

Performance Management

HUMAN RESOURCES INFORMATION SERIES FOR SUPERVISORS

- I. Overview
- II. Supervisor and Employee Rights
- III. Assignments and Job Descriptions
- IV. What Success Looks Like- Goals
- V. Coaching Through Information Evaluation & Feedback
- VI. Performance Management Cycle
- VII. Ways to Motivate Employees
- VIII. Frequently Asked Questions

I. Overview

Employees are most likely to be successful performers when they clearly understand their assignments, know what level of performance is considered acceptable, and receive consistent feedback. Evaluation of an employee's performance is not just a once-a-year activity done *by* a supervisor *to* an employee. It is an ongoing process that involves information from coworkers, customers, the supervisor, and even the employee. The employee is just as responsible for his or her successful performance and evaluation as the supervisor.

A formal appraisal is an important opportunity to summarize the informal evaluations of the employee's performance over a long period of time. The University policy currently requires that an employee receive at least one formal appraisal every 12 months.

II. Supervisor and Employee Rights

Supervisors: have the right of final approval on which levels of performance will be considered successful and to hold employees accountable for meeting these standards. Supervisors also have a right to formally evaluate employees on a periodic basis and provide informal feedback on a frequent basis in order to achieve the level of performance required to manage a successful program, service or department.

Employees: have a right to be informed of performance expectations and to be evaluated as objectively as possible. Employees also have a right to periodic performance feedback and to at least one formal evaluation each year.

III. Assignments and Job Descriptions

The first step to successful performance is ensuring that the employee is clear about what he or she is assigned to do. What is the employee's role within the organization? What are the duties and responsibilities?

Each position in a department has its own unique set of duties and responsibilities. For example, not all secretaries perform exactly the same combination of tasks, though much of what they do is similar. An exact description of the duties and responsibilities an employee needs to perform can be provided by writing (or updating) a department (or functional) job description. The description should be specific to the position(s) in a particular department or unit. It should include the phrase "and other related duties as assigned" to cover unexpected or occasional tasks and should be updated as often as is needed to keep it current.

IV. What Success Looks Like- Goals

Clarifying duties and responsibilities provides a framework for the crucial activity of setting performance standards. The supervisor and the employee both need some way of determining how well the employee is doing. It is important for the standards to be negotiated and set *before* the employee starts performing work that will be evaluated, whether the employee is new to the University or new to the position as a result of transfer or promotion. It is also important to update the standards as the work situation changes.

Negotiation is important because many factors (staffing levels, workloads, or stressful work conditions, for example) can affect the fairness of an expectation. The more the employee is involved in setting/updating standards and agrees they are *clear and reasonable*, the greater the chances for successful performance.

A goal refers to results that must be achieved or to ongoing performance criteria that must be met consistently and/or results that must be achieved in order for the employee to achieve successful performance. Goals refer to such things as the delivery of services at a specified level of quality, attendance level, accuracy rates, response times, production rates, safety thresholds, format requirements, and behavioral expectations. In order to write an effective goal for successful performance, it should be as specific, *measurable*, *attainable*, *realistic*, and *time* measured as possible ("SMART").

Goals may be set for each duty or project assigned. They may be set for activities or behaviors that apply to many assignments or projects (for example, computer work or cooperation). The important thing is that everyone who will be involved in evaluating an employee's performance is clear about which aspects of the employee's performance will be evaluated and what successful performance will look like.

V. Coaching Through Informal Evaluation and Feedback

Coaching is a term used to describe an ongoing evaluation and feedback process. It tells employees, "How am I doing?" and "Where do I go from here?" How would you like to be a member of a bowling team and go bowling every week, but only get your score once a year? Coaching is the day-to-day effort to review work, answer questions, discuss progress (or lack of it) toward meeting standards, develop skills, and provide positive guidance.

Is the supervisor the only person who can provide coaching to an employee? Coworkers, other supervisors, and even customers can often be in a good position to compare the employee's performance to establish standards and then give helpful feedback. Such coaching opportunities can be part of planned mentoring or customer feedback process or can occur spontaneously as a result of the employee asking these people for input.

The employee can also be her or his own coach by obtaining feedback from other sources. By reviewing one's own work products, data from reports, or even videotapes (when appropriate and if available) can provide the employee an opportunity for self-evaluation and improvement.

But can't that become a lot of information to keep track of? The most effective way to track and refer to that information is to set up a "memory file." This can be as simple as a file folder. It can include notes on exceptional (positive or negative) performance or behavior by the employee. It can also include copies of exceptional documents such as letters of appreciation or of warning. By keeping a memory file on each employee, a supervisor can track an employee's performance progress as well as what coaching has been provided. Depending on how accessible and complete that file, the employee may want to set up his own memory file to ensure all key aspects of his performance are recorded.

VI. Performance Management Cycle

- A. Annual Performance Review
- B. Performance Planning and Setting Goals
- C. Implementation of the Performance Plan
- D. Progress Reviews and Coaching (throughout the year)
- E. Annual Performance Review

Preparation

Employee prepares by:

- A. Reviewing the job description, responsibilities and skills.
- B. Assessing own performance and identifying areas for improvement.
- C. Preparing specific and measurable goals.
- D. Reviewing competencies for current and desirable jobs and targeting some for developing.

Supervisor prepares by:

- A. Reviewing and updating job description, responsibilities and skills.
- B. Assessing employees performance and identifying areas for improvement.
- C. Preparing specific and measurable goals.
- D. Considering advancement or enrichment opportunities.
- E. Scheduling uninterrupted meeting time and giving the employee advanced notice.

The Performance Appraisal Meeting

- A. Arrange a meeting place free of interruptions, distractions and phone calls.
- B. Ask for the employees self-evaluation and review your evaluation of the employee.
- C. Jointly, offer/suggest what would help or maintain performance.
- D. Agree on a developmental plan for the coming year.
- E. Get employee's commitment to improve performance and schedule the first performance review meeting.

Performance Progress Reviews

- A. Meet periodically to review and update goals.
- B. Provide ongoing coaching/suggestions.
- C. Help employee develop relationships necessary to meet goals.
- D. Run interference when necessary.
- E. Provide encouragement and reinforcement

VII. Ways to Motivate Employees

- ! *Personally thank employees for a good job verbally and in writing (Timely, often, and sincerely).*
- ! *Make the time to meet with and listen to your staff.*
- ! *Provide specific feedback about individual, department, and organization.*
- ! *Strive to create an open, trusting, and fun work environment. Encourage new ideas and initiatives.*
- ! *Provide information on departmental and University strategy and on how the individual fits in with the overall plan.*
- ! *Involve employees in decisions, especially those that affect them.*
- ! *Provide employees with a sense of ownership in their work and the work environment.*
- ! *Recognize, reward, and promote people based on their performance and deal with marginal performers.*
- ! *Give people a chance to grow and learn new skills. Create a partnership to help them meet their goals within the context of the organization's goals.*
- ! *Celebrate success -- of the University, the department, and the individuals in it. Take time for team and morale building meetings and activities.*

GENERAL TIPS AND IDEAS:

- ! *Customize a memo.* Use the employee's first name and add your own personal touches where possible.
- ! *Know your employees and reward them as individuals.* For example, if the employee appreciates written praise and likes to go fishing, give them a recognition memo and a few hours off on a sunny afternoon.
- ! *Involve employees in the recognition process.* Ask them when they think employees should be recognized. Establish a program where they nominate one another for awards.
- ! *Match the reward and the achievement.* Make sure those who have completed more substantial tasks are better rewarded than those who simply had a good day.
- ! *Vary rewards.* After an employee has received 2-3 recognition memos, offer them a material reward of some sort.
- ! *Spread the wealth.* Try to recognize everyone in some way or another. Find something they are doing right that you want to reinforce.
- ! *Act quickly.* Recognize the employee as soon as possible following the event. Even if you're planning a more substantial reward in the future, be sure to give some verbal recognition or a quick memo right away.
- ! *Be as specific as possible.* Let your employee know exactly what it is that they have done right.
- ! *Try not to mix recognition with advice.* This might confuse the message you are sending.
- ! *Convey the big picture.* Describe how the effort or result contributed to a broader goal or objective.
- ! *Reinforce company values.* When possible point out how an employee's actions support a company value or major objective.
- ! *Be genuine in your tone and wording.* Try to write in the same manner that you use when speaking.

TIPS FOR WRITING TEAM MEMOS:

- ! *Praise everyone on the team.* Congratulate the entire team on its efforts.
- ! *Point out team players.* If someone has made a particularly strong contribution to the team effort, point it out.
- ! *Be specific in your team praise.* Mention a group of people who worked especially well

together, or point out a particular result that could not have been achieved without close cooperation.

VIII. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What should we do about employees who become belligerent during the annual performance evaluation?

A: Holding only one evaluation session each year may cause unnecessary anxiety for both the supervisor and the employee. There are a couple of options to consider. First, less formal monthly or quarterly feedback sessions can provide valuable input in a less stressful manner. Another option is to ask the employee to create measurable performance standards at the beginning of the evaluation period and to provide periodic progress reports.

Q: How can an employee's cooperation skills be objectively evaluated? Isn't cooperation a highly subjective concept?

A: Cooperation is an essential component in an effective team-based environment, but it may be difficult to measure. One option to consider is asking the employee and the employee's colleagues to document examples of the employee's efforts to build and maintain relations in order to complete projects or address problems.

Q: It seems like some employees are not staying current in our field, and this may reduce our department's ability to be effective. Is there a way to mandate continuing education?

A: If staying abreast of specialized knowledge is critical to solid job performance, job knowledge should be given significant weight in the evaluation process. Demonstration of new knowledge may be evaluated by satisfactory completion of academic course work, a brief written summary of the major concepts discussed during a professional conference, or a product (a manual or a new procedure) created as a result of reading in the field.

Q: Do employees really require an annual review?

A: Yes, the University mandates an annual evaluation. Failure to complete an annual employee evaluation may significantly reduce department flexibility with promotions, discipline and other issues.

Q: Isn't a formal evaluation pretty pointless for truly outstanding employees?

A: Not at all. Formal evaluation for outstanding performance can be highly motivating for high achievers. Failure to acknowledge this performance may actually result in declines for future performance.

Q: What happens if an employee disputes the performance appraisal rating?

A: If the dispute cannot be resolved informally, the employee may initiate a grievance