

PERFORMANCE REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Benefits of the Performance Review Process

The performance review is a communication tool designed to support each employee's contribution to the organization. As you know, the performance review provides a way to measure skills, accomplishments, and identify obstacles to top performance. It should help identify areas of professional growth, but should not be considered the only communication tool. Open lines of communication throughout the year help to make effective working relationships. Each employee is entitled to a thoughtful and careful review. The success of the review process depends on your willingness to complete a constructive objective assessment, and depends on the employee's willingness to respond to constructive criticism and to work with you to overcome any performance barriers.

The performance review has benefits that reach beyond your relationship with the employees. A well-documented objective review will help avoid lawsuits because you will have documents to support decisions that could help defeat employee claims of illegal treatment if they arise. Thus, the review process is about more than completing a form at the end of the year.

Continuous Feedback and Documenting Performance

By providing feedback on a regular basis, you are giving the employee information about work performance and, if needed, allowing appropriate time to make corrections in performance and/or behavior. A common way to provide ongoing feedback is to schedule individual check in sessions with employees on a regular basis. Regular feedback avoids "blindsiding" the employee at review time with a negative report. Early intervention is always positive because when problems are discovered early corrections can be made sooner. Thus, when problems are discovered be open and candid and include steps for the employee to make improvements along the way. It is not a healthy approach, nor an effective approach, to save up a year's worth of criticism or praise and give it to the employee for the first time during an annual review meeting.

When you observe something, either good or bad, record your observation in writing. Just as important, you should have a conversation about what you observed with the employee soon after your observation and no later than the next check in meeting. Most of your record keeping can be informal and brief. By doing this ongoing work, when it is time for you to review the employee at the end of the year, you will have already done most of the work and you will not have to spend time reconstructing events. Documenting employee performance as it happens also increases the fairness of your year-end summation. Having a year's worth of documentation ensures that your review will be based on the employee's entire year's performance, not just the most recent.

Documents to Aid in the Process

Before you begin to write the review, gather all pertinent information regarding the employee to be evaluated, including samples of work, performance-related documents, attendance records, work improvement plans, feedback from others, work emails, corrective actions etc. Also, review your notes from sessions regarding the employee to be reviewed.

Performance Notes

The best way to document performance throughout the year is to keep a log either in a notebook or computer file. When the employee does something that you consider noteworthy you should take a moment to write it down in your notes. Please know that all notes that you keep on employees are discoverable in court, and therefore, any and all comments in your notes must be objective, factual, and appropriate. Never reference an employee's race, color, age, gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability. It is also important not to mention medical conditions, including pregnancy or any absences covered by FMLA and ADA in your notes. If you keep notes from your check in sessions, and it is recommended that you keep notes, please do so for all employees that report to you. Any comments that you make should be on a separate page for each employee and should include the date. Base your comments on objective job-related facts only. Remember, if your notes include comments about an employee with performance problems, be specific about the performance issue and record the date that you talked with the employee about the issue including the steps taken to help the employee make improvements along the way.

You are not expected, nor is it realistic, to keep notes during every meeting with the employee. But you should include in your notes conversations that you have had with the employee about things that stand out as positive or negative - things that are considered out of the ordinary. For example, you might note that an employee continuously arrives late to a meeting and you had a conversation with that employee about it on ...date, or you might note that an employee has performed exceptionally well on a project. When an employee does something of note, do not wait until the end of the year to let the person know about it. As previously mentioned, continuous feedback is important and there should be no surprises come review time. Your notes will serve as your memory when you prepare the review at the end of the year. Also know that your notes do not become a part of the employee's personnel file.

Work Group/Peer Feedback: In team models where work groups have formed, it is not uncommon for supervisors to solicit feedback from members of the work groups about a group member's work and work style. Any information received from a member of a work group should have been previously discussed with the employee under review prior to the review.

360-Degree or "Full-Circle" Evaluation: This is a more comprehensive performance review and is generally reserved for Officers of the Church. Here performance is reviewed by everyone with whom the officer interacts, including other peers, direct reports, conference ministers, board members, ministry partners etc.

Basis for the Review

The supervisor and the employee should develop goals together. Collaboration is the key to successful goal setting. If the employee helps to create goals, chances are greater that the goals will be met. For a new employee, schedule a goal-setting meeting in the first few months of employment. That way, the employee will have goals to work towards during the first year with you. Also, it is important for you to convey expectations and standards of the work to be

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performed. After you have met and identified goals, find out what, if anything, the employee needs from you to meet them.

Goals should be SMART:

Specific – must tell exactly what needs to be accomplished and be easily understood

Measurable – must be measurable so there's no question as to whether the goal is achieved

Attainable – must be realistic and able to be achieved without being too easy

Relevant – must fit with the organization's mission and priorities

Time-bound – must have specific timeline and deadline set for completion

Please refer to the flyer on **Organizational Goals and Objectives** and use the SMART Goal-Setting Worksheet to complete goals.

Who is responsible for completing the Performance Review?

The employee's immediate supervisor completes the review. If the employee reports to more than one supervisor, each supervisor should contribute feedback, and join as part of the review meeting. A self-assessment allows employees to evaluate their own performance and in many cases serves as a comparison to the supervisor's review. Often, self-assessments can highlight discrepancies between the employee and the supervisor's thoughts about performance and may provide mutual feedback for meaningful adjustment of expectations. All employees should be asked to complete a self-assessment via the Paylocity system.

How often is the review completed?

The formal written review should be completed annually for each employee. However, we expect that ongoing conversations about performance happen throughout the year.

How do I handle employees who have not met expectations?

If you find that an employee needs performance improvement, coaching the employee is going to be an important part of your responsibility. Coaching is meant to be positive engagement with the employee to help maximize their performance and to build skills and competencies. Do not look at it as discipline, but rather an approach to supporting the employee in realizing their full potential. You will want to consider the following in preparation for the meeting to discuss a rating of *Improvement Needed or Unsatisfactory*.

- Have you clearly defined the expectations for yourself before communicating to the employee?
- Has the employee communicated a lack of confidence to perform the tasks? If so, have you previously met with the employee to provide any coaching?
- Does the employee have the appropriate and needed resources to accomplish the work (e.g., other employee involvement, budget, etc?) Are other members of the team keeping their commitments, if applicable?
- Does the employee understand how their work fits into the larger scheme of things in the organization?
- If attendance and/or tardiness is the issue, have you asked the employee to contact HR for a consultation?

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If you have been effectively communicating about performance during your check-in sessions, an improvement needed rating should not come as surprise. Use the meeting time to review the Work Improvement Plan (WIP) and determine if expected results have been achieved. If a WIP has not been previously completed, work with the employee to complete a plan for improvement. It will be important to ask the employee how things might turn around; come up with a strategy for improvement together. Some suggestions might be additional training and you may consult with HR about training programs that might be appropriate. If an employee names a health reason or some other personal matter that is creating an issue with work productivity, please refer the employee to HR for further discussion.

The purpose of the work improvement plan is to correct performance or behavior before it becomes a larger problem. Please contact HR regarding appropriate corrective action steps for the following:

- The employee has already been coached for the same problem;
- the employee's lack of performance had a significant negative impact on the organization;
- the employee's behavior violated the law or a significant policy breach;
- or anything that gives you cause for concern that you are unsure how to handle.

It is important to agree on dates and times to follow up regarding the established work plan and to schedule that time accordingly. Note: It is important for you as the supervisor to keep the commitment to follow up as communicated.

Factors Influencing Ratings

Many factors can influence a performance review. It is important to recognize some of these factors, and to keep them in perspective when reviewing an employee's performance. By being aware of these factors, you are more likely to prepare and deliver an effective and objective performance review.

Over-rating: A supervisor may over rate an employee due to the inability to accurately perceive the employee's strengths or weaknesses. Employees may be over-rated for one or more of these reasons:

- Effect of past record. Good work in a previous rating period carries over into the current period.
- Compatibility. The employee simply pleases the supervisor and is easy to get along with.
- Recency. The employee does stellar work immediately prior to the review and this covers up an entire year of poor performance

Under-rating: Likewise, employees may be under-rated for one or more of these reasons.

- Dramatic effect. The person makes one mistake close to the review period and this covers up an entire year of good work.

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- Personality traits. The person just “rubs you the wrong way.”
- Contrast. The employee’s ratings are based on how his or her performance compares to that of another employee instead of objective performance standards.

Best Practices Prior to Completing the Review

Review the position description of your direct reports prior to completing the review. If you do not have a copy of the most recent job description, please contact HR for a copy. After reviewing the job description, review the goals and objectives agreed upon in the previous year’s review and note if goals have or have not been accomplished. Begin to complete the review and avoid under-rating and over-rating by keeping in mind the following:

- All comments should be factual and objective. Avoid any emotional or speculative judgments. Consider each factor independently. Do not assume that excellence in one factor implies excellence in all factors or that poor performance in one factor implies poor performance in each factor.
- Use specific job-related terms and clearly define intent of comments. For example, instead of saying an employee does a good job, specify what is “good.” Rather than saying attendance is poor, specify the number of days absent, sick leave used, patterns of use, and the effect the absences have had on job performance.
- Base your review on observed performance during the rating period, not on what is expected in the future.
- Evaluate overall performance throughout the entire rating period. Do not base the ratings only on significant successes and failures. These should be considered in context with the total performance.
- Consider various aspects of the employee’s performance that you want to discuss and have this process serve as a stimulus for better communication.
- Do not make inappropriate comments that references an employee’s race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status or religion.
- Do not mention or consider medical conditions or any absences covered by FMLA, ADA, or any other approved leave to support any statement made about the employee.
- All comments should be checked for accuracy, spelling, and appropriateness.

Before the Performance Review Meeting

Before you meet with the employee to discuss the review make sure to do the following:

- You should have goals and objectives in mind to discuss with the employee for the upcoming year.
- You should contact the employee to schedule a time to meet that works for both of you. Be careful to allow adequate time to cover the full review including time to set future goals etc. The meeting should take place behind closed doors without interruptions.
- Ask the employee to complete the *Supervisory Feedback Form* and bring it with them to the meeting. This is voluntary but highly recommended.

The Face-to-Face Review Meeting

Discussion of the completed review form is a very important part of the process. Again, make sure that you have time to devote to this meeting and consider it priority. This is meant to be a

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constructive and cooperative process of two-way communication with primary emphasis on development and growth. To help create a tone and setting, consider these suggestions:

- Ask questions and listen. Be open-minded to the information and opinions offered.
- Discuss strengths/accomplishments. This will sustain and reinforce high performance.
- Make criticism constructive. When you point out weakness, offer suggestions for improvement or better yet, ask the employee how they see themselves developing.
- Keep comments job-centered. Avoid discussing personality unless it adversely affects job performance.
- Consider the employee's point of view. If the employee presents information or provides you with documentation that brings to question your rating of them, and in your judgment after hearing the information you feel that you have been unduly harsh in a category, the review may be changed. Tell the employee that you will consider the information and get back to them. Be sure to discuss the proposed changes with HR prior to confirming with the employee.
- Discuss suggested training or development activities to be considered during the next review period and welcome suggestions from the employee.
- Welcome feedback that you may receive from the supervisory feedback form.

Introductory Period

If you have an employee who has been employed less than ninety days, you do not need to complete an Annual Performance Review. You should review the new employee using the Introductory Period Evaluation that will be assigned prior to the completion of their 90 day period.

Date to have Review back to HR

Please return the completed review forms to Human Resources by **February 28**. Contact HR if you have questions.

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Reviewing Performance

Situation#1

Supervisor states that the employee had a performance issue during the rating period but did not capture the issue in the performance review because the employee demonstrated improvement immediately after being told of the issue.

The Problem

The review does not reflect the performance issue and therefore, it appears that the employee never had a performance issue at all. Instead, it is important to always include performance issues in the performance review by noting the specific problem in clear and concise detail, and if improvement has been shown, note that fact directly after the issue in the review for the category. By doing this, you are documenting the issue, while at the same time, indicating that you have seen improvement or growth in the area. Being able to show an employee a growth pattern is a very positive part of an effective review process. Please remember that the goal is to always have the review be reflective of true performance, excluding information does not tell the whole story.

Situation#2

Supervisor gives everyone on the team “Exceeds Expectations” in every category.

The Problem

This is an unfair practice that does not benefit the employee or the organization. In fact, it would appear that the supervisor does not take the process seriously. Please know that in almost all situations there is room for improvement and employees deserve to know, and frankly want to know, how they can be more effective in their work. The performance review should always be an honest well-thought out reflection of the employee’s actual performance and anything short of that is a waste of time.

Consequences for Both Cases

In both cases there are similar consequences for not being careful when completing the review form. First, the employee is deprived of a complete and thorough assessment of progress and may be left with a misimpression of their performance. As discussed above, the review is an important tool for the employee to learn what is going well and areas where improvement is needed.

Second, incomplete or overly positive performance reviews can lead to serious legal concerns. If the employee in case #1 or #2 challenged a termination for cause or a decision to reduce their position in a reduction-in-force based on performance, the employees’ attorneys in these cases could use the performance review against the organization. For example, an attorney for an employee who is discharged for performance related reasons will look to the performance review to determine whether the evaluation supports the stated reason for the discharge. If the review shows no indication of needed improvement, the attorney and the court will believe that poor performance as the stated reason for discharge was not accurate.

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