of course, if you have nothing to worry about, why are you so troubled?)

Keep track of your work using Search Folders

A great way to see what you've done all year long is to go through status reports, e-mail communications with clients, your managers, and your coworkers, and pick out the most glowing accomplishments among them. Sure, you can go through your **Sent Items** folder and scour through each e-mail message, but that could take days, and you're likely to miss something really good. There is an easier way: Search Folders.

Search Folders (new for Outlook® 2003) are virtual folders that contain e-mail messages that match specific criteria you've previously set up. By "virtual" I mean that these folders aren't where messages are actually stored; no, these folders really contain just *views* of these e-mail messages so that you can access them for a particular reason. Here, let me explain with an example. (I didn't understand the concept until someone did this for me, too.)

How Crabby uses Search Folders

I'm not sure how your manager keeps up with all that you do, but I'm required to send a weekly status report — in e-mail — to my manager. It lists the tasks I've accomplished during the week, what my plans are for next week, how many people have come by my office to complain about me or my column, and how many readers wrote to ask me if the Crabby Office Assistant was available for download (as if Crabby were akin to an animated paper clip or kitty cat — please).

I've created a Search Folder called **Status reports: 2004**. I set it up so that whenever I send out an e-mail message with the term **Status Reports** contained in it, a virtual view of this message automatically appears in this Search Folder, while the real copy of it stays in my **Sent Items** folder. That way, I don't ever have to go looking for status reports if I want to refer to them. All the reports are in this folder, and I can pluck out my accomplishments and drop them onto my performance review (and, of course, leave out the not-so-great stuff: "Dear Crabby, I've noticed an increasing number of wisecracks about your editor in recent columns...").

Of course, you can set up as many Search Folders as you like for as many reasons as you can think of: Process improvements, positive customer feedback, sales figures.

So...do Search Folders sound like something you could use? Of course they do. Now go learn more:

- [About Search Folders](#)
- [Customize a Search Folder](#)
- [Outlook Best Practices: How Harry got organized](#) (Step 5 is all about Search Folders)

Be a goody-goody: Show off your skills

One great way to show your manager just how irreplaceable you are is by becoming more knowledgeable

about the work you do. You can do this in a variety of ways depending on what sort of company you work for and what type of work you do.

- **Become a Microsoft Office Specialist** Back in July, I wrote a column about my experience taking the Word 2003 MOS exam. You can take these tests for almost any program in almost any version of Office. You get a certificate that says you are a "specialist," an "expert," or a "master." Including scanned images of these certificates on your review may be a bit overkill, but hey, who's going to turn you down for that promotion now?

[Become a Microsoft Office Specialist](#)

- **Learn a new skill and develop your proficiency** If you have at least one Office 2003 program installed on your computer, you can take any of the self-paced Office training courses. With rich audio and visual components and interactive, hands-on practice sessions, these training courses give you real experience right away (and for free!).

[Take an online, self-paced training course](#)

When you're the manager: Review templates

While I'm not a manager myself (nor am I particularly manageable), I do understand that it's a burden to be almighty and powerful. Why not let Office templates help you out a bit here? We've got several just for the occasion.

- [Job performance review guide](#)
- [Employee performance review \(short form\)](#) (Requires Word 97 or later.)
- [Manager feedback form](#) (Requires Word 2003 or later.)
- [Performance review \(peer\)](#) (Requires Word 2003 or later.)
- [Misc. report templates](#)

I do hope you get that promotion/raise/window office you were counting on. If it didn't happen this time around, remember that Crabby is still proud of you. Now get back to work and prove your worth....

"Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent." — Eleanor Roosevelt

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

[Crabby Office Lady columns](#)

[Crabby's blog](#)