



Unit 4

Conducting Effective Performance Reviews

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss performance management techniques.

A Performance Management Checklist

Introduction

The following checklists were prepared as a quick reference tool for the performance management process. Keep these checklists as a reminder to yourself on the details of the process.

Please keep the three fundamentals in mind at all times:

- Do your employees understand *what you expect* of them?
- Do your employees know *how well* they are performing?
- Do your employees *have what they need* to improve their performance?

Review the checklist through each phase of the process. As you plan, use the Objectives and Results checklist. As you meet with employees, use the Support Plan checklist. Throughout the year (as you talk to and coach your employees), refer to the Meeting with Employees and Ongoing Support and Feedback checklists. And finally, as you prepare for the review phase, use the Performance Interview and Performance Review checklists to make sure you are properly completing the performance management process for the period.

Objectives and Results Checklist

- Are your organization's objectives/goals reflected in the objectives and results expected of the employee?
- Is it clear what is expected of the employee? Are objectives specific, accurate and results oriented?
- Is it clear how performance will be judged through the results?
- Are these expectations realistic? Achievable? Timely?
- Have you planned for no surprises by the end of the process?

Support Plan Checklist

- Are there any obstacles to the employee meeting your expectations of objectives and results?
- Can these obstacles be overcome with specific training, better equipment, increased feedback from the supervisor, or other means?
- Is there any other obstacle in the way of achieving the goals?
- If so, can it be overcome by re-prioritizing or re-assigning some tasks without sacrificing performance in other areas?
- Does the support plan accommodate all the requirements needed for the employee to meet the objectives you have set?

Meeting with Your Employees Checklist

- Will the employee understand how performance will be judged?
- Has the employee raised any objections to the proposed objectives and corresponding results expected?
- If so, have these been resolved?
- Have you explained what performance management means to your employee?
- Have you outlined the three phases of the process?
- Does the employee understand the benefits of the process?
- Does the employee understand the importance of his or her job to the goals of the team?

- Does the employee understand your expectations in terms of both objectives and results expected?
- Does the employee feel she/he has all the resources required to achieve these results? Is the Support Plan complete?
- Do your employees understand that they can return to you at any time to discuss your performance expectations, particularly if they are encountering problems?
- Have you answered all the employee's questions?
- Have you heard your employees and taken their concerns and comments to heart?

Ongoing Support and Feedback Checklist

- If you were to perform a review today, on any of your employees, would there be any surprises for them?
- Have you set a goal for yourself to informally but regularly touch base with each of your employees to ask how things are going, ask whether there are any problems, and discuss any difficulties in the achievement of their performance?
- Do you correct performance problems immediately?
- Do you congratulate successes immediately? (Remember that success is relative. Getting a supply requisition in on time can be a major success for a chronic procrastinator!)
- Have you reviewed the employee's work plans and objectives at least once during the period?
- Have you updated or modified those work plans and objectives that require revision? Have you done so with the employee's input and agreement?

Performance Interview Checklist

- Did you give the employee a copy of their self-assessment package one week before the meeting?
- Have you set an appointment at a convenient time for the employee? Have you allowed sufficient time for your interview? Have you made sure there will be no interruptions?
- Did you brief the employee before the interview so the employee knows to come prepared to discuss past performance and future performance?
- Has the employee been able to complete those sections for which he or she is responsible?

Performance Review Checklist

- Will there be any surprises for the employee?
- Have you provided factual information where appropriate on the form?
- Are your comments specific and accurate, making reference to original goals established under objectives and results?
- Can you support the judgments you make and record on the form with specific examples of the employee's performance during the period?
- In cases where the employee's performance met the objectives set, have you acknowledged the employee for a job well done?
- Have you both signed the report?

Dissecting a Performance Review

Now that we know a little bit about performance reviews, let's take a look at the actual components.

Key Results Areas

These are the areas we feel are most important. The principle observable events with which we should deal in a performance appraisal are those relating to the key results areas as determined in the job description. If job descriptions have been properly and thoughtfully written, the key results areas should reflect the reality of employee performance. These are the key results the employee is expected to achieve, and these should be observable results. It is amazing how little attention is paid to key results areas, even though we have said in the job description that these are the results we want from the employee.

Observing performance in key results areas is most likely to give us objective evaluations of employee performance. If we can't rely on observable behaviors, we have to resort to subjective evaluations, and when that happens, our own biases and prejudices can get in the way of fair appraisals.

Let's take just one example: cooperation. Let's say you were asked to rate it on this scale: excellent, above average, average, fair, or unsatisfactory. What would you check? Is that the same as how I would rate an employee? Maybe, maybe not.

Rating the Raters

Managers want to be fair in their ratings, but in one large organization, they had high rates and low raters. Some people gave all "excellent" while others gave a lot of "fairs." Their solution to the problem was to hire some additional people to rate the raters. Of course, one may wonder, "Who rated the raters?"

Then there is the company where managers gave 98% of their workforce an "above average." How can 98% of a company perform better than the average?

Evaluating Behaviors

What if, in the instance of cooperation, we list the observable behaviors normally done by the people labeled “cooperative” and ask whether or not the person does these things:

- Offers to help others
- Offers to work late
- Makes suggestions for improvement
- Follows through on commitment

Let’s look at another example: initiative. Criteria might include:

- Undertakes projects without being asked
- Writes letter without supervisor reviewing them
- Calls meetings on their own
- Orders materials on their own

Here is another situation. Let’s say you’ve hired a truck driver. After a couple of weeks, you ask the driver’s supervisor how the truck driver is doing and the supervisor replies, “Just fine. She is very personable and trying hard. She wants to do a good job.”

Did the supervisor just give an observable or subjective evaluation?

We might ask, are we paying the truck driver to be personable, trying hard, and interested in doing a good job, or is she being paid to:

- Submit her route plan daily
- Deliver 10 loads per day
- Hand in her report at the end of the day

Sometimes we hear employees saying they shouldn’t be evaluated on their performance; they are being paid to think and plan. For example, is it fair to evaluate a policy writer on how many policies they produce? Probably not. But if a policy writer never had any of their policies accepted and implemented, we’re not sure that person should be on the payroll.

There must be a way to evaluate employees on the basis of what they accomplish.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Performance Conversations, October 26, 2020 by Christopher Lee*
- ✓ *Performance Management May 29, 2019 by Herman Aguinis*