

How to Conduct a Performance Evaluation

As you prepare, conduct and follow-up on employee performance evaluation sessions as a supervisor, use the following guidelines to help you increase the likelihood of having a positive and productive exchange with your employees. Remember, the employee performance appraisal meeting is an opportunity to recognize achievements, identify and correct problems, and set specific goals and objectives for the coming year.

Preparing

- Give your employee advance notice so that he/she can prepare for the discussion.
- Review the position's responsibilities and expectations.
- Review your employee's job performance for the past year.
- Identify potential development areas that can be addressed through training and/or special projects.
- If you have asked your employee to do a self-evaluation, be sure to obtain that early enough so you have a chance to review it as part of your preparation.
- Set aside an adequate block of uninterrupted time to permit a full and complete discussion.

Remember to avoid the following when assessing your employee's performance.

- Halo Effect - tendency to overrate a favored employee, or an employee who had a prior good rating.
- Horns Effect - tendency to rate your employee lower than circumstances warrant.
- Recency Error- letting outstanding work, or unsatisfactory work, immediately prior to the evaluation offset an entire year of performance
- Cookie Cutter Effect - not focusing on individual specific performance. Rating all your employees or groups of employees the same.

Conducting

- Open on an upbeat note. Start the discussion with friendly greetings, this sets the tone for the rest of the session and puts your employee at ease.
- Keep the focus on job performance and related factors, not personality.
- Discuss job requirements; emphasize employee strengths, accomplishments, and improvement needs. Discuss development/training plans with your employee.
- Be honest and be prepared to cite observations for each point discussed, even questionable items. Support your employee's effort to improve.
- If you use self-evaluations, discuss the points where you and your employees agree and disagree.

- Clarify the overall ratings with your employee and provide specific information regarding the criteria that you used to determine them.
- Don't interrupt, but ask questions only for clarification. Rephrase and summarize what your employee says, to ensure you truly understand them.
- Ask your employee for ideas about how to resolve problems.
- Set appropriate goals, expectations, and objectives together for the up-coming year.
- Thank your employee for their participation. Ask them if you're providing valuable support. Ask for suggestions on ways you can improve as a supervisor.
- Summarize what has been discussed and ask for final questions. End on a positive note.

Constructive Feedback

When giving constructive feedback, it is very important that you focus on performance rather than personality i.e. criticise what your employee has done rather than who they are. The following are tips you can use:

- Plan the feedback in advance and ensure you have a clear aim about the purpose of the feedback.
- Consider in advance how you think your employee may react to the feedback.
- Focus on what your employee does well.
- Encourage self-assessment by asking your employee's views in the first instance – they may already be aware of areas for improvement.
- Explain the effects of their actions or behaviour on colleagues, the team/Department/Faculty.
- Encourage your employee to take full responsibility for his/her actions.
- Focus on the future and what can be done to improve any areas of weakness or what could be done differently.
- Make it clear that you want to work with your employee to seek solutions to any problem areas.
- Let your employee know if you think they are capable of improvement.

A suggestion when giving this type of feedback is using the 'sandwich' technique, which 'negative' areas are 'sandwiched' between positive feedback:

- First, emphasis on what worked well.
- Second, focus on what could have been done differently.
- Thirdly, give a summary of what might help and a reminder of the positive.

Effective Ways to Communicate

Don't say:	Do say:
Your work is very careless.	There are regular mistakes in your work that we need to discuss. Here are some examples.
You're unable to meet deadlines and your work is always late.	You have missed the agreed deadline for [specific task/activity] on three occasions [be prepared to give more detail as appropriate]. We need to talk about how to prevent this happening in the future.
You do a good job.	Your [specific task/activity] was [outcome]. An example - Your data entry on the record system is always very accurate and information is entered on time.
You make too many mistakes.	I want to discuss what we can do to reduce the level of mistakes.
Your management skills are unsatisfactory.	What are your views on your ability to supervise and manage your staff regularly?
I was really annoyed when you processed that invoice late.	When you processed the invoice late, the outcome was that we lost our discount for early payment and it impacted our relationship with this important supplier.
You should have taken more responsibility on that [task/activity].	Do you agree that you were the person responsible for that [task/activity]?
You need to sort this problem out.	I want to discuss how I can support you in sorting this problem out
Your performance is unacceptable.	I believe that you are capable of improvement and would like to discuss what further training might be helpful in meeting your objectives

Handling Employee Behaviours

Your employee may not accept your feedback about unsatisfactory performance and may become defensive. Below are a few tips to deal with unexpected behaviours.

If your employee becomes defensive or makes excuses:

- Listen to what your employee has to say and paraphrase back. Remain neutral and maintain eye-contact.
- Don't solve the problem.
- Ask for specifics with open-ended questions.
- Try to determine the cause by asking, "Tell me more." "How did you reach that conclusion?"
- Ask how he/she will resolve the problem.

If your employee becomes angry:

- Stay calm and centered and maintain eye-contact.
- Listen to what he/she has to say and paraphrase back.
- Let he/she "run down" for as long as needed until he/she can listen to you.
- Avoid arguments.
- Bring discussion and focus back to performance and standards.
- Say your employee's name, and ask open-ended questions.

If your employee is unresponsive or withdraws:

- Be patient and friendly.
- Show concern.
- Stay silent, and wait for your employee to say something.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Note that he/she is unresponsive.
- Encourage your employee that you want to hear his/her input, and this input is important to you.

Closing and Following Up

- Both you and your employee should sign the review. Signing the review does not mean your employee agrees with the review; it means that the review has been shared with the employee. The employee can provide a written response, which is optional.
- Provide your employee with a copy, and the original is forwarded to Human Resources for the employee's personnel file.
- You and your employee should exchange ongoing feedback about performance goals and standards throughout the year.