



# **PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**



**A Guide for University of Maryland Supervisors**

**Prepared and Presented by  
Human Resource Services**

## PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, participants will:

- Understand performance development, its benefits and how it works
- Be able to establish performance expectations and measurements
- Be able to assist and guide employees in recognizing and developing the competencies required to meet organizational objectives
- Be able to conduct successful performance development discussions with input from employees.



# INTRODUCTION

**What is performance development?**

**Performance development is an on-going process for communicating about performance and helping people achieve excellence in their jobs. It involves goal setting, feedback, coaching, evaluation and development planning. It is a process that supervisors and employees actively use throughout the year, not just at appraisal time. The primary focus of performance development is to establish on-going two way communication between supervisors and employees., not to meet administrative requirements. Forms are merely provided to facilitate this process.**

**Principles of Performance Development**

**Performance development is based on these fundamental principles. Employees will be more motivated and will produce higher levels of productivity and quality of service when they:**

- **Have clearly defined objectives**
- **Know how their performance will be assessed**
- **Understand how their work contributes to the success of the organization**
- **Receive timely and accurate feedback throughout the year**
- **Receive coaching and support from supervisors**
- **Have a performance review discussion with written documentation, at least 2-3 times a year**
- **Have recognition linked to performance**

**Performance development is designed to help managers, supervisors and employees achieve performance excellence.**

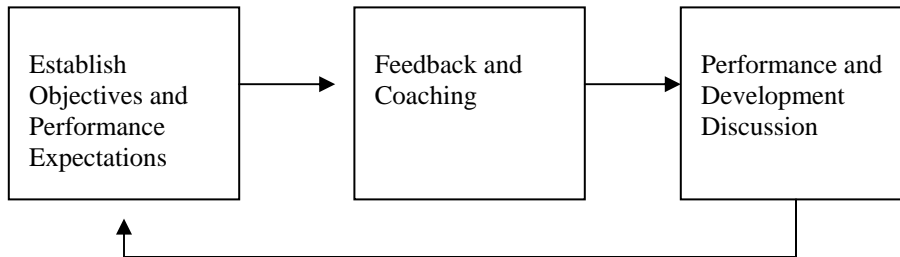
**Objectives of Performance Development**

**Performance development should accomplish the following objectives:**

- **Provide supervisors and employees with a tool to improve performance and enhance organizational effectiveness**
- **Direct effort, motivation and resources toward the achievement of the institution's long range goals**
- **Foster improved and ongoing communications between supervisors and employees**

# OVERVIEW OF HOW PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT WORKS

## FLOW OF EVENTS



The diagram shows the different things that occur during a performance development cycle. The cycle is continuous and, for most employees, will normally be one year. It may be shorter under certain circumstances (e.g., performance changes significantly during the cycle).

The supervisor and the employee both have roles in this process. The supervisor's role is to understand and communicate to the employee:

- Performance expectations based on the employee's assigned duties
- What performance is expected as the basis for a fair evaluation
- The purpose, process and benefits of performance development
- Specifically how well they are performing (feedback)
- The employee's strengths and successes
- Where their performance does not meet standards
- How to improve performance (coaching)

The employee's role is to:

- Actively participate in setting performance expectations and standards
- Perform up to and/or exceed standards
- Seek feedback and coaching on their performance
- Improve where performance doesn't meet standards

## **ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS**

It is important to establish and clarify the expectations at the beginning of the performance development cycle. The employee's involvement and input on the expectations build commitment to successfully performing the job because the employee feels invested in the process.

Setting goals and evaluating behavior/results on performance factors is not an exact science. The process should be as objective as possible. Objectives, standards and measurements should be relevant, essential and based on the job (not on the person nor that person's ability). They should be expressed in clear, practical and "effective" terms. This is a two-way discussion between the supervisor and employee. At the very least, the supervisor and employee should have a common understanding of what the factors mean, and the kinds of behaviors and results important to successful performance on the job. If it is difficult to reach mutual understanding of the expectations, answer the following questions:

- Is the departmental job description up to date and/or accurate?
- Is the expectation reasonably attainable?
- How relevant and important is the expectation to the successful performance of the job?
- How does the expectation support the work of the unit or the team (interaction outcomes)?
- Does the employee have the skills to meet the expectations?
- If not, what is the action plan to acquire the skills?
- Are you documenting expectations objectives, outcomes and/or behaviors?

To help in this process, examples of behavior/results have been prepared for each performance factor. These are intended as examples only. They are not all relevant for every position and for some positions there will be other items, which should be considered. The supervisor and employee should use the examples listed as an aid in identifying the behavior results most important for the factors as they apply to that particular position. The examples should also be useful in evaluating performance and assigning fair ratings. Be as SMART as possible in establishing performance objectives, standards and measurements. Being SMART means expectations should be Specific, Measurable, Relevant, and Trackable.

## **Methods of Defining Performance Expectations**

Because of the differing nature of job duties and tasks, various means of expressing performance standards are necessary. Not all of the means are pertinent to each task. The degree of importance to be attached to each may vary from position to position even though the task may appear to be the same.

Here are some examples of defining performance standards (information courtesy of *Takacs Techniques*. 1995):

### **1. Results/Effect Obtained**

Use when the performance can best be measured or expressed in terms of the ultimate result/effect to be obtained.

Example: Schedules will be developed so that they reach the printer in time for printing next semester's catalogue.

### **2. Manner-of-Performance**

Use when there is a required procedure or method for accomplishing a task. This standard answers such questions as. "must the work be done in accordance with some specific procedures which are set forth in memos, regulations, etc."

Example: The telephone must be answered using the following procedure:

1. Answer by the 3<sup>rd</sup> ring
2. Give greeting ("Good morning/afternoon)
3. State name of department
4. State your name
5. Ask, "How may I help you?"

### **3. Cost Effectiveness**

Use when the performance can be assessed in terms of the amount of money saved, earned or expended in the accomplishment of the work being performed.

Example: Expenditures will not exceed the amount allocated for the budget year.

#### **4. Quantity of Work**

**States how many work units must be completed within a specified time period for this aspect of the work. In other words, how much work must the person do in a certain period of time? Standards must state specific numbers, how many, how fast, etc.**

**Example: A minimum of 200 invoices must be correctly processed each month.**

#### **5. Time**

**Use when time limits can be set as a definite requirement of work. These standards should answer the questions: when, how soon, or within what period of time?**

**Example: All grant applications and/or proposals must be reviewed at least one week prior to the submission date.**

#### **6. Quality of Work**

**Generally expressed in terms of accuracy, appearance of work or general results achieved. They answer the questions how well must the work be done or how thorough must it be?**

**Example: Work will be produced based on established specifications and procedures and with maximum level of accuracy the first time.**



## **Conducting the Expectation Meeting**

- **Schedule meeting in advance.**
- **Ensure privacy without interruptions.**
- **Put employee at ease.**
- **Establish climate for two-way communication.**
- **Discuss how expectations will be measured.**
- **Ensure that employee has the knowledge, skills, abilities and resources to meet performance expectations.**
- **Explore areas of agreement and disagreement.**
- **Express confidence in employee's ability and offer your help.**
- **Make sure expectations are clear and written and that employee has a copy.**
- **Arrange mid-way feed back sessions.**
- **Place a copy in a file accessible to the employee and/or give the employee a copy of the expectations.**



## **FEEDBACK AND COACHING**

In order to provide feedback, supervisors should track performance and results as they occur and not wait until the end of the period. This tracking should include information on both expectations and operational objectives. There are many ways of recording and maintaining information about performance.

- **Written records**
- **Employee performance log (see samples)**
- **Documented compliments or complaints**
- **Documented or reported observations**
- **Employee records, time logs, activity reports**
- **Work samples**

Providing ongoing feedback and coaching is critical to effective performance management. Employees want, need and deserve to receive frequent, timely and accurate information on how they are performing. In performance development, the supervisor's role is one of "coach", developing team members and ensuring that individual performance contributes to the team's goal.

Supervisors should make a special effort to provide positive recognition and reinforcement in areas where employees are performing well and where performance is improving. This is the most effective way of promoting excellence and developing people. It is less effective to wait until people make mistakes before giving feedback.

Sometimes special coaching and support is required. When performance is below requirements, the supervisor should recognize the situations as soon as possible and meet with the employee to develop corrective action plans.

### **General Principles for Giving/Presenting/Discussing Positive Feedback**

- **It is intended to be helpful**
  - **The other person must understand what has been said**
  - **The other person must be willing and able to accept it**
  - **The other person can do something about it if they choose to (give examples)**
- **Be specific**
- **Be timely**
- **Focus on observed and/or reported behaviors, not on the person**
- **Focus on essential behaviors that have the greatest impact: link to performance objectives/standards**

- **Use statements that deal with the performance, not with the person**
- **Explain consequences of the conduct or behavior**
- **Give motivating feedback**

#### **Techniques for Receiving Positive Feedback**

- **State reason for praise**
- **Present enthusiastically**
- **Be sincere**
- **Relate to the job**
- **Express appreciation**

#### **Techniques for Discussing Performance Problems**

- **Put employee at ease**
- **Identify problem behaviors**
- **Give examples of performance problem**
- **Ask employee for help in identifying possible causes of and solutions to the problem**
- **Express your confidence that, with the employee's help, the planned actions will solve the problem**



# **PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION**

## **Conducting Performance Review Discussions**

**The following points should be helpful in planning for effective constructive discussion about performance:**

- **The employee is notified well in advance of the review discussion. Both the supervisor and the employee prepare for the discussion by reviewing available performance documentation and work samples. Both the supervisor and the employee may prepare a draft evaluation for the discussion.**
- **The discussion occurs at a time and a place that minimizes distractions from ongoing work activities.**
- **The discussion is a two-way communication. Both the supervisor and the employee ask and answer questions and must be effective listeners.**
- **Critical incidents or specific measurable results achieved are used to establish a common understanding of performance strengths and weaknesses.**
- **The content of the review discussion does not come as a surprise. The supervisor and the employee have been discussing performance throughout the year. Consider extenuating circumstances and factors beyond the employee's control.**
- **The discussion focuses on performance, not personality. The discussion is based on previously agreed-to, job-related factors important to overall success on the job.**
- **The discussion is highly individualized. The discussion reflects the employee's unique goals, abilities and development needs.**
- **The discussion leads the employee to analyze his/her own performance, with guidance and help from the supervisor, so he/she can both understand strengths and improvement needs.**
- **The discussion is based on the performance during the entire review period and not just on recent performance.**
- **The meeting is constructive. In discussing shortcomings, the focus is on how to improve, rather than on past failures.**

Each performance review discussion should be tailored to fit an individual employee, but the following steps should work well in most situations:

- State purpose of discussion
- Ask employee for his/her view of performance during period and check for understanding.
- Provide summary statement of your evaluation of overall performance
- Provide recognition for specific areas of high performance or areas where performance has improved
- Identify/discuss one or two areas where improvement is needed or development opportunities exist: be specific when comparing performance against expectations/standards
- Ask for employee's ideas on development plans, and document specific plans on performance development program form: set follow-up date
- Conclude discussion on positive note

### **Formulating Development Plan**

#### *Purpose*

One of the major purposes of performance development is to help employees continuously improve their capabilities, and improve future performance. This is important both to the organization in achieving its strategic goals, and to individual employees in achieving growth and career development goal.

The performance development form may be used to record development plans, but it is the discussion between the supervisor and employee that is the key to success in this area. These actions should be recorded in the sections for development plans and/or operational objectives.

#### **One or Two Specific Areas**

Development plans are most useful when they are focused on specific performance outcomes or skill areas, rather than general areas. It is also suggested that a supervisor and employee focus only on a few performance areas at one time (usually only one or two). A long list of problem areas and development plans is unlikely to result in much real progress, but will almost certainly damage the employee's self-esteem.

