

# Performance Management: The Performance Appraisal

Linda Olson, Dakota County Supervisor  
Linda Bixby, Washington County Supervisor

---

---

---

---

---

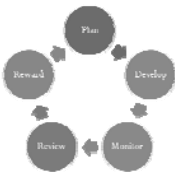
---

---

---

## Overview

Performance management is the process that allows an organization to improve its effectiveness in the accomplishment of its mission and goals.



### Performance Management System Components:

- **Plan** work and set standards
- **Develop** the capacity to perform,
- **Monitor** performance,
- **Review** performance in a prescribed process, and
- **Reward** quality performance

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Plan

- Create job descriptions that are understandable and relevant
- Make the mission and goals clear
- Set performance standards, outcomes and measurement
- Involve employees in the process (what, why, how)
- Establish the elements and standards for the appraisal process
- Build in flexibility to allow for changing program objectives



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Develop

- Increase capacity through training
- Give assignments that lead to new skills or more responsibility
- Encourage good performance
- Strengthen skill development
- Provide opportunities to keep up with a changing workplace (i.e., technology)



---

---

---

---

---

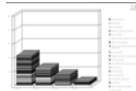
---

---

---

## Monitor

- Consistently measure performance
- Provide ongoing feedback to employees and teams
- Track progress toward goals
- Provide an opportunity to make changes to unrealistic standards
- Identify areas for development/training
- Identify unacceptable performance prior to a formal review



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Review

- Measure actual performance against expected performance
- Provide an opportunity for the employee and supervisor to exchange ideas and feelings about job performance
- Identify training and development needs, and plan for career growth
- Support alignment of organizations and employee goals
- Provide an instrument to compare performance among all employees
- Provide a process to look toward the future
- Provide the basis for determining compensation adjustment based on merit
- Provide legal protection against lawsuits for wrongful termination



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Reward

- Acknowledge individual contributions and team successes
- Should contain both informal and formal components
- Should be ongoing and natural (part of the day-to-day)
- Has a big impact on:
  - ✓ staff commitment
  - ✓ how employees do their jobs
  - ✓ job satisfaction
  - ✓ workplace environment and image



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Performance Review....



"I like you, Thompson. You're smart, a hard worker, and you're full of potassium."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Components of a Performance Review

- Assessment of technical knowledge and abilities
- Quality and quantity of work
- Degree of success in defined work areas and traits such as decision making, teamwork, leadership, communication, initiative, flexibility, customer service, dependability
- Professional activities such as involvement in organizations, work groups, special projects
- Professional development
- Degree of success in completing annual goals
- Development of new goals

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## General Tips

- **Supervisors need to be “present”**
  - ✓ Be available to observe your staff
  - ✓ Your observations need to validate your data
- **The organization must have a performance culture**
  - ✓ You cannot succeed in a vacuum
  - ✓ The organization must value performance and messages about it should be consistent
- **The concept of relative performance is an important one**
  - ✓ Employees need the context for their performance otherwise it is meaningless
- **Don't stay stuck with a performance problem.** Mistakes supervisors make:
  - ✓ They don't know how to address it
  - ✓ They are reluctant to take on difficult issues



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Common Mistakes

- Inadequately defined, or misunderstanding of, standards of performance
- Over-emphasis on recent performance
- Waiting for the evaluation to give feedback
- Reliance on gut feelings
- Being overly positive or overly negative
- Lack of appraiser preparation (playing it by ear)
- Judgment aversion
- Viewing the appraisal as an isolated event rather than an ongoing process
- Insufficient or unclear performance documentation
- Inadequate time allotted for the discussion
- Too much talking by the supervisor and/or not enough listening
- Lack of a follow-up plan



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Tips for New Supervisors

- Tread carefully when considering radically altering the ranking done on most recent evaluation unless a significant amount of time has passed with you as the “new supervisor.”
- Review all previous performance evaluations on each employee.
- Review the previous supervisor's notes in each employee's “working file.”
- If you can't back it up, don't say it.
- Call on your peers in other counties for support, ideas, advice and to discuss issues.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Documenting Critical Incidents and Significant Behaviors



**Critical Incident:** Event that is usually extreme (good or bad)

**Significant Behaviors:** Noteworthy conduct that impacts performance (positive or negative)

Record these as soon as possible after they occur. Record only facts and not opinions. Documentation helps you to:

- Increase the accuracy of the performance appraisal
- Provide evidence to support ratings
- Guarantee that you will consider the performance during the entire review period
- Reduce bias that occurs when you rate only recent behavior
- Support actions you need to take in the future

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Appraisal Forms

- **Poorly constructed forms can prevent good discussion**
- **Don't distort or deny**
  - ✓ Balance is important.
  - ✓ Glowing evaluations don't motivate (everyone will know it's a fraud).
- **Understand the pitfalls of "rating scales"**
  - ✓ Natural tendency for employees to focus on how they were "scored."
  - ✓ Often viewed as a "report card" or "grade."
- The **emphasis should be on the narrative** (detail) of your evaluation, not on the actual rating assigned.
- **Squeeze the rating scale.** *Example:* "Sue performs on the high end of benchmark for her technical knowledge."



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Moving Beyond Writer's Block

- Develop a system to track performance and behavior throughout the year
- Use the job description as a starting place to begin writing evaluations
- Use objective, measurement-oriented language
  - ✓ Don't overuse vague, generic terms such as "good" or "excellent"
  - ✓ Focus on action words: *exhibits, demonstrates, grasps, generates, manages, possesses, communicates, achieves*
- Stick to the facts
- Choose words that focus on performance and not personality
- Add examples or anecdotal information to illustrate your analysis
- Complete the review over a period of time, revisiting it periodically until done



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Moving Beyond Writer's Block

### Resources

- Neal, Jr., James. Effective Phrases For Performance Appraisals. Ohio: Neal Publications, Inc, 2000.
- Max, Douglas and Robert Bacal. Perfect Phrases for Performance Reviews. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2003.
- Falcone, Paul. 2600 Phrases for Effective Performance Reviews. New York: AMACOM, a division of American Management Association, 2005.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Engaging Employees in their Performance



Involving the employee in the evaluation process can make it a meaningful and worthwhile experience for both the employee and the supervisor.

Employees may hesitate to engage in the performance appraisal if they:

- Do not understand the purpose or mechanics of the review
- Are afraid, or not given an opportunity, to express opinions
- Are not given enough time to prepare for the discussion
- Their thoughts and ideas are brushed aside or discounted
- The process feels meaningless

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Engaging Employees in their Performance (continued)

- Continual assessment: schedule regular informal check points to discuss work and goal progress
- Discuss actual performance data/significant behaviors
- Compare data with responsibilities/goals
- Focus on finding solutions to problems and not on finding fault
- Maintain a positive focus and express confidence
- Solicit and use feedback from your employee relating to their performance, goal development and action plans
- Provide recognition
- Discuss specific actions for you and the employee to take
- Coach when opportunities arise
- Ensure the employee performance appraisal discussion is two-way (see "Conversation Starter" handout)
- Consider using a self-evaluation component to your review process (see handout)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Managing Employee Reactions

- Give frequent feedback
- Address performance problems timely
- Be constructive: focus on performance not the person
- Understand the job being performed
- Give them a chance to be heard-even if you disagree you demonstrate that you understand their reasoning
- Acknowledge and address resistance/defensiveness
- Don't rehash what went wrong; focus on what needs to happen in the future
- Be able to describe what successful performance looks like
- If there is disagreement, point out that:
  - ✓ A disagreement in perception exists, and
  - ✓ There are no right or wrong perceptions



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Giving Constructive Negative Performance Feedback

- **Express your concern**
  - ✓ Use "I" messages
  - ✓ Be tactful and direct – not so subtle you could create misunderstanding
- **Describe the behavior or the issue**
  - ✓ don't judge it
- **Have examples to illustrate**
  - ✓ things you have actually observed
  - ✓ using co-worker feedback can backfire
- **Assume the employee has positive intentions and say so**
- **Understand the whole story**
  - ✓ Listen, ask questions, confirm your understanding
  - ✓ Ex: What do you think is contributing to the backlog?"

Compliment →

Criticism →

Compliment →



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



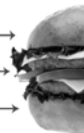
## Giving Constructive Negative Performance Feedback (continued)

- **Reinforce correct behavior**
  - ✓ Poor performance may be a result of good intentions
- **Describe the consequences**
  - ✓ Tell him/her how it is harming them
- **Describe what you want to see in the future**
- **Discuss possible solutions**
  - ✓ Brainstorm alternatives
  - ✓ Draw out the employee's ideas
  - ✓ Discuss the pros and cons of alternatives
- **Develop a plan**
  - ✓ Get employee commitment to work the plan
- **Follow-up**
  - ✓ Monitor progress
  - ✓ Periodically discuss and provide feedback

Compliment →

Criticism →

Compliment →



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Turning a Negative into a Positive

- "Your work has been sloppy lately." (**Negative:** too vague)
- "Your last three out of four TQRs showed incorrect PRISM coding medical support on SUOD." (**Positive:** cites specifics)
- "You obviously have trouble understanding the statutory modification criteria." (**Negative:** focuses on the person, not on performance)
- "I know you are capable of correctly applying the statutes to your work." (**Positive:** reaffirms confidence in employees abilities)
- "Don't let it happen again." (**Negative:** blanket demands)
- "How can we prevent errors from happening in future payment agreements?" (**Positive:** asks for feedback on improving performance).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## You are the Supervisor and not the Psychologist

- Don't diagnose
- Don't be the confidant or counselor
- Don't assume that your employee has a mental illness or mental health issue
- Be very careful about making informal accommodations
- Refer employees to your Employee Assistance provider as appropriate.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Goals



© Scott Adams, Inc./2004. by UPS, Inc.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Goal Basics

### What:

- Agreed-upon statement of what will be achieved in a specified period of time
- Should indicate how success will be attained
- Should provide parameters and define roles (how, who, when)
- Should be measurable, attainable, moderately difficult and accepted by the employee



### Why:

- Opportunity to align employee goals to organizational goals
- Allows you to both measure and recognize achievement
- Lets you identify and correct performance problems
- Enables you to identify and focus on your top priorities

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Goal Basics



### What:

- **Volume of work**: measures the amount of work performed
  - ✓ The number of court cases resolved by stipulation
  - ✓ The number of legal actions completed in 2008 compared to those completed in 2009
- **Accuracy**: measures the degree to which the work is performed free of error, or the quality of work
  - ✓ The percentage of current support collected
  - ✓ The percentage of default orders receiving CSM deficiency notices
- **Timeliness**: measures the duration it takes to perform the work
  - ✓ The number of days it takes for a case to move from case initiation staff to enforcement staff
  - ✓ The number of days it takes to serve process after locating an NCP

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What if Goal Achievement is Difficult to Measure?



Some goals are not easy to measure. This does not mean you should shy away from them. Instead develop criteria for evaluating the level of achievement that is acceptable:

- **Monthly reports**: "Performance is acceptable when completed monthly reports are turned in no more than two times late in a twelve month period."
- **Forecasting**: "Employee will not fail to bring to supervisor's attention when return phone calls fall behind by more than 48 hours."
- **Observation (for Behavioral Goals)**: "Employee will not roll her eyes in unit meetings."



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Behavioral Issues & Goals

- Types of behavioral goals
  - ✓ Increasing the general positive behavior that is expected
  - ✓ Decreasing or eliminating the specific problem behavior
- To be observable, the description should clearly state what the behavior looks like with no ambiguity.
  - ✓ Describe as though you are taking a picture
- Examples:
  - ✓ (Name) will demonstrate a commitment to improving presentation skills by regularly seeking feedback on presentations.
  - ✓ (Name) will lower her voice and use phone skills training when dealing with difficult callers. Customer complaints pertaining to apathy, or attitude will be reduced.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Assessing Goal Accomplishment

- **Rating Quantifiable Goals**

Use a simple three part scale for rating goals that are easy to measure:

  - ✓ *Did not meet goal*
  - ✓ *Met goal*
  - ✓ *Exceeded goal*

An optional fourth response can be *partially met goal*
- **Rating Behavioral Goals**

Use a frequency scale to rate behavioral factors since they are more complex and cannot be quantified:

  - ✓ *Almost Never*
  - ✓ *Almost Always*

with frequency anchors in between



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What those Words in Performance



### Reviews Really Mean



- Outgoing Personality:** Always going to be out of the office
- Good Communication Skills:** Spends lots of time on personal phone calls
- Work is First Priority:** Too ugly to get a date
- Independent Worker:** Nobody knows what he/she does
- Actively Social:** Drinks a lot
- Quick Thinker:** Offers plausible excuses
- Meticulous Attention to Detail:** A nit picker
- Has Leadership Qualities:** Is tall or has a louder voice
- Career Minded:** Back Stabber
- Loyal:** Can't get a job anywhere else
- Careful Thinker:** Won't make a decision
- Relaxed Attitude:** Sleeps at desk

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

The End...



Copyright © Gary Martin, 1996 - 2010



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Bibliography

Neal, Jr., James. The #1 Guide to Performance Appraisals: Doing it Right! Ohio: Neal Publications, Inc, 2001.

Toropov, Brandon. Manager's Portfolio of Model Performance Evaluations. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001.

Max, Douglas and Robert Bacal. Perfect Phrases for Performance Reviews. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2003.

Swan, William S with Philip Margulies. How to do a Superior Performance Appraisal. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1991.

Falcoone, Paul. 101 Tough Conversations to Have With Employees. New York: AMACOM, 2009.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Bibliography

Bruce, Anne. Perfect Phrases for Documenting Employee Performance Problems. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2005.

Sandler, Corey and Janie Keefe. Fails to Meet Expectations: Performance Review Strategies for Underperforming Employees. Massachusetts: Word Association, Inc., 2008.

Author Unknown, Archer North & Associates, <http://www.performance-appraisal.com/mistakes.htm>

Author Unknown, North Dakota OMB Human Resources Management Services, <http://www.nd.gov/hrms/managers/guide/perfeval.html>

Author Unknown, Communicare, Inc., <http://communicare.com/DT/Pitfalls&BestPracticesPerformanceManagement.pdf>

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---