

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

These performance management guidelines are designed to help you manage, develop, and evaluate your staff and to help them plan, track, and evaluate their own work. The process gives you and your staff a system for communicating regularly about performance. In addition, performance reviews are an effective tool for balancing employee's need for feedback with the college's desire to help them realize their professional potential.

This section describes the performance management process in detail and defines your role in it. You'll find out how to set clear job expectations, provide constructive ongoing feedback, conduct performance reviews effectively, promote professional development among your staff, and develop performance improvement plans. The Human Resources department will be glad to help you with any aspect of the performance management process.

DEFINING AND COMMUNICATING JOB EXPECTATIONS

As an employee's direct supervisor, you have a crucial responsibility to set and communicate clear performance expectations before he or she begins an assignment. Performance expectations are nothing more complex than concise, measurable statements that answer the following questions:

- What duties should the employee perform?
- What is an acceptable standard for completing the job in terms of time, quantity, quality, and budget?
- When will we know the job is done (how will we measure its completion)?

Performance expectations should be on the "MARC":

- **Measurable**---providing a clear way to determine if and how well the employee met the expectation.
- **Attainable**---reasonable and realistic.
- **Related**---connected to achieving other goals within the department and the college.
- **Challenging**---helping employees stretch their skills and appealing to their desire for professional growth.

SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Another fundamental part of performance management is setting concrete goals and objectives for your staff. **Goals** can be either special assignments or plans for improving performance and are usually specific to each employee. Goals are an excellent vehicle for providing the general targets and feedback vital to

employee's success. By contrast, **objectives** are the specific tasks employees must complete to accomplish their goals.

Goals are valuable tools for managing new projects, helping improve or enhance an employee's performance and adding creativity to what employees might otherwise consider routine work assignments. To be most effective, goals should be "**SMART**":

- **Specific**---Goals should be stated in terms of a certain behavior the employee must exhibit in order to attain the goal.
- **Measurable**---Goals should contain clear criteria for determining if the employee achieved the goal. Ideally, this measuring system should enable the employee to monitor his or her progress along the way.
- **Attainable**---Goals should be challenging, but attainable. Since goals can and should serve as motivational tools, they should state a target that is within reach, yet not too easy to accomplish.
- **Realistic**---The employee should feel that his or her chance of success is better than 50 percent. Unrealistically high goals may lead to high performance in the short term but result in long-term frustration for the employee.
- **Timebound**---The employee should have a specific date by which to achieve the goal.

When setting goals with your staff, consider the following tips:

- Encourage your employees to help determine their goals. Taking an active role in this process often strengthens employees' commitment to their goals.
- Avoid setting too many goals for an employee. Three to five goals each quarter is generally sufficient.
- Hold your employees accountable for their goals. To make this process easier, don't set goals on which you're not prepared to follow through.

ON GOING FEEDBACK

Throughout the year, you should take every opportunity to provide feedback on your staff's performance. You should provide very specific feedback to make sure an employee understands it completely. You should also offer feedback on a timely basis, as an employee exhibits related behavior. There are two types of feedback, positive reinforcement and constructive feedback, which are described below.

Positive Reinforcement

When employees meet or exceed their job expectations, you shouldn't take their performance for granted. Taking a minute to thank an employee for a job well done is a simple and effective way to boost morale and help motivate the

employee to continue the good work. If employees know exactly what they need to do to perform well and that you appreciate their efforts, they're more likely to maintain---or exceed---their level of performance.

Constructive Criticism

There may be instances in which an employee should improve or otherwise change an aspect of his or her performance. When this happens, meet with the employee briefly to discuss the issue and offer constructive criticism. Consider the following guidelines during your discussion:

- Specify merits of the performance that you want to see retained.
- Specify concerns about the performance that you want to see eliminated.
- Explore ideas together for retaining merits and eliminating concerns.
- Ask the employee for suggestions, and LISTEN!

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

As an essential component of the performance management process, performance reviews are design to:

- Improve the performance of individual employees.
- Establish a comprehensive performance record for each employee.
- Identify potential talent for career opportunities.
- Help the college make informed personnel decisions.

When used effectively, performance reviews can help you:

- Foster open communications with your staff.
- Improve productivity in your area.
- Motivate your staff.
- Provide employees with constructive feedback about their performance.
- Identify specific areas of performance or operations that need improvement.
- Acknowledge and reinforce strong performance.

Performance reviews are conducted at the beginning of an employees employment with the college, and annually thereafter. After 6 months of employment, the employee may be eligible for an introductory increase. Human Resources will notify you when it is time to conduct performance reviews.

By conducting mid-year reviews, you have a valuable opportunity to formally check in with your staff. Although the College has a cycle for formal performance reviews, you may also hold performance discussions and take appropriate action at any time during the year.

Responsibilities

You, each member of your staff, and your Human Resources department all play vital roles in the performance management program. These responsibilities are summarized below:

Supervisor

- Prepare for each performance review session by carefully reviewing the employee's performance from the previous year and evaluating future opportunities for career development.
- Schedule and hold the performance discussion with the employee.
- Submit the final performance review form and give a copy of the evaluation to the employee and your principal administrator.

Employee

- Prepares for the session by reviewing the goals he or she set during the previous year's performance review and his or her performance against those goals.
- Notes areas in which he or she exceeded these goals, as well as obstacles to his or her achievement.
- Considers development opportunities for the forthcoming year and identifies areas for improvement.
- Analyzes his or her PDQ to determine any changes that could help in reaching his or her professional goals and/or the goals of the college.

Human Resources

- Initiates the evaluation process by notifying you and sending you a performance review form.
- Acts as a resource for both you and your employee in preparing for the performance discussion.
- Helps you and your staff member identify appropriate career development opportunities.
- Maintains a file of all completed evaluation forms for each employee.

Procedure

Conducting performance reviews takes thoughtful preparation and solid interpersonal skills. To help you make this program as effective as possible, we have outlined each stage of this process below, along with some practical tips.

Prepare for the Performance Review Discussion

To prepare for a formal performance review, you should carefully plan and develop all the points you will cover during your discussion with an employee. You should also make sure the employee knows about the review in advance so he or she has time to prepare. The basic process is as follows:

- Between three and four months before an employee’s annual performance review is due, your Human Resources department will notify you and inform you where you can get performance review materials. The employee should complete the appropriate section of the form and then return it to you.
- After reviewing the employee’s responses, complete the rest of the form. You may want to complete the section on goal setting during the performance discussion so you can include the employee’s suggestions or ideas.
- Meet with Human Resources prior to the review if you have any concerns.
- Schedule a meeting with the employee.
- Before the meeting, take some time to:
 - Determine what the employee should have accomplished by this point. Review the employee’s work objectives and achievements, and determine the quality of the resulting work.
 - Identify the employee’s specific strengths and areas of improvement.
 - Write down a development plan to propose to the employee.
 - Try to anticipate the employee’s reaction to your review: what observations he or she will and will not accept and how you will handle resistance.

Set the Stage

To help you and your employee get the most out of the performance discussion, consider the following guidelines as you set up the review:

- Make sure the employee understands the purpose of the review.
- Ask the employee to bring any documentation that illustrates his or her performance in addition to the information on the performance review form.
- Schedule the review for a specific time, setting aside plenty of time for a thorough discussion.
- Reserve a private area for the meeting, and make sure you won’t be interrupted.

Conduct the Meeting

Since you must base your performance review on clearly defined results, your ability to uncover information and focus on specifics in the meeting is very important. By the end of the discussion, you and the employee should reach a mutual understanding about his or her performance and any plans for development. Consider the following “dos and don’ts”

Do:

- Use an approach that both of you will be comfortable with, and adjust the approach to the employee and the situation.
- Explain the purpose of the discussion, and talk about the benefits of the performance appraisal process.
- Take the time to develop a rapport with the employee, and try to create a friendly tone and atmosphere.
- Maintain a positive, constructive attitude throughout the discussion.
- Describe a specific behavior the employee exhibits, and avoid the desire to generalize about or interpret it. Be aware that analyzing an employee's behavior could possibly damage his or her self-worth and self-esteem. To encourage your employee to accept a new plan of action, offer it as an option rather than a direct order.
- Encourage open communication by asking the employee for feedback and questions.
- Listen attentively; don't interrupt.
- Focus on the employee's future, not the past.
- Try to motivate the employee by offering positive reinforcement and solutions to problems.
- Emphasize the employee's strengths.
- Focus on the employee's results, not his or her personality.
- Give concrete information and advice to help the employee improve his or her performance.
- Avoid confrontation and argument.
- Be candid, honest, and specific in discussing employee performance.
- Listen with your ears, eyes and mind. Be aware of non-verbal communication between you and the employee.
- Show that you respect the employee and care about his or her thoughts and feelings.
- Be sure you understand the employee's point of view and specific needs related to an issue before you move on to another one.
- Help the employee define any problems in his or her own words; guide the employee to recognize independently the nature of the solution or what he or she needs from you.
- When the employee expresses a desire to improve his or her performance, acknowledge it in the interview and reinforce it on the job. Gradually reduce the amount of reinforcement you offer as the new behavior becomes part of the individual's general behavior.
- Agree on specific course of action to solve the problem or resolve your differences.
- Be supportive and encouraging; express your confidence in the employee.
- Resolve to follow up and keep your commitment to the employee.

Don't

- Preach or harangue the employee.
- Be condescending or sarcastic.
- Vent your anger or frustration through criticism; it doesn't motivate and is often destructive.
- Get sidetracked.
- Talk about yourself or your own experiences, unless a certain instance is directly related to the employee's performance and can clearly help motivate him or her to improve.
- Simply unload your opinion on the employee without asking for feedback and questions.
- End on a note of disagreement.
- Complain, dwell on past failures, or express current doubts in the employee's ability.
- Back off and "see what happens."

REVIEW AND FOLLOW-UP

Once you and the employee have signed the performance review, send or give a copy of the completed performance review form to the employee. Then send the original performance review to your Principal Administrator. The Principal Administrator will review and sign the performance review and forward the review to Human Resources for filing in the employee's personnel file.

To check your interviewing skills, you may want to review the discussion by asking yourself the following questions:

- Did you set a climate conducive to open discussion?
- Were you prepared?
- Do you consider the interview satisfactory?
- Who talked more, you or the employee?
- Does the employee understand his or her status?
- Do you feel you listened effectively?
- Did you resolve any conflicting goals?
- Did you omit any issues you should have covered?
- Did you confirm your agreement on a plan of action?