


Goals

Performance goals should be clear and guide action. To do that, goals must meet the following criteria:

S. M. A. R. T.

- **S**pecific
 - **M**easurable
 - **A**chievable
 - **R**esults Oriented
 - **T**ime-Bound
- 

SPECIFIC: Be specific about expected results. Define these clearly and simply. Performance objectives should describe the general actions required to achieve performance expectations.

MEASURABLE: Clarify what will be measured and how. Some Objectives can be measured quantitatively, others must be measured qualitatively. Describe how success will be assessed.

ACHIEVABLE: Goals should be attainable and agreed upon. While realistic, they should also be a stretch to provide challenge and professional growth.

RESULTS ORIENTED: Goals must be focused on the desired end result or outcome desired.

TIME-BOUND: Goals should have a specific date for completion.

Example SMART Goals

1. Review and revise current office practices in A, B and C areas to improve efficiency and effectiveness by October 1st. Success will be measured by client feedback on a formal survey.
2. Attend formal instruction to improve business writing skills by December. Practice business writing by completing six articles for the departmental newsletter during the next fiscal year.

ASSESSMENT

An employee may “exceed” expectations on a goal if it can be documented that he/she attained the goal as defined and improved in one or more areas of the goal. Ask the questions, who, what, when, where, why and how to determine level of achievement.

Coaching

Coaching is an ongoing process of communication between the supervisor and the employee designed to improve current performance and build capabilities for the future. It involves informal conversation, as well as more formal coaching meetings and written documentation. Some supervisors find it difficult to provide positive or negative feedback. It may be helpful to note that feedback is simply an objective observation of reality and it is inherently neutral. When staff work without feedback, supervisors fail to provide the framework for real growth, development and enhanced contribution.

GIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

The intent of giving feedback should always be to help people improve personally and/or professionally. Be aware that giving feedback impacts a person's self-esteem. Redirecting feedback must be done to address the issue without personally attacking the employee. Feedback should be restricted to job-related behaviors – not personal values, beliefs or assumed motives.

- 1. Make sure the feedback is relevant to the individual's job**
Give feedback on issues that are critical to the individual's success and the priorities of their job. Do not be concerned about irrelevant issues.
- 2. Be direct and discuss observed behavior(s)**
Stay with your own observations and perceptions. Hearsay is weak and subject to distortions.
- 3. Be descriptive rather than evaluative**
State what you observed the person doing or saying without editorializing or making a value judgment. For example do not say, "Your presentation was poor!" Instead say, "To me, you seemed unsure of your material during your presentation this morning." Avoid focusing on the receiver's character or personality.
- 4. Be specific rather than general**
The more detail you can provide the better. If you do not provide specific examples, the receiver will surely ask you for them. Building on the presentation example, you might say, "I noticed you stumbled over the introduction, and there were two places where your facts did not support your conclusion."
- 5. Focus on the needs of the receiver, not your needs as the sender**
Try to see the situation from the perspective of the receiver. Your full intent needs to be for the benefit of the recipient. Thus, a comment like, "I was embarrassed by your presentation." is irrelevant.
- 6. Be as timely as possible**
Feedback that is given out of context is of little value. State your observations as close to the occurrence of the actual event as possible.
- 7. Be sure to give the proper balance of reinforcing and redirecting feedback**
Over time a person should have the proper amount of reinforcing and redirecting feedback based on whether they are contributing appropriately or not. For specific on-

going conversations it is best to give either reinforcing or redirecting feedback so that there is no ambiguity in your expectations. If either party feels any uncertainty about what outcomes are desired, the employee should summarize their understanding of the conversation and submit it to their supervisor. This will help both parties feel comfortable that they understand one another.

8. Give feedback privately

Redirecting feedback should always be given privately. If you are giving reinforcing feedback and the recipient is not embarrassed by public reinforcement, it may be appropriate to give feedback publicly. As a supervisor, consider the impact this will have on others in your group. Will they be motivated or de-motivated by the public acknowledgement? Will you have opportunities to "praise" others publicly?

It is expected that coaching will occur on an as needed basis throughout the year and may be initiated by either the supervisor or the employee. An effective way to track and refer to performance related incidents/activity is to set up a "memory file." This can be as simple as a file folder. It can include notes on exceptional (positive or negative) performance or behavior by the employee. It can include copies of letters of appreciation or coaching/counseling. By keeping a memory file on each employee, a supervisor can track an employee's performance progress as well as what coaching has been provided. The employee may also want to set up a memory file to ensure all key aspects of his/her performance are recorded.

SUPERVISOR ROLE

- Provide ongoing performance feedback to employees to recognize excellent performance
- Provide feedback to correct performance that does not meet established expectations
- Solicit ideas and suggestions from the employee for improving work processes
- Work with the employee to identify barriers to success and strategies for removing or minimizing the barriers
- Discuss employee's learning and professional development needs
- Solicit employee feedback on supervisory coaching effectiveness

When coaching an employee:

- Allow time for coaching. Even on an informal basis, it takes time to do it well.
- Ask how you can be of help to your employee.
- Ask the employee what prevents him/her from performing at the desired level, if the coaching is about not meeting expectations.
- Ask the employee for solutions to the problem.
- Describe the employee's performance as specifically as possible.
- Write down what you and your employee agree to do.
- Talk about follow up. Will you meet again to discuss the issue? When?

Questions for Supervisors:

- What have I observed about this person's work that I want to reinforce?
- In what ways does this person like to be recognized for excellent performance?
- How could this person improve his/her performance? What is the difference between "actual" and "desired" performance?
- How well is this person doing in meeting his/her goals? What can be done to facilitate goal progress?

- Have I checked to see if there are any barriers this person might be experiencing in performing his/her job duties, such as:
 - o Getting needed information?
 - o Having well-defined priorities?
 - o Having appropriate equipment?
 - o Receiving needed feedback on performance?
 - o Having adequate supplies?
 - o Having a reasonable workload?
 - o Working under a reasonable deadline?
- Have I provided or made available the training this person needs to do the job?
- Have I asked this person how I can help him/her succeed?

EMPLOYEE ROLE

Those receiving coaching are encouraged to be active participants in their own coaching by:

- Asking for coaching when it is needed
- Listening and responding to feedback from coaches
- Identify what training/skills are needed to be fully resourceful

Questions for Employees:

- Am I clear on what's expected of me?
- In what areas do I believe that I am exceeding expectations? How do I want to share this with my supervisor? Are there examples of my successes that I want to share?
- In what areas do I believe I am meeting expectations? Is there anything I need in order to do better in these areas, e.g. equipment, resources, training, etc.?
- In what areas do I believe my performance is below expectations? Why am I not meeting expectations? What do I need to improve my performance?
- Do I know the extent to which my supervisor is satisfied with my job performance?
- How can I share with my supervisor what I am working on? Project updates?
- How well am I meeting my goals? What help do I need to assure my goals are met?
- Is there information I need to share with my supervisor about barriers to my job performance?

Such as:

- o Inadequate information
- o Unclear direction
- o Inadequate supplies or equipment
- o Lack of skill or knowledge
- o Completing deadlines
- o Workload
- Is there training that would help me improve my performance?
- Are there additional areas of the office that I would like to understand better?
- Do I have suggestions to improve the way my work is done? (e.g., better procedures, redesigned systems, etc.)
- Is there anything I need from my supervisor to do a better job?
- Are there concerns that I have that I should share with my supervisor?

Performance Appraisal Session/Learning Assessment

The performance assessment summarizes the employee's contributions over the entire appraisal period (usually one year). It may occur as often as necessary to acknowledge the employee for accomplishments and to plan together for improved performance.

PREPARING FOR THE ASSESSMENT

Much of the hard work of appraising performance should be carried out before the assessment meeting. Prior to the meeting managers can encourage employee involvement by asking the employee to:

- Prepare a self-evaluation
- List accomplishments and identify areas for improvement
- Provide names of key clients who can give feedback on the employee's performance
- Propose work-related and professional development objectives for the next review period

Managers should review the employee's:

- Objectives for the appraisal period and the extent to which the employee accomplished their goals according to pre-determined expectations
- Professional development over the review period
- Accomplishments as described in input provided by key clients and colleagues
- Memory file to achieve a full picture of performance over the entire rating period

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING A PERFORMANCE REVIEW

1. Make it "priority time."
 - o Create an agenda for the meeting
 - o Minimize interruptions
2. Set a tone of collaboration.
 - o Start the discussion on a positive note
 - o Encourage your employee's participation
3. Be clear about your purpose.
 - o Reinforce that the discussion will address strengths and areas for improvement
4. Review performance expectations.
 - o Discuss the job description, position objectives, goals, and critical job tasks
 - o Be clear about performance standards
5. Discuss performance that is below, meets, and exceeds expectations.
 - o Use language that is clear and specific; use examples
 - o Describe performance, not personality
6. Ask your employee what he/she thinks.
 - o Overall, how successful have you been at meeting your performance expectations?

- What performance expectations have you met or exceeded?
 - What measures support this?
 - What performance expectations have you not met?
 - What would you like to do better on your job?
 - What new duties would you like to do?
 - What skills did you improve or acquire this year?
 - How did the development plan assist in this skill acquisition?
 - What skills do you need to develop this year?
 - What does your supervisor do that helps you do your job?
 - What more can the supervisor do to improve your job or assist you in being successful?
 - What else would you like to discuss?
7. Set goals to:
- Improve performance in targeted areas
 - Build on strengths
 - Develop the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities
 - Align the employee's work with the needs of the unit
8. Agree to follow up.
- Schedule at least one interim check-in on performance during the year
 - Ask how your employee prefers to receive feedback (written, verbal)
 - Discuss how your employee likes to be recognized for good work
9. Close with encouragement.
- Ask the employee to summarize the discussion
 - Offer your help and support
 - End on a positive note by summarizing employee strengths and contributions

PITFALLS TO AVOID IN PERFORMANCE REVIEW

1. **Halo Error** - Appraiser giving favorable ratings to all job duties based on impressive performance in just one job function.
2. **Horns Error** - (Opposite of halo error) Downgrading an employee across all performance dimensions exclusively because of poor performance on one dimension
3. **First Impression Error** - Developing a negative or positive opinion of an employee early in the review period and allowing that to negatively or positively influence all later perceptions of performance.
4. **Recency Error** - (The opposite of first impression error) Allowing performance, either good or bad, at the end of the review period to play too large a role in determining an employee's ratings for the entire period.
5. **Leniency Error** - Consistently rating someone higher than is deserved.
6. **Severity Error** - (Opposite of leniency error) Rating someone consistently lower than is deserved.
7. **Central Tendency Error** - Avoiding extremes in ratings across employees.
8. **Clone Error** - Giving better ratings to individuals who are like the rater in

behavior and/or personality.

9. **Spillover Error** - Continuing to downgrade an employee for performance errors in prior rating periods.

To avoid these errors:

- Keep documentation (notes, e-mail, etc.) throughout the year, both on accomplishments and needs for improvement. (e.g. memory file)
- Allow enough time before the review meeting to reflect on the events of the past year.
- Ask others who are familiar with the person's work to add input
- Ask the employee to review his/her own performance as additional input to the discussion.

EMPLOYEE ROLE

Before the performance review:

- Confirm the meeting with your supervisor.
- Gather any documentation regarding your performance that you have collected throughout the year (letters, notes, etc.).
- Complete your self-evaluation; make a copy and give it to your supervisor in advance of the meeting.
- Review your job description and expectations that were set during the performance planning discussion.
- Write down questions that you want to ask your supervisor.
- Be prepared to talk about your performance--what you do well, how you could improve, what you would like to learn.

During the performance review:

- Listen to feedback from the supervisor and ask questions to clarify information.
- Share information from the self-evaluation.
- Offer suggestions and ideas for improving performance.
- Identify areas for learning and development.
- Identify obstacles to performance and suggest solutions.
- Sign the performance review form, attaching comments if desired.

CLOSING

- Both the supervisor and the employee should sign the appraisal. Signing the appraisal does not mean the employee agrees with the appraisal; it means that the appraisal has been shared with the employee; the employee can provide a written response, which is optional.
- Provide the employee with a copy, and the original should go in the employee's personnel file.
- You and the employee should exchange ongoing feedback about performance goals and standards throughout the year.

Performance Management-Quick Guide. Office of Human Resources, California State University, Northridge. 7 May 2007

<http://www-admn.csun.edu/hrs/Perf_Rev/Quick_Guide.doc>