

CASE STUDY

Johnson Controls, Inc.

PRACTICE TOPIC

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

- **Bringing a fresh approach to a learning conference for managers**
- **Practicing a new performance reviews system**
- **Sharing learners' expertise and improving their skills**

Johnson Controls, Inc. is an international corporation based in Milwaukee that specializes in installing and servicing automatic controls: thermostats, alarm systems, etc. They needed to get the word out to their Area Managers about a new system for performance reviews – but the managers were tired of the usual learning approaches. The performance reviews workshop was going to be one afternoon during a packed multi-day conference, and most of the other meetings would be lecture-style. They needed something different and memorable.

Johnson Controls came to us to design an interactive and enjoyable practice session. We chose a half-day format, with two interactors playing a variety of Johnson Controls managers and their direct reports.

We started by meeting with Johnson Controls managers to find out as much as we could about their business, so we could create situations that would seem to come right out of their daily lives at work. We learned their terminology and acronyms. We studied the new performance review form and how Johnson Controls intended to use it. And we asked a lot of questions about what was going wrong in the current performance review process, about people's frustrations and difficulties.

The session we created for Johnson Controls, called "Rave Reviews," started with interactors showing a manager making every possible mistake in giving a performance review, from lack of advance preparation to bargaining with the employee over the numerical rating. The situation was realistic but humorous.

Participants worked in teams to coach the manager character into doing a better job, with each team taking a different section of the performance review. Several learners took the place of the manager during their sections, working directly with the interactor playing the employee to explore better ways of handling the situation.

The workshop also had a live quiz show, where the participants competed for prizes by answering multiple-choice questions presented as little scenes.

"Rave Reviews" was well received, with an overall rating of 4.53 on a 5-point scale. One participant commented, "Best way I have seen to get all involved." Another wrote, "This workshop has reinforced much of what I have learned over 23 years of conducting performance reviews. It has also given me some ideas on how I can improve my method and style in doing the reviews."