

## CHAPTER 29

# THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A COMPANY CALENDAR

One of the most interesting phenomena I have observed is the total lack of interest in the company calendar by most employees. Most engineers have a calendar on their desk or carry an appointment book to keep track of important events. However, if you ask them if they track significant company events or have a company calendar, the answer is almost inevitably negative.

People have calendars for school events, sporting events, and even for birthdays and anniversaries, but rarely have company calendars. Is it important to develop a company calendar and keep track of significant events? The answer is yes!

► **Career Tip.** Failing to plan is simply planning to fail! And not having a company calendar is planning to fail.

### COMPANY CALENDAR, HOW DO YOU USE IT?

To show you how important developing and maintaining a company calendar is, let's look at the following example. An example of a company calendar is shown in Figure 29-1. The activities are listed in the left-most column of the calendar. The time when this activity is planned to occur is shown by the black bars.

Let's study the first significant event on the calendar: salary considerations. In this sample calendar, raises and promotions are given out once a year, in May. However, a significant amount of activity occurs before the May raises.

Activities	Company Calendar											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Salary Considerations												
Salary Forecast by Mgmt.												
Totems												
Promotion Rev. Boards												
Job Reviews												
Handout Raises/Prom.												
Department Budgeting												
Training Budget												
Capital Equipment												
Workload Forecast												
Company Financial												
Profit Reviews												
Supervisor Vacation												
United Way												
US Savings Bond												
Company Picnic												

FIGURE 29-1 A sample company calendar.

In the March through April time period, the supervisor puts together a preliminary salary forecast. This is the supervisor’s first estimate of the raises and promotions intended to be given out in May. Occurring also in this time frame are the company rankings and promotion review board meetings. Toward the end of April, job reviews occur. Last is the actual awarding of raises and promotions. Now let’s examine why keeping track of these events is so important.

Let’s assume you have been working for several years without a raise or promotion and you finally decide that it’s time you do something about it. However, it is September and promotions or raises are only given out in May. What good do you think will come of you storming into your supervisor’s office in September and stating, in no uncertain terms, you deserve a raise now. The supervisor’s immediate response will most likely be to stall. Your supervisor knows there is no possibility you will receive a raise at the present time but the worst thing to do is tell you that now. How much better it would be if you had saved your energy and waited for March as the calendar indicates?

► **Career Tip.** Identify when raises and promotions are determined in your company and plan to have your major achievements occur just before.

The next thing to consider is job reviews. Your supervisor is busy handling a multitude of problems. Suddenly it's April or May and job appraisals must be written for 10 employees. If one appraisal write-up takes 3 hours, it may take over a week just to fill out the forms. Most supervisors have several employees and can probably only remember about 20% of what they accomplished during the past year. This time period is not the time to make waves or agitate your supervisor. If you recently had a setback, chances are this will be foremost in their mind. The best thing to do is have your breakthroughs and successes timed so they occur in March.

Send your supervisor a memo in March summarizing all your accomplishments over the year and then review them in a meeting. Remind your supervisor of your tremendous effort during the past year and highlight all you accomplished. Inform your supervisor you filled the forms out in advance to help save time. The supervisor need only file it away until the time is ready to do your appraisal; this should help save time. Chances are he or she will do just that. Most likely they will welcome and endorse this activity since you are making their job easier. Make sure you keep a copy in case they should lose or misplace their copy.

► **Career Tip.** Fill out the evaluation forms for your supervisor and send them in advance. Save him or her time and make sure all your significant accomplishments are noted.

Let's discuss some other important activities that are occurring at this time. Company totem is one and promotion review board is another. Do you know who is on the totem board? Do you know who is on the promotion review board? If you do, it is a good time to beat your drum a little bit so they remember your accomplishments over the past year and not just the most recent. Those rated highest on the totem are usually the ones who just recently made a major accomplishment. Do you know the criteria the promotion review board will be using? Generating a ghost memo written by you for your supervisor that highlights your accomplishments against the criteria is very handy to have in advance.

► **Career Tip.** Timing is very important. Successful career people do not depend on luck; they make their own luck. One way to do this is through the use of a company calendar.

Another important activity on the company calendar is the distribution of internal research and development funding. Do you know when this occurs? For the example shown, initial planning is done in January and progress reviews are held quarterly throughout the year. Do you have a project you would like to get funded? What projects are funded for the

year and who is working on them? Are you on a pet project of great importance or something to keep you busy? Knowing when the project reviews are planned is important information. Nothing helps like having a breakthrough on your project just in time for the senior management review.

When do United Way and the annual Saving Bonds Drive occur in your company? These are excellent projects to donate your time to. These activities are often organized and executed by upper-level managers, the same managers who will be sitting on totem boards, promotion review boards, and handing out raises. These are all excellent ways to get the extra visibility you need. While working for a noble cause, you have the opportunity to visit with your lead engineers and supervisors, and meet their supervisors on a one-to-one basis and get extra points for doing so. As you sit there planning out the activities with the upper-level management, it doesn't hurt to tell them about your achievements.

Other examples of activities like these are the company picnic, the company holiday party, and any charitable things your company may sponsor, like food drives, shelters, clothing drives, or marathons. If you keep a company calendar, you will soon realize that there is something happening nearly every month that could result in giving you the extra visibility that you need. So much in fact, that you may not be able to take part in it all. It's important to make new contacts as well as friends along the way. Developing genuine friendships is as important as developing one's career. You can do both.

► **Career Tip.** Volunteering to work on a company committee will allow you to interact directly with the decision-makers of the company.

Another important activity you need to be aware of is the workload forecast your supervisor must do on a periodic basis. These are simply forecasts showing the work planned for you and your group over the next year. When does your supervisor do these? It may be a good idea if you paid attention to these since they will tell you if you will have a job in 6 months. If your supervisor is forecasting enough work then, come job appraisal time, you stand a better chance of getting the raise. If, however, in 3 months the forecast is no work for you, it may be a good time to start looking for work elsewhere.

One annual activity is updating the business plan or the company 5 year plan. This plan identifies the key business thrusts that the company plans to execute over the next 1 to 5 years. Knowing that such a plan exists, when it gets updated, and obtaining a copy, can be very beneficial to your career.

Department or supervisor budget planning is another activity of which you should be aware. A supervisor must forecast or estimate the expenditures

the department will have over the year. Periodic updates and adjustments are made throughout the year and stopping by your supervisor's office when a budget is being done is a good idea. Was the tuition for classes you planned on taking included? Has the budget allowed for your new computer or the test equipment that you need?

Another important activity that usually occurs on a weekly basis is staff meetings. Do you know when your supervisor must meet with superiors and report progress? If you just happened to stop by and brief your supervisor hours before walking into a staff meeting, they may be more inclined to highlight your accomplishments. It does not hurt to have your supervisor highlighting all your accomplishments at the weekly staff meeting. Another way to do this is to submit a weekly written report to your supervisor highlighting your accomplishments for the week. Remember to save these weekly accomplishment lists. At the end of the year they become a handy summary of all your accomplishments. These weekly reports become a diary from which you can write your yearly summary.

If you don't write down everything weekly, you will probably only remember about 50% of what you accomplished for the year. This situation gets worse when you fail to summarize your yearly accomplishments in a written document for your supervisor. Without something written down, your supervisor will only remember 30% of your verbal message when you next meet. This means that without disciplined and documented summaries of your accomplishments, your supervisor will at best only report 15% of what you accomplished. No one gets raises or promotions when the supervisor only remembers or documents 15% of your efforts.

► **Career Tip.** Do a weekly activity report regardless if they are required or not. They become an excellent record of your accomplishments during the year.

## SUMMARY

The important point about developing and keeping a company calendar is that it allows you to keep track of important career activities; activities that can benefit your career or allow you to take actions necessary to maintain your career. Developing a company calendar is no easy task and it may take you several years before you are recording all significant activities. Once you do this you will soon realize all the opportunities that are available to you. It will quickly become apparent that the only person limiting your career growth is you!

Have you identified any career actions you want to take as a result of reading this chapter? If so, please make sure to capture these ideas before you forget by recording them in the notes section at the back of the book.

**ASSIGNMENT AND DISCUSSION TOPICS**

- 1 Start a company calendar.
- 2 From the calendar, determine the most significant task/item you can do in the next 2 months to enhance your career.
- 3 Volunteer for a meaningful or noble company activity. Get involved!