



PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Performance management is an ongoing process rather than a once a year occurrence. It's a way for you as the supervisor to motivate and develop your employees, and to assist them in committing to the overall goals and objectives of your department. Employees need to know what you expect, and you need to be able to measure their adherence to those expectations in a fair and equitable manner. Your feedback should give employees clarity, a reason to go forward, and direct their work effort toward the goals of the department and the institution.



HUMAN RESOURCES

LAMAR UNIVERSITY

WHY SUPERVISORS TAKE A NEGATIVE VIEW OF THIS ACTIVITY

- It takes too much time.
- It is not tied to merit or anything else.
- We want to avoid problems that might arise during the process.
Discussions can sometimes turn into an argument.
- This process doesn't change behaviors or performance anyway.
- This is just another piece of paper



We all play the game of justification—why we did or did not do something. Before we discuss Phase I of the process which is the Planning Phase, let's discuss the reasons most frequently given for not doing performance evaluations.

It takes too much time. Time invested in this process may “save” an employee or change that employee's direction. It can cause an employee who is fully meeting performance expectations to feel appreciated and recognized. It can bring about employee engagement and commitment. Effecting any of these things is time well spent for a manager.

It is not tied to merit or anything else. While we hope one day to be able to use this process for merit purposes, that is not the primary reason for assessing performance. This process involves ways for employee and supervisor to spend “quality time” together reviewing each one's perception of activities and progress, establishing agreement, and deciding on future efforts.

To avoid problems. As a supervisor you want to be honest with employees, call things as they really are, and encourage the best from each individual. This takes courage and a desire to fully embrace your role as a supervisor. Part of your job is to assess the performance of your workforce. You are the coach. A team does not improve just because they each have a page out of the playbook. The coach is the critical element responsible for evaluating how well each player is doing his job and how much his efforts contribute to the success of the team. As supervisor your job is to evaluate your players, and you should be evaluated by your boss on how well you do this portion of your job.

This process will not change behaviors or performance. As you prepare for Phase I of this process you have an opportunity to reset the clock by talking about what is expected, how it will be measured, and what will be the consequences of non-performance. Behaviors rarely change if there is no consequence for the behavior. It's imperative that desired behavior/performance be communicated, be reinforced when expectations are met, and addressed when expectations are not met.

Just another piece of paper. The focus of this training is not on a piece of paper, but an ongoing process. While there is a requirement to commit the overall results to a written document, it's the process where all the work is done and where great benefit comes to the employee, to the workgroup, to you, and to the University.

WHY ASSESS PERFORMANCE?

- To provide the opportunity for ongoing, one-on-one communication with employees.
- To address and reinforce performance expectations.
- So that employees know where they stand.
- To link employee goals with the goals and objectives of your department, division and the University.
- To assist in the justification of future employment actions.
- To assist in developing employees.

In the past, for many employees, the performance evaluation interview was the only time during the year when the supervisor and employee sat down for a face-to-face discussion of the employee's performance. Even more tragic is that frequently this was also the only time a good performer received any recognition for work well done. This shouldn't be. This process calls for ongoing feedback throughout the year as the employee carries out the plan established in Phase I. By the time employee and supervisor reach Phase III and IV, there should be no surprises and both should be on the same page.

In Phase I of the process clear expectations should be established—outline areas where the employee is expected to achieve results. What is the job that has to be done? How will what's done be measured? What performance factors or behaviors are important in accomplishing the work? What is the development plan going forward? You should have a clear view in mind of what satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance would look like. You want to have goals and objectives that are clearly defined and shared with employees, and you want them to see the importance of what they do.

By tying the employee's goals with the goals and objectives of the department and the University, you help the employee understand the importance of his/her work. For example, a custodial worker may view his/her work as unimportant and think it's drudgery and just something that has to be done day in and day out. But when this job is seen as one necessary to provide a clean and comfortable environment for students to learn in, that then ties it to the education process and a goal of the University.

WHAT IS THE LEGAL IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS?

- Performance evaluations can be utilized to support both positive and negative employment action.
- Performance evaluations are a formal part of the documentation cycle.
- If properly completed they can support disciplinary decisions. If improperly completed, they may show up on an 8' by 10' screen in court supporting the other side.
- They can hopefully keep the University and the supervisor from being sued.

This is mentioned as part of the training because the performance evaluation is recognized as a legal document. Therefore what you say on it must be factual and true. While the performance evaluation is certainly not the only means of documenting a performance problem, it should not say one thing while other facts say just the opposite. As such, let us always strive for accuracy in our assessments.



PERFORMANCE PLANNING

- Define major areas of responsibility and specific objectives to be accomplished.
- Define how these will be measured.
- Define performance factors to be considered.
- Discuss development.
- Establish frequency of feedback meetings.
- Make notes as needed regarding action items and things agreed to and provide same to employee.

Discussions with employees must accurately reflect what the supervisor expects so there's no misunderstanding and everyone is on the same page. You, as the supervisor, must be able to define the major areas of responsibility and what kind of results you expect—you should be able to tie this to departmental and University goals and objectives, and emphasize how you will measure what the employee does. You want to be able to point to concrete and specific examples that would demonstrate fully acceptable work to help the employee better understand. As the plan is carried out it will not be sufficient to simply say, "You are doing a good job, keep it up." A good job at what? Keep what up? You'll need to be a lot more specific regarding accomplishments so that your employees know you're paying attention to them, and that you recognize their value as individual contributors to your team.

As part of performance planning you might review job descriptions with your employees. Sometimes employees reveal some interesting differences between what they think is their job and the important parts of it, and how the supervisor views the job. This could have a lot to do with why many supervisors become frustrated when employees do not meet their expectations. It is the supervisor's job to establish the standards or expectations, define acceptable behavior or performance, and communicate all of this to employees.

As you seek to establish performance standards please keep in mind that you are not focused on a list of tasks and duties, but a definition of acceptable performance of tasks or duties. Key points to keep in mind when establishing performance standards are:

- Differentiating between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance.
- Ensuring the standard is realistic and achievable.
- Ensuring the standard can be observed and is measurable.

As a quick exercise before going to the next page, write a set of performance standards for the following tasks: (1) Act as receptionist for the department. (2) Prepare statistical reports. Compare what you thought of to the items shown on the next page.

Example: Performance Standards

(For exercise from the previous page)

Act as receptionist

- Greet or acknowledge all visitors as they enter the department. All have a right to expect a smile and a friendly greeting.
- Demonstrate in all interactions with others polite, courteous, and helpful behaviors.
- Answer the telephone by the third ring.
- Accurately complete call slips, confirming names and numbers.

Prepare reports

- Update and maintain automated tracking system for recurring departmental activities. Prepare monthly statistical reports reflecting this information.
- Compile data for reports on Excel spreadsheet.
- Ensure data is accurate and complete.
- Prepare ad hoc statistical reports upon request.
- Prepare reports within allotted timeframes.

SETTING GOALS

- Be specific. If the goal is too vague, it will be meaningless.
- Help employee understand purpose for goal.
- Define how you will gauge progress toward accomplishing the goal—how it will be measured.
- Assign deadlines—this pushes commitment and helps us plan.

It's usually easy to set goals but much harder to achieve them. We frequently see this when we move into a new year. We've probably all been guilty of making New Year's resolutions that we soon realize have gone nowhere. Instead of vague goals, we need to be specific. Instead of saying "I'm going to lose weight" I need to say "I'm going to lose 30 pounds." Now I've been specific, but I still need to determine measurability so I can assess my progress toward achieving this goal. To do this, I might add that "I'm going to lose 30 pounds at 10 pounds per month over a 3-month period of time and indicate what the end date for the 3-month period will be."

Before moving on let's stop for a little practice. Please write one or two performance goals and determine if you've captured the elements previously discussed.

Examples For Setting Goals

(For exercise from the previous page)

Description of a goal

Plan, coordinate and implement the agency's annual insurance enrollment period including preparing multiple employee communications such as memos, newsletters, and other presentations. Progress toward accomplishing this goal will be measured by the amount and frequency of information sent to employees, how smoothly the process flows, and the timeliness of associated activities.

Description of a goal

Plan, coordinate, and conduct at least six inspections, investigations, or quality assurance reviews each quarter during the third and fourth quarters of each year and evaluate findings. This goal will be measured by a random review of at least three of the six items each quarter to assess soundness of recommendations, whether compliance with state and federal licensure regulations were appropriately addressed, and thoroughness of final reports.

CARRYING OUT THE PLAN

- Schedule date and time for feedback meeting.
- Determine what phase of the cycle the meeting falls within.
- Let the employee know what will be discussed.
- Have employee bring any needed information.
- Make notes regarding discussion—provide copy to employee.

In Phase I of the performance management cycle you established the frequency of feedback meetings. We recommend holding feedback meetings at least quarterly. When it's time for one of these meetings, determine which phase of the cycle it falls within. This will aid you in determining what needs to be covered with the employee. When you set the date and time for the meeting, let the employee know what will be discussed. If needed, have employee bring appropriate information to the meeting. Gather any information you need to share with the employee. Ensure that if the employee has items he/she wants to specifically discuss, these are brought forth as well. During your discussion with the employee make notes as needed regarding action items, changes agreed to, etc. Provide a copy of this information to the employee.

The "Periodic Performance Review Form" located on the HR website was developed for feedback meetings, but you may also document these meetings in some other fashion.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- Here supervisor and employee independently assess how employee has done.
- Have employee do a self-appraisal.
- Review notes from discussions throughout cycle. Prepare a draft of the annual appraisal that outlines your own assessment of performance.
- Compare employee's assessment with yours. Identify similarities and differences. Have comments and examples to support how you have judged performance to be.
- Discuss with your supervisor.

This phase is the precursor to sharing the formal written appraisal. Keep in mind there should be no surprises here as there has been an ongoing dialogue with employees throughout the performance cycle through feedback meetings. This ongoing dialogue, along with notes you've provided, should assist employees in accurately assessing their performance when they do a self-appraisal.

When you get the employee's self-appraisal and prepare your own written assessment, you'll need to have comments and examples that support your judgment regarding the employee's performance. You should also discuss your assessments with your supervisor. This is particularly important if there are problems. Prepare a draft of the annual performance appraisal form to share with the employee. The appraisal form and instructions are located on the HR website.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

- Supervisor and employee meet to discuss results achieved, effectiveness, and overall performance.
- Reach a common understanding.
- Discuss the areas of agreement. Supplement with your observations.
- Where you disagree, start with area of least divergence.
- Use facts and specifics to back up your judgments.
- Remember this is a discussion. The employee may disagree. Listen, ask for facts and examples.
- Allow employee to write comments.
- Sign appraisal and distribute appropriate copies.

This is the final phase in the cycle. Supervisor and employee meet for a discussion of overall performance, results achieved, effectiveness, etc. During this meeting the supervisor discusses the employee's self appraisal noting similarities and differences with the supervisor's assessment, reviews the employee's strengths and development needs, and both come to a common understanding. The supervisor should include comments and examples that support the supervisor's judgment regarding performance. Remember performance covers the entire cycle that has just gone by.

Always encourage your employees to be interactive—this is a discussion. Because it is a discussion, there's always the possibility that something might come up that changes your mind about an aspect of the appraisal. For this reason you might want to label the written appraisal you're discussing as a "draft." Always start discussions where there is the most agreement, then progress through areas of least agreement. If you start with the positive, the employee will hear you. If you start with the negative, the employee will be too concerned with the negative to hear the positive. Always encourage employees to express disagreement if they disagree. Guide them to substantiate their opinions with facts and examples. Be open to employees opinion and perspective. Even though they may need to be guided toward your perspective, it's important for them to know you get them and where they're coming from.

If the employee would like to make comments, the supervisor can have the employee write them on the form or prepare them on a separate sheet to be attached to the appraisal. The supervisor has the employee sign the appraisal indicating it has been reviewed. The supervisor also signs, and obtains second-line signatures. After the appraisal has been signed by all parties, the supervisor gives the employee a copy, sends a copy to HR, and keeps one for own file.

REPEATING THE CYCLE

- Start again with Phase I.
- Supervisor and employee meet to plan for a new cycle.
- Incorporate data and insight gained from previous cycle.
- Revise any major areas that may have changed over the last year and set new objectives.
- Create updated development goals and action plans.

The cycle starts again with the planning phase. Some of your objectives may be ongoing or continuous. You may also include unmet or incomplete items from the previous cycle.