

# HOW OUR PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS HAS HELPED US SURVIVE COVID AND WORKING REMOTELY

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SHAPING A SMARTER  
TRANSPORTATION EXPERIENCE™  
[DKSASSOCIATES.COM](http://DKSASSOCIATES.COM)

AN EMPLOYEE-OWNED COMPANY

**DKS**

# AGENDA

**1 / Introduction**

**2 / Why did we develop our EODP**

**3 / What is our EODP**

**4 / How our EODP helped us survive COVID and working remotely**

**5 / Program Results**

**6 / Program Takeaways**

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# INTRODUCTION

# Katrina Haney

## Director of Human Resources

### DKS Associates

- Transportation engineering & planning firm
- Founded in 1979
- 140 employees in 7 offices across WA, OR, CA, and TX
- 100% Employee-owned
- 100% of our employees have been working from home since March 16, 2020

# AEC HR Summit

- **AEC HR Summits:**
  - **Seattle - best pub crawl**
  - **New Orleans - best night life and history**
  - **San Diego - best weather and rooftop bars**
  - **Nashville - best music and food**
  - **Favorite Summit Event: PUB CRAWL**

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## WHY DID WE DEVELOP OUR EODP

# Turnover

Fiscal Years (May 1 - April 30)

2015 - 37%

2016 - 31%

2017 - 16%

2018 - 29%

August 2018 - EODP Implementation

2019 - 12%

2020 - 18%

2021 - 16%

\*Turnover does not include interns and other temporary employees

Growth & Opportunity were the top two reasons departing employees cited they were leaving DKS.



Source: <https://snacknation.com/blog/employee-happiness/e>:



Source: The Employee Engagement Group

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**WHAT IS OUR EODP**

**It replaces our 1 x per year traditional performance review.**

**We wanted to:**

- Identify signs of distress
- Equip employees with technology
- Promote dialogue
- Develop trust with our employees
- Reinforce organizational values
- Use goals to create clarity
- Increase recognition

**Tips for managing remote employees**

# **It is more than duplicating a review process:**

- Creating a culture of feedback
- Creating a culture of goal setting
- Creating a values based organization
- Being proactive rather than reactive
- Knowing who is high risk
- Leadership helping one another to retain
- Increasing engagement
- Increasing alignment
- Creating a happier team

# **Employee Owner Development Program - EODP**

**PHASE 1 - Launched August 2018**

**FOCUSED ON BEHAVIOR AND EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS  
MEASURES ENGAGEMENT AND ALIGNMENT**

**PHASE 2**

**FOCUSED ON MEASURING BEHAVIOR AND PERFORMANCE**

# Employee Owner Development Program

The Employee Owner Development Program is designed to provide ongoing and immediate feedback and recognition of an employee's performance. Employee-owners and their supervisors will meet four times a year to share feedback on topics such as engagement, alignment, development, performance, and goals.

## The program objectives are to:

- ✓ Seek continuous feedback and improvement.
- ✓ Improve retention by measuring employee engagement and alignment.
- ✓ Provide employees with guidance in their professional development.
- ✓ Obtain feedback on employees' career development goals.
- ✓ Ensure that all employees are aware of the quality of their performance.
- ✓ Ensure that DKS has qualified and trained personnel at all levels in the organization.
- ✓ Help obtain optimum employee performance.
- ✓ Recognize and reward employees for exceptional performance.
- ✓ Identify successors early on to develop and train for future opportunities with DKS.

Each calendar quarter (January – March, April – June, July – September, October – December) the following will occur:



## Feedback & Goals:

### How do I provide feedback?

Feedback should include specifics, importance, and action (SIA). Be specific: vague feedback isn't particularly helpful to the recipient. Say why it's important: why did you bring it up? Let them know why it's worth sharing. Make it actionable: what steps should they take to maintain or improve something? The SIA can be used for providing constructive and positive feedback.

### CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK EXAMPLE:

"Yesterday there was an impromptu meeting in our shared office (specific). I know it's important to share the space, but I was on a deadline and the meeting was REALLY loud, so I got frustrated and worried about completing my ODOT deliverable on time (important/impact). In the future, I propose that we direct these meetings to another room when someone's under pressure. Additionally, I will make sure to speak up if I need quiet, and not get frustrated (action)!"

### GOAL EXAMPLE:

"This quarter I will keep my team engaged (relevant) and maintain 100% team retention (specific) through bi-weekly check-ins with my employee owners (measurable), soliciting and providing realtime feedback once weekly (attainable), and scheduling one off-site team happy hour by October 31st (timely)."

### How do I write goals?

The goals written should be S.M.A.R.T Goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely). Specific: state what you'll do. Use Action words. Measurable: provide a way to evaluate. Use metrics or data targets. Achievable: within your scope. Possible to accomplish. Relevant: makes sense within your job function. Improves the business in some way. Timely: state when you'll get it done. Be specific on date or timeframe.

### Example milestones to give/ask for feedback?

After: a meeting, an interview, a deliverable, a presentation, a proposal effort, a project close-out, a final submittal. When someone has exhibited a DKS Core Value, after an interaction that made you feel valued, after receiving valuable feedback.

### Should I always give/ask for feedback through Lattice?

No, there are times when immediate and verbal feedback is best and you should say it when you feel it. If it's feedback you want to remember and share with your manager, you can always go back and leave yourself a note in Lattice.

# FEEDBACK - weekly

## Feedback & Goals:

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The screenshot shows the Lattice software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Lattice logo, 'You', 'Your team', 'Company', and 'Admin' buttons. Below the navigation bar, there are two review cards.

**Review 1 (Amanda Thorn):** Sent on Jun 28, 2019. The review text is: "Tasmyn is so helpful and on top of things! She is engaged in the new hire process, and always thinking of our new employees. She asks for clarification, and is just great to work with." Below the text are four buttons: 'Meaningful Difference', 'Client Satisfaction', 'Trustworthy', and 'Teamwork'. The 'Trustworthy' button is highlighted in blue.

**Review 2 (Katrina Haney):** Sent on Jun 27, 2019. The review text is: "Have you ever thought to yourself, 'if only I could do 'x' in Google, Survey Monkey, Deltek, Basecamp.....and the list goes on?' If so, please, please share your wild idea with Mindy. Mindy can make magic happen. Mindy is a script genius, if you didn't already know. She can take wild innovative software ideas and seemingly easily and quickly, she makes them happen. Granted, some of her genius can be my incapability but I really do think a lot of it is her genius. Mindy recently help Amanda set up a sweet system, in a nutshell: a manager can submit a Google form (asking for swag credit for an employee), that Google form sends Amanda an email with text she can copy and paste into an email (an email to the employee and an email to our swag vendor), and it also attaches a swag certificate Amanda created and can attach to her email to the employee. WHAT?! Thank you Mindy for always being so eager to help and for always saying yes to trying out our wild ideas. Mindy is a gem of a resource and I trust that she says it can't be done, it really cannot be done." Below the text are four buttons: 'Meaningful Difference', 'Expertise', 'Trustworthy', and 'Teamwork'. The 'Expertise' button is highlighted in blue.

# GOALS - monthly

**FILTERS**

- [My goals](#)
- [My team's goals](#)
- [Company goals](#)
- [Explore all](#)

**SAVED VIEWS**

Create a custom set of filters and save it for future reference

## Explore

[Create goal](#)

Search owners and goals...

All time

[Filter](#) OWNER: Katrina Haney X STATUS: All Active X

**8 goals**

Goal status ⓘ

Not updated Off track Aligned to company

2 (25%) 0 88%

[^ Hide analytics](#)

Title	Owners	Due	Last update	Status
• Schedule CX internal training meetings and update slides by 11/20 for January training		Nov 20, 2020	Nov 19, 2020	<span>ON TRACK</span>
► G1, S4 Establish and empower an employee group to identify, propose, and implement actions, progr...	 PC	Apr 30, 2023	Nov 19, 2020	<span>0%</span>
► G2,S4 Create a culture of mentoring	 PC	Apr 30, 2023	Never	<span>- NOT UPDATED</span>
► G2,S5 Encourage continuous growth through regular training programs		Apr 30, 2023	Never	<span>- NOT UPDATED</span>

# UPDATES - monthly

What did you focus on this past month?

Write answer

B I S I E E

...

What are your plans and priorities for next month?

Write answer

What challenges or roadblocks do you need help with?

Write answer

Is there anything else on your mind you'd like to share?

Write answer

Do you have a client experience story that you'd like to share with our marketing team? It can be a DKS experience or an experience outside of DKS, such as with an airline.

How are you feeling this week?



Awful



Poor



Neutral



Good



Great

# REVIEW - quarterly

An engaged employee is aligned in 3 areas of their job function and will respond to the review statement as "strongly agree" or "agree":

## 1 How much **they like or want** to do the job

- I have access to the things and people I need to do my job well.
- I have access to the learning and development I need to excel/grow in my career.
- I'm really good at my job, and I enjoy it.
- The systems and processes at DKS support us getting our work done effectively.

## 2 How **good** at the position **they are**

- I know what I need to do to be successful in my role.
- I receive appropriate recognition when I do good work.
- Day-to-day decisions here demonstrate that client satisfaction and teamwork are top priorities.

## 3 If the job function is **valued or needed** by the organization

- My manager (or someone in management) has shown a genuine interest in my career aspirations.
- I believe there are great career opportunities for me at DKS.
- I understand what I need to do in order to advance to the next career path level.
- I believe DKS is invested in my development.
- I have identified one or more successors and I'm working towards developing their skills.
- I believe my role at DKS is valued.

Reference: The Employee Engagement Group

# REVIEW - quarterly



Source: The Employee Engagement Group

# Manager CHECK-IN - quarterly

## Employee Owner Development Program

### CHECK-IN SUMMARY OUTLINE

The Check-in Summary is a chance for you to summarize your quarterly meeting with your direct report. The Summary can be found when you login to Lattice and see the task to complete called "Finalize Review Packet." When you select "Finalize Packet," it will take you to the Summary page in the Review. This is a suggested outline of what your Summary may look like.

	<b>1 DATE AND TIME OF MEETING</b>
	<b>2 HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHECK-IN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Details, if you went over any specific questions and responses from Review</li></ul>
	<b>3 BARRIERS ADDRESSED AND RESOLVED (IF APPLICABLE)</b>
	<b>4 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK DISCUSSED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive comments from others</li><li>• Constructive items to discuss</li><li>• Action / Goals going forward</li></ul>
	<b>5 GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES (FROM BOTH EMPLOYEE NEEDS AND MANAGER NEEDS)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Certifications, licenses, etc.</li><li>• Soft Skills areas of growth (presentation opportunities, communication, organization)</li><li>• Trainings needed (excel, VISSIM, GSuite)</li><li>• Career path progression</li><li>• Manager commitments: ("I encouraged him / her to attend the NSPE conference to grow XYZ skill and agreed to allow 3 days for this training.")</li><li>• Review CX survey results (if applicable)</li></ul>
	<b>6 SUMMARIZE GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goals and action items should be listed so they are easily found</li><li>• Briefly list the goals the employee should enter into the Lattice "Goals" section.</li></ul> Goals should be entered by the employee within 1 week of the Check-in.

# Executive & Manager Team Report

- Number of departures
- Number of employees who disagree/strongly disagree
- Three or more disagree/strongly disagree ratings
- New or sudden disagree/strongly disagree ratings
- 5 statements tied to strategic plan
- All comments
- Comments to follow up on
- Additional observations/themes

# Improvements along the way

- Reinforce the purpose
- Stop using acronyms
- Change Employee Owner “Report” to “Review”
- Improve access to the materials
- Require written responses to statements on Employee Owner Review



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**HOW OUR EODP  
PREPARED US FOR  
COVID AND WORKING  
REMOTELY**

- Cadence and space for regular communication
- Engagement
- Alignment
- Recognition & celebration
- Ability to identify distress even without seeing someone
- Communication / accountability loop from employee to exec team
- Created growth and opportunity and kept it at the forefront instead of being forgotten about
- Regular check-ins help with isolation and loneliness which impacts productivity

All of these things impact worker happiness = increases productivity

# Manager comments when asked how our EODP helped prepare them for leading a remote team:

- The EODP established the system of recurring check ins. **Resource needs** are part of the check in discussion, which transferred well into remote working and the additional needs/challenges that employees face.
- We were already in the practice of providing **feedback** through an online portal - which is needed now that we can't always go around and drop by someone's desk.
- The quarterly check in process is helpful because it gives specific reason to **connect** with each employee - more frequently than other places I've worked.
- I don't work with all of the folks in my group, so the **structure and frequency** of takes some awkwardness that could come from less frequent meetings to "do a review"
- The program has a positive **growth mindset** behind it, with employees setting their own goals and taking responsibility for their growth. It feels like a partnership between employees and management. With this, DKS takes "growth mindset" to a whole new level.

# Employee comments when asked how our EODP helped prepare them for working remotely:

- Quarterly check-ins that request me to review the company's role in my development helps me to see how the company is supporting me, and to think about my plans for future **opportunities**.
- Lattice has a wonderful tool to request **feedback** which helps me receive critical feedback **before a problem develops** and feedback on strengths that could be utilized in future projects.
- EODP provides me the tool to **engage** other team members with whom, after 6 months, have not had the opportunity to meet in person other than virtually.
- **Feedback** is talked about in the quarterly check-ins so it helps track goals of what is needed to work and/or be acknowledged. This is useful since **working remotely can sometimes feel like you may be missing something but the EODP ensures me** in a structured manner that I'm apart of a great learning environment.

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## RESULTS



**SINCE LAUNCHING OUR  
EMPLOYEE OWNER  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN  
AUGUST 2018, OUR TURNOVER  
HAS DECREASED FROM 28% to  
15% - 3 year average before  
and after**

# REVIEW

Percentage of employees who agree/strongly agree with all 5 statements: Target is 90%



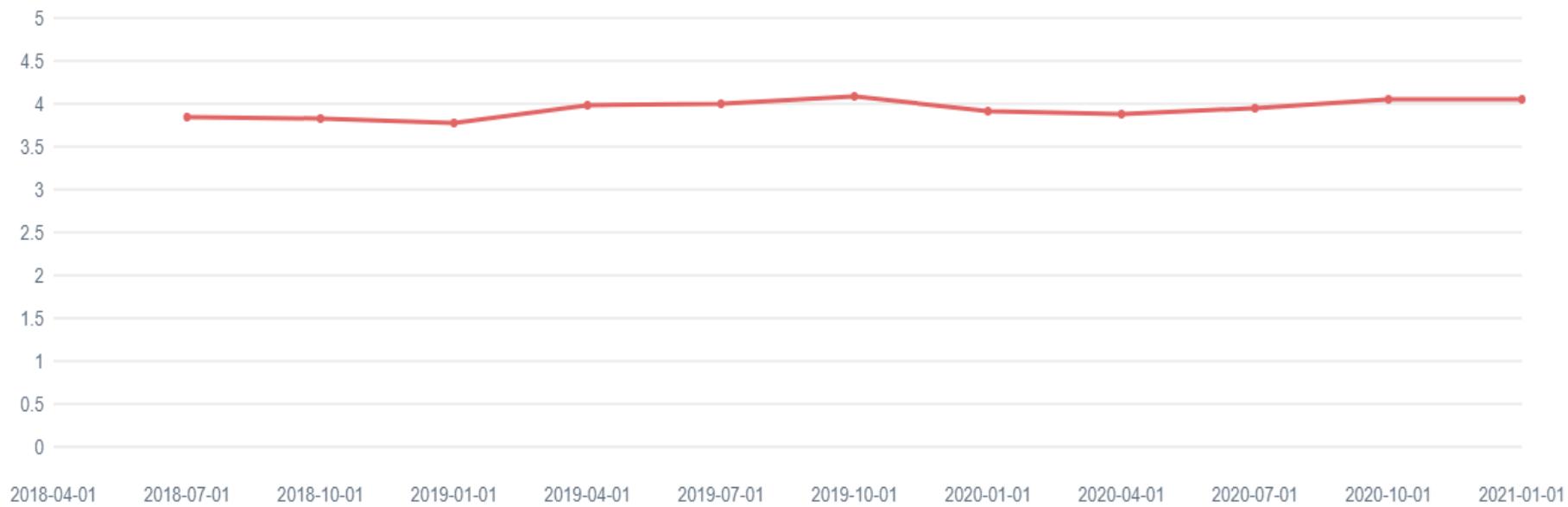
- I understand what I need to do to advance on the next career path
- I believe there are great career opportunities for me at DKS
- I have access to the learning and development I need to excel/grow in my career
- I know what I need to do to be successful in my role
- My manager (or someone in management) has shown a genuine interest in my career



**40% of employees who have left for voluntary reasons since launching our EODP were identified as a “high-risk” employee**

# UPDATES - SENTIMENT SCORE

Sentiment ⓘ





**Gross revenue has increased  
49% since 2015**

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

# Tips for success

## Change Management Plan:

- Executive champion
- Know your key stakeholders
- **Coach your managers**
- Talk about it early
- **Brown bags with all employees**
- Technology - share demos
- **Brand it**
- **Understand the purpose & reinforce**
- **Constant communication & reminders**
- Reassess and improve
- **Tie other programs into it**

# If I could do just one thing:

**Mini employee engagement surveys on a quarterly or bi-annual cadence OR stay interviews**

# THANK YOU

DKS CORE VALUES

MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE

OPPORTUNITY

EXPERTISE

TRUSTWORTHY

CLIENT SATISFACTION

TEAMWORK

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# QUESTIONS

DKS CORE VALUES

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