



University of St. Thomas Human Resources Department

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT GUIDEBOOK FOR STAFF

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Performance Assessment and Management

Guidebook for Staff

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PART I INTRODUCTION

You probably know that one of the ways the University of St. Thomas achieves its strategic objectives is by valuing excellence in its academic and administrative programs. The University strives to create and maintain an environment that emphasizes the importance of relating work performance to its mission. The performance assessment and management system supports that commitment. In fact, it is the means by which the University establishes and maintains individual accountability. The performance assessment and management system also creates the foundation for the University's pay-for-performance program, which rewards employees for their contributions by linking performance and pay.

Admittedly, assessing and managing employee performance is not a casual undertaking. It is a continuous and, sometimes, complex process. Nonetheless, it is a primary responsibility of those holding positions that supervise others. Done correctly, it is a tool that can enhance the operation of the University, recognize employees for good performance, encourage professional development, and provide employees with recommendations for improvement. Remember: if your employees succeed, you, as the supervisor, succeed as well.

Simply put, performance *assessment* and *management* are important components of the supervisor-employee relationship. They are parts of an ongoing process of performance planning, review, and development that involves both the supervisor and the employee, who together identify common goals that correlate to the higher goals of the unit and/or the University of St. Thomas. The actual *performance assessment* serves several purposes. It:

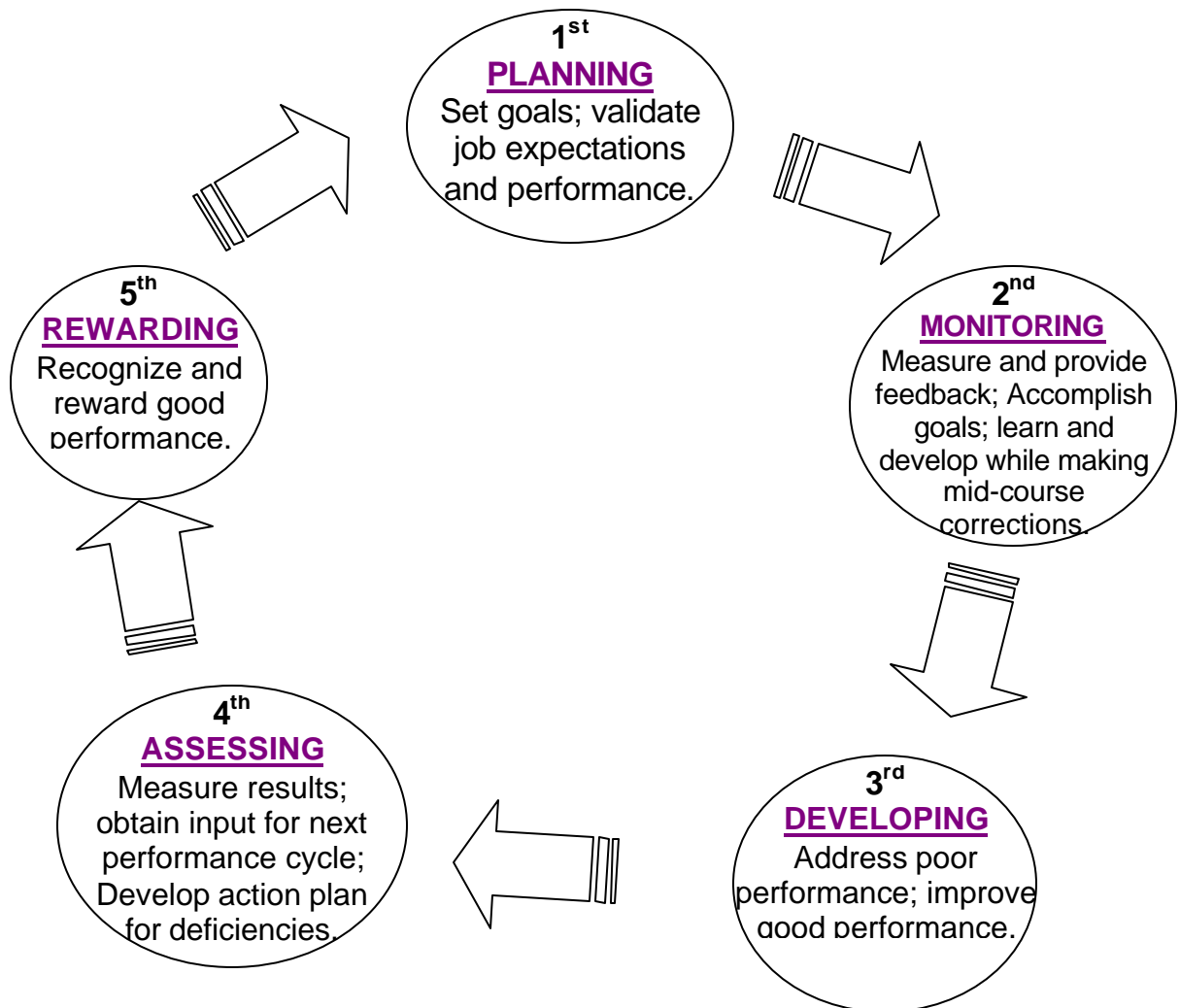
- ? encourages employee involvement
- ? provides a formal mechanism for employees to receive feedback regarding job performance and expectations
- ? allows the employee to work with the supervisor to establish goals and priorities for the next year
- ? facilitates growth and development of employees
- ? results in a documented history of the employee's performance
- ? provides an opportunity for each employee to discuss work-related problems and interests with his/her supervisor
- ? serves as the basis for awarding annual salary increases

The actual performance assessment form, when completed, represents a culmination of past year's discussions between the supervisor and employee about the employee's performance.

In contrast, *performance management* is a continuous process that begins immediately following the initial hiring process and continues throughout the employee's University employment. It is through performance management that the supervisor and employee gain a shared understanding of job expectations. Supervisors who have questions about the performance assessment and management process or who would like to obtain a list of those employees in their area who are due an annual performance assessment should contact their designated HR Partner. The performance of all regular full-time and part-time staff is assessed at least annually, generally during May 1 through June 30.

PART II KEY COMPONENTS OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management includes five elements: planning, monitoring, developing, assessing, and rewarding. Carrying out the processes of performance management provides an excellent opportunity for both the supervisor and employee to identify developmental needs. During the planning and monitoring phases of the process, performance deficiencies become evident and can be addressed. Areas for improving good performance also stand out, and action can be taken to help successful employees improve even further.



Planning is the first element of the performance management process. It requires supervisors to set performance standards and goals in order to help employees channel their efforts toward achieving institutional or unit objectives. Performance planning culminates in a *Performance*

Plan. It is critical that supervisors engage employees in the planning process, which generally occurs at the beginning of the assessment or appraisal cycle (e.g. July through August) or when a new employee is hired. Doing so clarifies what the employee will be evaluated on and sets the stage for ongoing feedback and coaching throughout the year. Simply stated, it helps employees understand the goals of the University and/or their unit, what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how well it should be done.

Performance expectations/standards should be understandable, measurable, verifiable, equitable, and achievable. By establishing them, employees are held accountable for work assignments or responsibilities. Employee performance plans should be flexible so that they can be adjusted for changing unit or University objectives and work requirements. When used effectively, these plans can be beneficial working documents that are discussed often and not merely paperwork that is filed in a drawer and seen only when it becomes time to conduct the annual performance assessment. The *Performance Planning Worksheet* is offered as a sample documentation tool and presented as Appendix III. **TIMEFRAME: July through August**

Monitoring is the second element in the performance management process. This element requires supervisors to monitor assignments and projects. Monitoring occurs continually and involves measuring performance and providing employees timely and ongoing feedback on their progress toward reaching their goals. At this phase of the process, supervisors conduct informal progress reviews with employees comparing their performance against the established expectations and standards. The benefit of monitoring is that it provides the opportunity to determine how well employees are meeting expectations and standards, to provide them early feedback, and to modify any standards that appear unrealistic or problematic. An additional benefit of monitoring performance is that unacceptable performance can be identified at any time during the assessment period and assistance provided the employee to address the deficiencies rather than waiting until the annual performance assessment takes place. **TIMEFRAME: Throughout the performance assessment period**

Developing is the third element of the process that considers and addresses the developmental needs of employees. The objective is to raise the employee's level of performance through training, giving him or her additional assignments or higher levels of responsibilities that introduce new skills. Providing employees with training and developmental opportunities encourages good performance, strengthens job-related skills and competencies, and helps employees keep up with changes in the workplace, such as the introduction of new technology. **TIMEFRAME: Throughout the performance assessment period**

Assessing is the fourth element, which requires the supervisor to assess or appraise the employee's performance. Assessing performance is critical because it helps the supervisor compare the employee's performance over time and among all other employees within the unit. It is important to know who the best performers are. Without this knowledge, supervisors cannot make equitable and uniform decisions about salary increases within the context of the University's pay-for-performance system.

A straightforward definition of this element may be useful: Within the context of the University's performance assessment and management system, "assessing" means evaluating the employee against the set of pre-established expectations and standards included in the employee's Performance Plan and then assigning a performance rating, using the University's five-tiered rating system. That system specifies general criteria for five assessment or appraisal criteria. These ratings describe the level of performance of the employee compared to his or her Job Profile, Performance Plan, and performance standards. The levels are:

5 = OUTSTANDING: Performance yields extraordinary results for the University and/or the employee's unit.

4 = HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED: Performance consistently generates results above those expected of the position.

3 = SUCCESSFUL: Performance fully meets job expectations and occasionally generates results beyond those expected.

2 = NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: Performance meets some, but not all, job requirements.

1 = UNSATISFACTORY: Performance is below job requirements. Immediate improvement is required.

Performance ratings are based on the employee's job performance during the entire 12-month assessment period. Ratings are assigned according to the definitions provided above, which also are provided on the University's performance assessment forms. A copy of the form is provided as Appendix IX. **TIMEFRAME:** May through June

Rewarding is the final element in the performance management process. It recognizes employees, individually and as members of a team, for their performance and contributions to helping the unit and/or the University achieve its objectives or mission. One basic principle of an effective performance management system is that all behavior is controlled by its consequences. Those consequences can and should be both formal and informal and both positive and negative. Recognition and acknowledgement is an ongoing, natural part of the day-to-day interaction between the supervisor and employee. At the end of the performance management cycle, the salary increase, which is the reward, is determined solely by the employee's overall performance rating. Seniority does not play a part and neither does the cost of living index. **TIMEFRAME:** September

PART III DEFINING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR KEY JOB DUTIES

The purpose of performance standards is to communicate job expectations and to provide a benchmark that both the supervisor and employee use to evaluate the employee's. Performance standards should not be confused with the employee's *Job Profile*. While performance standards define *how well* an employee must perform each duty in order to meet or exceed expectations, a *Job Profile* describes the primary responsibilities of the job.

Performance standards also tell the employee *what* is to be done and provide the employee with specific performance expectations for each major job duty. In other words, standards of performance are the observable behaviors and actions that explain *how* the job is to be done, plus the outcomes that are expected for satisfactory or above satisfactory job performance.

Likewise, performance standards inform the employee of what a good job looks like. Some supervisors prefer to make them as specific as possible, while others prefer to use them as talking points and then set out to define them at a level of specificity during the performance assessment discussion. Keep in mind that standards of performance are usually developed in collaboration with the employee who performs the tasks or functions and are explained to new employees within their first month on the job.

You probably know that performance typically involves more than technical expertise. As supervisors, you also expect certain behaviors (e.g. teamwork, responsiveness, creativity, punctuality, etc.). It is often these behaviors that determine whether performance is acceptable.

Performance standards are:

- Based on the position, not the individual
- Observable, specific indicators of success
- Meaningful, reasonable, and attainable
- Describe "fully satisfactory" performance once trained
- Expressed in terms of Quantity, Quality, Timeliness, Cost, Safety, or Outcomes

In determining performance standards, consider the following questions:

- What does a good job look like?
- How many or how much is needed?
- How long should it take?
- When are the results needed?
- How accurate or how good is acceptable?
- Are there budget considerations?
- Are there safety considerations?
- Are there legislative or regulatory requirements that require strict compliance?
- Are there behaviors that are expected in your unit that promote teamwork, leadership, creativity, customer service?
- What results would be considered satisfactory?
- What condition will exist when the duty is performed well?
- What is the difference between good and poor performance?

Appendix VIII is a list of a few of the most common job standards.

PART IV PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

Preparing for the annual assessment meeting is a collaborative process. The supervisor provides the employee with a copy of three documents:

- | Self-Assessment form
- | Performance Plan
- | Current *Job Profile*

These documents are integral to the performance assessment process. Rather than the supervisor relying solely on his or her judgment about the employee's performance, the employee should be asked to provide input prior to the supervisor completing the performance assessment document and holding the performance assessment meeting. The *Self-Assessment Form* provided as Appendix IV serves this purpose. This form will help facilitate the performance discussion, since it provides the employee an opportunity to comment on his or her performance during the assessment/appraisal period. Once completed, the *Self-Assessment Form* becomes a part of the employee's official performance assessment/appraisal, which is sent to your designated HR Partner.

The *Performance Plan*, which is the document that the supervisor and employee developed at the beginning of the assessment period, clarifies job expectations and standards that formed the basis of the employee's performance assessment. This document informed the employee at the beginning of the performance cycle about the goals and objectives of the University and/or those of his or her unit, what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how well it should be done.

Finally, the employee's *Job Profile* summarizes the job duties of the position and includes the skills, knowledge, and abilities required for satisfactory performance. As we all know, an employee's job duties and responsibilities can change throughout the year either due to a reduction or enlargement of job scope. The annual performance assessment process is an excellent time for the supervisor and employee to review the *Job Profile* and revise it as appropriate. Don't forget to send a copy of the revised *Job Profile* to your designated HR Partner for re-evaluation.

PART V SCHEDULING THE ASSESSMENT MEETING

Most individuals prefer receiving advance notice—particularly when advance preparation is required. You should provide the employee at least two (2) weeks notice of the performance assessment meeting. Doing so generally allows him or her adequate time to review the *Performance Plan*, *Job Profile*, and to complete and submit to you the *Self-Assessment Form*. While the employee is preparing for the performance assessment meeting, you also should prepare by reviewing the employee's

- | Performance Plan
- | Job Profile
- | Self-Assessment Form (when received from the employee)
- | Any notes and/or documents in your file that illustrate the employee's achievements, such as thank-you letters, commendations, or complaints from customers or colleagues

Some staff members work in a service-oriented unit or provide administrative or technical support to faculty. In these instances, you may want to solicit input from these individuals or any customers of the employee to consider as you develop his or her performance assessment. Once you have gathered your information, compare the employee's actual performance to the performance standards that you and the employee determined at the beginning of the performance assessment period.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- | Am I considering the employee's performance for the entire assessment period?
- | What performance standards did the employee meet or exceed? Provide specific examples.
- | What performance standards did he or she not meet? Provide specific examples. What can be done to help the employee improve his/her performance?
- | What factors may have affected the performance? What factors may have been beyond the employee's control?
- | Were expectations reasonable? Attainable?
- | How have I formed my opinion about the employee's performance? Have I been fair and objective?

PART VI THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT MEETING

The performance assessment discussion takes place before completing the performance assessment form. It is one of the most important things you, as a supervisor, will do. This is a time to engage in a more formal discussion about the employee's performance. The discussion should reflect the interactions you and the employee have had throughout the assessment period. It should be undertaken with great care and preparation, because the way in which you handle this part of the process can have significant impact on the morale and future performance of the employee.

Conducting the discussion

Set the stage.

1. Establish importance by holding in a private setting with no interruptions.
 - a. Provide a relaxed format.
 - b. Have all materials at hand.
 - c. Establish rapport immediately.
 - d. Clearly explain the purpose and format of the discussion.
2. Start on a positive note. Set the tone as one of communication and feedback, not one of judgment and critical evaluation.
3. Confirm that the employee has a copy of the *Job Profile, Performance Plan* (which you and the employee developed at the beginning of the assessment/appraisal cycle), and his or her *Self-Assessment*. These forms are critical; you and the employee will discuss them, and you will use them to complete the performance assessment form.
4. Discuss the employee's job responsibilities as listed on the *Job Profile*, as well as his or her *Performance Plan* to determine if changes need to be made for next year. Solicit feedback from the employee in order to determine his or her understanding of the job. This is an opportunity for you to compare your perception of the job with that of the employee. Clarify expectations and any misinterpretations. Explain how the employee's job and role fit in with the goals of the unit and/or the University. Make any necessary changes to the *Job Profile* and next year's *Performance Plan* based on input from the employee.
5. Compare the employee's actual performance to established performance standards. Use documentation to discuss specific instances of performance. Be honest, accurate, and candid. Base your assessment on actual occurrences and provide examples. The employee has the right to hear in what areas his or her performance meets or exceeds expectations and in what areas improvement is needed.
6. Be sure to give credit for achievement and work done well. Give specific examples and mention resulting benefit to the University and/or the employee's work unit.
7. Focus on important job dimensions. Don't deal with minor infractions of little significance. Discuss them at the time they occur and then forget them, unless you see a trend developing.
8. Apply effective communication skills.
 - a. Encourage the employee to talk. Ask open-ended questions. Ask for the employee's assessment, comments and suggestions.
 - b. Use your listening skills and don't interrupt. Check for understanding.
 - c. Avoid emotionally loaded expressions, such as, "You always..." and "You never ..."

9. When you must criticize, criticize the employee's performance, not the employee personally. Describe the employee's behaviors, not personality traits or attitudes. Constructive feedback focuses on specific action, never on the individual. Discuss positive as well as unsatisfactory performance. Provide specific examples and explain why these behaviors are problematic or how they benefit the organization.
10. Minimize your role as a judge. Attempt to collaborate.
11. Never compare one employee with another. It has little productive value and can create jealousies.
12. Check for presence of barrier or constraints to performance, such as inadequate working conditions, excessive work load, absenteeism of a critical contributor, etc. Seek to gain an understanding, rather than simply push for an agreement on your assessment of the employee. Ask what you can do to be of greater help. Emphasis should be on improvement and learning for the future rather than criticism of the past.
13. There should be no surprises. You should have addressed poor performance at the time it occurred. If the employee's performance has not improved, discuss it again and develop an action plan. The performance assessment/appraisal discussion is not the place to mention instances of poor performance for the first time. If poor performance is significant, a *Performance Improvement Plan*, as given in Appendix VI, should be developed.
14. Concentrate on overall performance, not isolated incidents.
15. Avoid common rating errors in forming your opinion about the employee's performance. See Appendix VII.
16. Remember: The aim of the performance assessment process is to evaluate past performance and, more importantly, to look ahead and provide the employee direction for the future.
17. Receive feedback from the employee in a constructive manner.
 - a. Listen carefully and seek to understand what is being said. Don't interrupt.
 - b. Ask questions – get more information. Ask for examples.
 - c. Liberally use the phrase, "Tell me more."
 - d. Try not to get defensive. Behaviors that hinder one from effectively receiving feedback are:
 1. Justifying
 2. Building a case
 3. Denial
 - e. Don't take it personally. Be open-minded because there may be a better way to achieve the same outcome.
 - f. Admit mistakes. Don't try to assign blame on someone or something else.
 - g. Thank the employee for the feedback.
18. End the performance assessment discussion on a positive note by discussing anticipated achievements and any other topics you think may encourage and motivate the employee.

PART VII COMPLETING THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

Most supervisors are more comfortable completing the performance assessment form in advance so that they can discuss it with the employee during the performance assessment meeting. Why not, you might ask—particularly since the supervisor will have already reviewed the employee's *Performance Plan*, *Job Profile*, and *Self-Assessment*. While this approach seems logical, it is incorrect. You should complete the performance assessment form **only after** holding the performance assessment meeting with the employee. Be sure to complete the *Performance Assessment Form* immediately following the meeting and give the employee adequate time to review, comment, and sign it.

The Performance Assessment Form

There are three performance assessment forms—one each for hourly, exempt, and supervisory/managerial staff. Each form should be tailored to the particular job being evaluated. There are five parts to each form. Let's review them briefly.

PART I Lists and defines the five levels of performance and provides the corresponding rating for each. As you discuss with the employee his or her performance and complete the performance assessment form, be sure to refer back to this part of the form. It will assist you in rating each component of the employee's performance.

PART II Lists a set of job behaviors specific to all hourly, exempt, or supervisory/managerial positions. Job performance is a direct reflection of an employee's on-the-job behaviors. Therefore, this section asks you to rate how well the employee performed during the past year in relation to each of the ten job behaviors. Your performance assessment should naturally flow from your evaluation of the various job behaviors.

PART III Inquires about the employee's job results. It asks you to use the employee's *Job Profile* and list in priority order the essential functions or duties of his or her job. In two or three sentences, you should describe the employee's performance of each duty and then assign one of the five possible ratings. Remember: a rating has little or no significance without some discussion about the factors you used to arrive at it.

PART IV Provides you and the employee an opportunity to discuss and outline in this section all goals you expect him or her to achieve in the coming year. You should provide specific actions and timelines as a way of helping the employee needs to achieve the goals. Also include in this section any aspects of the employee's performance you want maintained, improved, and/or changed, including any new assignments to be accomplished. For example, discuss with the employee and include in this section any new initiatives and/or projects. Make sure they are appropriate for the position and fair in relation to the employee's skills, knowledge, and abilities. Identify ways to measure successful completion of goals. For example, you might create benchmarks so that both you and the employee know when success has been achieved. Remember: you cannot expect the employee to meet your expectations if you do not accurately explain what they are.

PART V Asks you to assign an overall performance rating based on your comments and individual ratings in Parts II and III of the performance assessment form. This section also concludes the process for this year. You are required to give the completed form to the employee for his or her review and signature. The employee's signature indicates only that he or she reviewed the document and not that there is agreement with its contents. If the employee chooses not to sign, you should not insist. Simply note his or her refusal in the "Comments Section." Your notation will confirm that the performance assessment meeting took place.

Finally, you will note the last section of the form provides a space for the employee to comment (Employee's Comments). You should encourage the employee to write any comments he or she may have about the performance assessment. Allow the employee two or three days to absorb what was discussed during the performance assessment meeting and to make any appropriate comments. You now are ready to submit the form to your supervisor or the appropriate member of the Academic and Administrative Leadership for his or her signature. The final stop for the form is to your designated HR Partner. Please verify with your supervisor the appropriate next step after the employee has signed the form. Don't forget to give the employee a copy and to keep a copy for your records.

You and the employee have successfully completed the performance assessment process for this year. A new performance assessment cycle begins at this point. You and the employee should begin making arrangements to develop a *Performance Plan* for the coming year.

APPENDICES

CHECKLIST FOR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Employee's Name _____ Title _____

Supervisor's Name _____ Unit _____

Review Period _____

AGENDA

CHECK WHEN COMPLETED

- Discuss the employee's goals and primary responsibilities for the past year.
Discuss how they relate to the unit's and/or the University's overall goals and objectives.
 - Discuss employee's strengths/areas for growth category.
 - Discuss employee's significant accomplishments from the past year.
 - Discuss possible ways to improve performance.
 - Discuss barriers to effective work performance and job satisfaction in the past year.
 - Discuss employee's goals and needs for the next review period.
 - Discuss long term career goals and development needs to achieve them.
 - Discuss employee's feedback/suggestions for supervisor.
 - If applicable, discuss employee's funding status and relationship to the University, i.e. specified term, career, etc.
 - Discuss anything else the employee or supervisor would like to address.
 - Complete Performance Assessment Form.
Attach supplementary documents: Employee Self-Assessment, Performance Plan including goals, Plan for Development, or other accompanying documentation of performance.
-

CONDUCTING THE PLANNING MEETING

You now know that both the supervisor and employee play a role in the planning phase of the performance management process. Below are a few suggestions for both.

Supervisor:

1. Review all steps of the performance management process.
2. Share next year's department goals and, if appropriate, those of the University.
3. Draft job standards for each employee.
4. Review the employee's Job Profile and job standards and agree on performance expectations.
5. Initiate and facilitate performance planning meetings (usually, two planning meetings are needed for the initial implementation). Encourage employee input.
6. Evaluate strengths and areas for development for each employee and discuss available resources.
7. Link the development plan to the Performance Plan for each employee.
8. Create and support learning and professional development opportunities.

Employee:

1. Review Job Profile and job standards with supervisor and agree on performance expectations.
2. Actively participate in the process.
3. Evaluate with your supervisor your strengths and areas for development.
4. Determine how to improve or develop skills.
5. Link development plan to Performance Plan.
6. Become the primary driver of your development.

PERFORMANCE PLANNING WORKSHEET

Employee _____ Date _____

Job Title _____ Unit _____

Step 1: Determine Critical Job Functions

What is provided through this position (administrative support, technical assistance, customer service, supervision, custodial services, project management, etc)? Please list all major job functions.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Who is served by this position (students, faculty, staff, parents, vendors, public agencies, etc.)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Step 2: Identify Primary Tasks and Standards of Performance

List the most important tasks of this job. (Attach additional sheets if needed.) For each task, determine standards of performance based on one or more of the following criteria. A performance standard generally answers important questions about the impact of the job.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|--|
| ? | Quality | How well the task must be performed? |
| ? | Quantity | How much needs to be done? |
| ? | Timeliness | How fast or by what deadline the task needs to be done? |
| ? | Cost | Under what cost or budget constraints the task must be done? |

EXAMPLES:

Task: Resolve student complaints

Standard(s) associated with this task:

? Quality: Uses good customer service techniques

? Timeliness: Resolves complaints within 24 hours after receiving them

TASK#1 _____

Standard(s) associated with this task:

Quality? _____

Quantity? _____

Timeliness? _____

Cost? _____

TASK #2 _____

Quality? _____

Quantity? _____

Timeliness? _____

Cost? _____

TASK #3 _____

Quality? _____

Quantity? _____

Timeliness? _____

Cost? _____

Please repeat this process until you have listed and established performance standards for all critical job functions of the employee's job.

EMPLOYEE SELF-ASSESSMENT AND GOALS

Employee's Name _____ Title _____

Supervisor's Name _____ Unit _____

Assessment Period: _____

1. Describe your goals/areas of emphasis for the past year.
2. List your significant accomplishments from the past year.
3. What were key obstacles in accomplishing your job responsibilities?
4. What are your goals for the upcoming review period?
5. What support do you need to achieve these goals or strengthen your performance during the coming year? How can your supervisor assist you?
6. In what areas would you like to grow and develop? What are your strategies for achieving this?
7. Using the 5-point performance rating scale, what performance rating would you assign your last year's performance?

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS

- ? **Ask the employee to complete a Self-Assessment.** Supervisors should ask the employee to review his or her own performance and expectations for the previous year by preparing a self-appraisal, provided as Appendix IV. The purpose of the Self-Assessment is to engage the employee in the performance assessment process and provide him or her a chance to think about and document how he or she performed in meeting job expectations and goals.
- ? **There should be no surprises.** The performance assessment is a review of the past year's performance. Through previous coaching, counseling, and other communications, the employee should be aware of any concerns you have about his or her job performance. The annual assessment discussion should not be the first time the employee learns or hears about your concerns.
- ? **Be honest and fair in evaluating all employees.** Be certain that you, as the supervisor, have assessed the performance of all of your employees in an objective and consistent manner as individuals and relative to other employees in the group. Among the many purposes of performance assessment is that it allows the supervisor to take a realistic snapshot of the employee's performance—although that snapshot comprises the employee's performance during the past twelve (12) months. You should never say the employee is improving if she or he is not performing well.
- ? **Be consistent in your approach.** Don't create a situation where it appears you are creating excuses for one employee while holding another employee accountable. Define your criteria for each of the five levels of performance (i.e., the five levels are provided in an earlier section of this guidebook and also included on each of the performance assessment forms) and use the same criteria for every employee. Don't set separate criteria for certain employees when they are performing essentially the same job.
- ? **Give your comments.** A performance rating is useless without written comments. Comments may confirm achievements or be constructive depending on the nature of the ranking.
- ? **Make your comments consistent with the ratings.** You should never give an employee a "fully satisfactory" rating if your comments describe marginal or substandard performance. In such a case, the proper rating should be "Marginal" or "Need Improvement."
- ? **Be realistic.** Don't inflate performance ratings. When employees fail to receive a candid performance assessment and feedback, they are less able to adjust their performance and may fail to seek training to enhance their skill levels. In addition, employment decisions related to promotions, terminations, and pay increases become clouded by inflated ratings, as do assessments of organizational effectiveness.

? **Rate the employee's performance, not the employee's "attitude."** Keep your comments job related and based on the employee's ability to perform his/her job. Avoid phrases like "bad attitude," "he's not a team player," and other subjective type comments. Explain the behavior that is a result of the "attitude" you deem unacceptable.

? **Set goals with the employee.** Don't just criticize an employee's deficient performance; set goals for improvement and/or development. Work with the employee to create a plan of action to help him or her address any areas of deficiency and to establish goals for the coming year. Establish a timeline for monitoring the employee's progress and to reevaluate the employee at the appropriate time.

? **A performance assessment should motivate an employee toward improvement.** The employee should feel excited about the challenges and about his or her ability to meet them. If employees hear only about their failures and weaknesses, they likely will question their ability to succeed. If employees perceive support and encouragement from their supervisor, they will gain the confidence needed to keep trying. When the employee implements the supervisor's suggestions for improvement and those suggestions yield results and recognition, the employee is more likely to listen attentively to future suggestions.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

(To be completed only if the assessment includes a rating of "Needs Improvement")

Employee's Name _____ Title _____

Supervisor's Name _____ Unit _____

Review Period: _____ Today's Date _____

List any of the employee's job responsibilities that need improvement and describe the specific improvement required to meet performance expectations. Attach this completed form to the employee's Performance Assessment form.

PRIORITY Job Responsibility:

Improvement Required:

PRIORITY Job Responsibility:

Improvement Required:

PRIORITY Job Responsibility:

Improvement Required:

COMMON RATING ERRORS

The Leniency Error: Giving everyone high ratings regardless of actual performance in an attempt to avoid conflict or as a way to influence the employee's perception of the supervisor.

The Central Tendency Error: Clumping or clustering all employees in the middle performance categories in an attempt to avoid extremes. This error is usually caused by the rater's desire not to call attention to him or herself or by super ordinate sense of "democracy."

The Regency Error: Failing to take into account the entire evaluation period and focusing on a recent performance episode, positively or negatively. Base your evaluation on representative information from the whole evaluation period to avoid this error.

The Halo Effect Error: Letting one favored trait or work factor influence all other areas of performance, resulting in an unduly high overall performance rating.

The Horns Effect Error: Allowing one disfavored trait or work factor to overwhelm other more positive performance elements resulting in an unfairly low overall performance rating.

Contrast Error: Evaluating an employee in relation to another. Evaluations should be based on how well the employee performed in relation to his/her duties, goals and stated performance standards, i.e., actual performance compared to expected performance.

Past Performance Error: Rating on past performance rather than present performance.

Biased Rating Error: Allowing personal feelings toward employee to influence rating.

High Potential Error: Confusing potential with performance.

Similar to Me Error: Similar to me and therefore feeling of comfort and compatibility.

Guilt by Association Error: Evaluation influenced by employee's associations rather than performance.

COMMONLY USED JOB STANDARDS

There may be a set of common standards and behaviors that are expected of everyone. For example, all supervisors may be expected to perform similarly around several functions, or everyone in the unit will be held to the same standards around teamwork, customer service, etc. In these instances, the rater may want to make a list of the common standards that apply and attach to each individual's performance management plan.

Please keep in mind that these are examples of specific duties from several jobs and are intended only as illustrations. They are not necessarily complete or accurate for any specific position.

EXAMPLES

Leadership

- communicates a vision of the future and moves self and others toward it through shared goal setting
- influences others to accomplish/achieve desired goals
- guides others through change
- adapts style to the situation and the person
- obtains commitment and cooperation from others
- maintains open communication
- fosters an environment that encourages innovation, risk taking, ownership , learning and growth in others
- utilizes skills and abilities of others effectively
- delegates responsibilities appropriately
- provides an environment of motivation
- manages performance of staff

Team Orientation

- works effectively with others
- actively contributes to the achievement of group and organizational goals
- accepts shared responsibility and ownership of projects
- maintains open communication among team members
- utilizes strengths of individuals within group to the benefit of the team

Innovation/ Creativity

- develops and implements ideas, products, or solutions to achieve goals
- seeks and provides unique/different perspectives to opportunities
- supports risk taking and encourages innovation in others

Customer Service

- projects a customer orientation – is customer focused
- assumes ownership and responsibility for the needs of the customer
- makes effective decisions, balancing the needs of the unit and those of the customer

Problem Solving/ Decision Making

- analyzes and solves problems within realistic time frames
- makes timely and effective decisions on the basis of available information
- involves the appropriate people in defining and resolving a problem
- supports decisions with facts and rationale

Interpersonal Communication

- listens actively to others
- asks appropriate questions for clarification
- gives and receives feedback
- is aware of own and other's communication style and makes adjustments as necessary
- encourages and is receptive to suggestions and solutions from others
- recognizes and manages conflict effectively

Flexibility

- effectively adjusts behavior and modifies strategies when confronted with changing, uncertain or unstructured situations
- adapts to change without loss of effectiveness
- deals effectively with ambiguity
- acquires new knowledge/skills to meet changing demands

Performance Management

- makes appropriate hires; trains and coaches toward full performance
- identifies and communicates major job duties and performance standards
- facilitates and encourages two-way communication regarding responsibilities, expectations, goals and performance
- provides ongoing, balanced feedback on performance
- distinguishes between good and poor performance and acts accordingly

Example of Performance Standards for Various Administrative Positions

- Develops project objectives, budgets, work plans and implementation strategies
 - consistent with unit goals
 - communicates clearly to all levels
 - falls within budget guidelines
 - can reasonably be accomplished in specified time frame
 - follows up and resolves problems in timely manner to keep project on track.
- Analyzes, synthesizes and communicates financial information and data in complex account structures; uses data to develop budget and financial plans
 - uses appropriate sources of information
 - uses the most recent data
 - meets specified deadlines
 - conclusions and recommendations are justified by the data
 - federal, state and University guidelines are followed

- Designs/develops and negotiates contracts with clients and vendors
 - contracts are clear, complete and reflect the needs of the unit
 - negotiation skills are such that the best value is achieved for the institution
 - solutions are effective and mutually acceptable
 - good client and vendor relationships are maintained
 - contracts are consistent with all federal, state and University policies and procedures
- Develops policies and/or interprets and implements all federal, state, local and University policies, procedures and regulations
 - policies are clearly written and include all necessary components
 - all pre-approval steps have been followed to include necessary input from concerned parties
 - sufficient research is conducted to provide accurate background knowledge necessary to the process of development and/or interpretation
 - communication regarding policies is done in a timely manner to all affected groups and in an unambiguous, customer friendly manner
- Performs management duties with accountability and authority for the strategic direction of the unit
 - planning, budget, staffing, resource allocation, policy development, staff supervision, etc.:
 - the unit is in compliance with governmental and University policies and procedures
 - staff morale remains high
 - complaints about personnel, leadership and work of department are minimal
 - organizational goals are achieved in timely manner
- Assists students with academic problems and/or advises students regarding degree requirements
 - works with students in a customer-oriented manner
 - gives accurate information
 - keeps updated on requirement changes and keeps students informed
 - knows and utilizes resources to resolve problems

Example of Performance Standards for a Departmental Assistant

- Greets customers
 - opens office promptly at 8:00 a.m.
 - consistently conveys friendly, helpful, professional manner
 - provides accurate information
 - demonstrates a customer service orientation
 - secures back-up for times of absences from desk
- Answers phone
 - answers with a friendly greeting
 - speaks clearly and distinctly
 - uses all functions of phone (hold, transfer, etc.) in knowledgeable and customer friendly manner
 - takes messages accurately and completely

- Distributes incoming and prepares outgoing mail
 - sorts and date stamps incoming mail
 - distributes to individual mailboxes in timely fashion
 - logs in packages and notifies recipients
 - prepares FEDEX and UPS documentation correctly
 - takes outgoing mail to mail room in time for pick-up times
 - forwards mail as needed
- Maintains files
 - keeps files in organized fashion so that materials are easily located
 - re-files material within 1/2 day of return
 - checks out files as requested, using proper forms and "file locator tabs"
- Duplicates materials
 - accurately duplicates materials within 4 hours of receipt or as requested
 - collates and staples materials to assure professional appearance
 - notifies staff of completed orders
 - maintains machine, resolves problems and contacts service personnel as needed

Example of Performance Standards for Accounting Clerk

- Researches information
 - review contents of time-sensitive publications, accurately summarize funding information, and appropriately distribute in weekly e-mail
- Processes requests for external funding
 - verifies accuracy of budgets and forms,
 - secures appropriate internal signatures,
 - submits to finance in an accurate and timely manner
 - maintains office files so that tracking the funding process is easily managed
- Monitors accounts and processes paperwork
 - identifies charges, verifies availability of funds and obtains proper authorizations in accurate and timely manner
 - processes expenditures within five working days

Example of Performance Standards for a Laboratory Technician

- Prepares laboratory reagents, cultures and solutions
 - all reagents, cultures and solutions are prepared with extreme accuracy
 - all reagents, cultures and solutions are stored appropriately
 - all specified safety regulations are followed
 - stocks are kept in supply
- Washes and sterilizes glassware and equipment
 - cleansing operations are done according to specified guidelines
 - glassware and equipment are returned to cabinets once sterilized
 - all glassware is washed and sterilized within 4 hours of use
- Keeps records of research results
 - records are accurate, neat and easily interpreted
 - records are completed within 1 day of actual experiment

Example of Performance Standards for a Library Assistant

- Oversees library department desk

- assures coverage for all times library is open
- responds to patrons' questions and resolves problems in a timely manner and with a strong focus on customer service
- Trains student workers
 - assures that all students have the proper training to work at the desk
 - training is completed within the first two weeks of the semester
 - follows up on each student's performance and continues training and coaching as needed
- Re-shelves books
 - all books are re-shelved within 24 hours of return
 - books are re-shelved in proper location

Example of Performance Standards for Administrative Assistant:

- Oversees clerical support functions
 - work priorities are clearly established and followed
 - manages the performance of the support staff by providing a motivational environment, correcting poor performance and acknowledging good performance
- Composes correspondence
 - composition is professional, grammatically correct, clear and logical and reflects the tone and philosophy of the department
 - correspondence is timely and has a customer friendly orientation
- Develops and maintains complex files and databases
 - files and databases are accurate and updated on a regular basis
 - trains others in use and interpretation of databases
 - assures back-up in maintaining files and databases
- Makes travel arrangements and completes travel documents
 - all arrangements are made in a timely manner
 - assures that all travel stays within the travel budget with exceptions cleared by the Chair
 - monitors to assure accuracy in documents
 - responsible for determining all extenuating circumstances and resolving problems

Example of Performance Standards for Technical Support Provider:

- Provides technical support to computer users
 - identifies and resolves problems such that the user feels that the problem is resolved
 - installs hardware and software in a timely manner and with minimum interruption to the user
 - conducts all interactions with the user in a customer-friendly manner
- Makes recommendations as to system needs
 - makes recommendations consistent with customer needs
 - recommendations are consistent with departmental budget guidelines
- Serves as resource on technical questions
 - keeps updated on latest in the field and attends all training offered
 - researches answers when not immediately knowledgeable
 - responds in a timely manner
 - answers questions and deals with all customers with respect and understanding
 - always interacts with customers from a customer service perspective