Performance Evaluation: Tips for Supervisors

Although performance evaluations are conducted annually, it is good practice to provide the employee feedback regarding their performance throughout the year such as in timely coaching conversations or during a quarterly conversation. The evaluation is intended to be the last task in what should be an ongoing, year round process of managing performance.

Two-way communication between employees and supervisors is critical to everyone's success. Providing feedback and candidly addressing concerns can build a more productive work environment. An open dialogue can help clear the air and pave the way for an effective performance evaluation with no hard feelings and a clear perspective on expectations. Nothing contained in the performance evaluation should be a surprise; it should not be the first time an employee hears about an issue.

What's required?

- In general, the University requires that supervisors conduct a performance review of each employee in writing at least once annually per Minnesota State Statute.
- The performance review is a communication tool between the employee and the supervisor and is part of the official personnel file.
- The performance review looks at specific areas, goals, and standards of performance and the employee's progress toward meeting them, as well as future goals and employee development
- Managers and supervisors should use the approved Performance Evaluation Form.

The pre-review checklist and preparing for the review.

1. Set a calendar date and time in advance that is mutually convenient for both you and the employee, and that will allow enough time for each of you to prepare. A conference room is a good choice for privacy and no interruptions. Schedule enough time for discussion [1 to 1-1/2 hours].
2. Gather:
    - the job description and performance objectives
    - goals and activities set from the current review period
    - work rules and procedures
    - your documentation notes including quarterly conversation forms
    - any feedback or letters from customers/co-workers
    - current disciplinary memos
    - the previous performance review
    - employee self review
3. Review the position description for accuracy and revise if there are inaccuracies or changes needed. Do not let inaccuracies with a position description delay the completion of the annual performance evaluation. Base the responsibilities on what you and the employee know are the current duties of the job.
4. If your employee chooses to do a self-review, be sure to obtain that early enough so you have a chance to review it as part of your preparation.
5. Before filling out the review form, take a moment to:
    - list the main areas of responsibility
    - what the employee has done well
    - what the employee needs to improve in
    - what you can do to help the employee do a better job
6. Give real thought to your responses, utilize the narrative sections and provide behavioral and measurable outcomes that are detailed and specific. Be fair and objective in completing the evaluation and base your responses on the performance over the entire past year.

7. Compare the actual specific performance results and behaviors to the objectives. Stay away from an attitude or personality focus. If addressing poor attitude in the evaluation, remember to avoid generalization and provide detailed and specific examples. Make sure you have clear and consistent expectations for all your employees, based on performance on the job.
8. Remember to avoid:
   - Halo Effect - tendency to overrate a favored employee, or an employee who had a prior good rating
   - Horns Effect - tendency to rate an employee lower than circumstances warrant
   - Recency Error- letting outstanding work [or unsatisfactory work] immediately prior to the evaluation offset an entire year of performance
   - Cookie Cutter Effect - not focusing on individual specific performance. Rating all your employees, or groups of employees the same

Conducting the review meeting.

1. Schedule a time in advance, in a quiet and private location, to meet with the employee and discuss the evaluation.
2. Welcome the employee; put the employee at ease.
3. Outline your plan for the evaluation. What will the meeting look like? Lay out the meeting structure before beginning.
4. Let the employee start
   - Listen and take notes.
   - Maintain good eye contact and attentive posture.
   - Reflect back to the employee your understanding of what the employee said.
   - Don't interrupt, but ask questions only for clarification.
   - Be non-judgmental.
5. Read through your supervisor portion of the evaluation together. Have two copies; one for you and one for the employee to follow along.
6. Emphasize strengths, as well as areas that need improvement.
7. Be honest and be prepared to discuss questionable items.
8. Support the employee's effort to improve.
9. Ask the employee for ideas about how to resolve problems.
10. Set goals, expectations, and objectives together for the next performance period.

    ***This step should occur in a future meeting so that the employee and supervisor have time to absorb the feedback delivered in the performance evaluation and understand how it relates to the next FY goals and activities.

11. Discuss development/training plans with the employee.

    ***This step can also be delayed for a future meeting so that the employee and supervisor have time to absorb and understand the feedback in the performance evaluation.

12. Summarize the session and end on a positive note.

Handling employee behaviors.

- **If the employee becomes defensive or makes excuses**:
  - Listen to what the employee has to say and paraphrase back. Remain neutral. Maintain eye-contact.
  - Don't solve the problem.
  - Ask for specifics with open-ended questions.
  - Try to determine the cause:
    "Tell me more." "How did you reach that conclusion?"
  - Ask how the employee will resolve the problem.
- **If the employee becomes angry:**
  - Stay calm and centered. Maintain eye-contact.
  - Listen to what the employee has to say and paraphrase back.
  - Let the employee "run down" for as long as s/he needs until the employee can listen to you.
  - Avoid arguments.
  - Bring discussion and focus back to performance and standards.
  - Say the employee's name, and ask open-ended questions.
  - If necessary, take a break or reschedule the evaluation meeting.
- **If the employee is unresponsive or withdraws:**
  - Be patient and friendly.
  - Show concern.
  - Stay silent, and wait for the employee to say something.
  - Ask open-ended questions.
  - Note that the employee is unresponsive.
  - Encourage the employee that you want to hear his or her input, and this input is important to you.
  - Consider a scheduling a follow-up meeting to allow the employee time to gather thoughts and be prepared to discuss openly.

Closing and follow-up.

1. Both the supervisor and the employee should sign the review. Signing the review does not mean the employee agrees with the review; it means that the review has been shared with the employee.
2. Remember, even if you and an employee disagree on a point, you can both express your opinions, but you are the supervisor and your evaluation is the final statement. Employees can submit written response to be included in their personnel file.
3. Provide the employee with a copy of the evaluation packet. The original should go in the employee's personnel file (supervisor provides to HR Office). Supervisor can retain a copy in their supervisor file for quick reference throughout the year.
4. You and the employee should exchange ongoing feedback about performance goals and standards throughout the year. Schedule a time to meet to discuss FY goals and activities (to be completed in quarter 1 months of July – September).