Performance Management: A Tool For Employee Success

Guidelines, Process and Useful Hints for Supervisors and Staff

(Updated 1/08)

University of Missouri
Division of Finance & Administration

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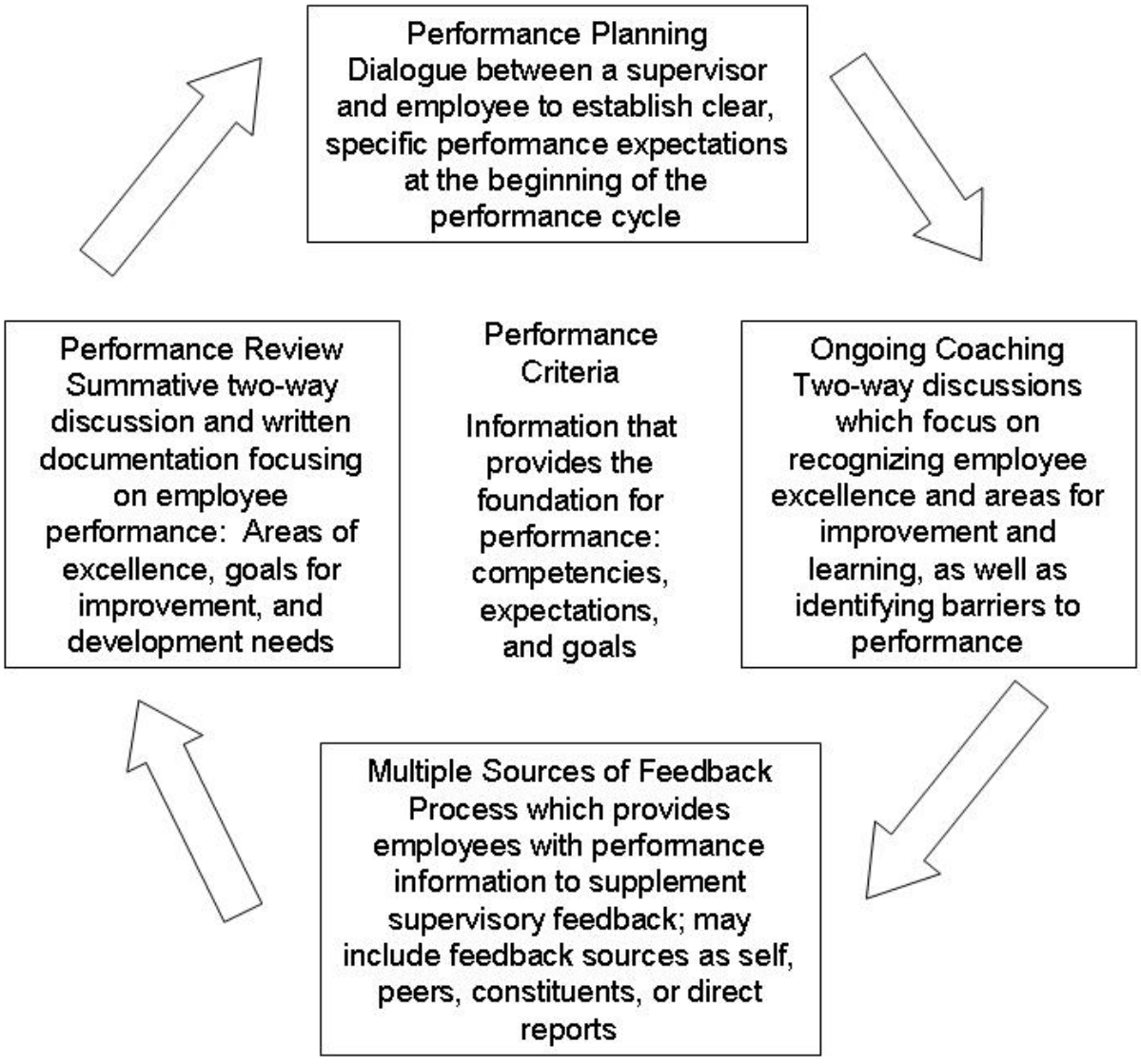
Performance Management Model

University Mission and Goals and Division/Unit Mission and Objectives

Provide context for performance management so that individual performance is aligned with the organization's mission and objectives



Section 1: Introduction to Performance Management

The underlying goals and principles of an effective performance management system include:

Goals:

- Improve staff performance in meeting department, division and university goals and objectives.
- Support staff development and continuous learning
- Align compensation with desired organization outcomes
- Strengthen management accountability

Principles:

- An effective performance management system helps organizations, managers, and employees succeed. Performance management is a tool for success.
- Performance management is a shared commitment to high performance.
- Performance management balances autonomy and accountability at the individual and organizational levels.
- Effective performance and continuous learning should be encouraged and supported.
- Effective performance management should be in alignment with university values throughout the division.
- Performance management should be based on clearly identified core competencies for support staff and supervisors/managers.

What Employees Need to Succeed:

- Employees need to know what supervisors expect them to do, when, and how well. If they don't know, how can they succeed?
- Employees need regular, specific feedback on their job performances. They need to know where they are excelling and where they could improve. If they don't know what they should continue to do and what they should change, how can they get better?
- Employees need to understand how their work fits in with the work of others, the goals of their work unit, and the overall mission and purpose of the division and university. This aspect is of key importance because it's motivating to feel part of a larger purpose and to have sense of contributing to achieve that purpose.
- Employees need to play an active role in defining and redefining their job. First, it is motivating to do so. Second, employees, particularly experienced ones, know their job better than anyone else and often know best how to remove any barriers to their success.
- Employees need to know their levels of authority. When they know what decisions they can make on their own, what decisions need to involve others, and what decisions are managerial, they can operate with greater confidence. This knowledge also speeds up processes.

- Employees need to have opportunities to develop their skills and grow. An employee who is learning new things and applying them is more likely to be retained and more likely to be motivated.

Components of Performance Management:

1. Performance Planning: A dialogue between a supervisor and an employee to establish clear, specific performance expectations at the beginning of the performance cycle.

2. Coaching: Two-way discussions which focus on recognizing employee excellence and areas for improvement and learning, as well as identifying barriers to performance.

3. Multiple Sources of Feedback: A process which provides employees with performance information to supplement supervisory feedback; may include feedback sources such as self-evaluation, peers, constituents or direct reports.

4. Performance Review: A summative two-way discussion and written documentation focusing on employee performance: areas of excellence, goals for improvement and development needs.

Minimum Expectation for Performance Management Process

Component	Goal	Minimum Expectation
Performance Planning	Discuss the core competencies and how they are related to the employee's job	Planning discussion between supervisor and employee
Coaching	Encourage ongoing two-way communication during the performance cycle	As-needed feedback shared between supervisor and employee
Multiple Sources of Feedback	Provide employee with one additional source of feedback other than the supervisor's	Employee completes a self-evaluation or receives feedback from one other sources prior to performance review
Performance Review	Evaluate performance based on the performance planning discussion	Written annual evaluation using university- approved form

Section 2: Preparing to Start the Performance Management Process

The starting place for the performance management process consists of two components: gathering information and data and preparing and educating staff.

Information and Data Gathering:

The performance management process should link individual performance expectations to the success of the department, division or institution. The types of information and documentation that is helpful in aligning individual performance with organization goals and objectives include the following:

- the strategic plan of the university
- the strategic plans of the department and division (note these plans should be in alignment with each other and supportive of the university's strategic plan)
- one-year short-term operational plan of the department or division, if one exists.
- job descriptions of each employee
- performance appraisal for each employee for the previous year

Preparing and Educating Staff:

Employees need to understand what performance management is for, how it is going to work, what to expect, and what will be expected of them. Outlined below are the critical "need to know" issues for employees.

- why performance management is important (purpose)
- how will it benefit the employee, the manager, and the organization
- the supervisor's general philosophy or approach (e.g., working together, centered on self-evaluation, focus on prevention of performance problems)

Employees also need to know what to expect during the planning and appraisal meetings:

- What will happen during the performance planning meeting?
- What kinds of input are they expected to supply?
- What kinds of questions will you be asking them?
- What decisions will be made during the meeting?
- How flexible will the objectives and job tasks be?
- What kinds of preparation do they need to do?
- How long will the meeting take?
- What will happen at the yearly review?
- How will disagreements be handled?
- How will appraisal affect pay?

Section 3: Performance Planning

Definition and Expectations

Performance planning is the second step in the performance management process. It is a dialogue between a supervisor and an employee to:

- establish and agree upon performance expectations,
- clarify what the employee will be evaluated on, and
- set the stage for ongoing feedback and coaching throughout the year.

The performance planning process should address the following questions:

1. What are the employee's major responsibilities for the year?
2. How will we (employee and supervisor) know whether the employee is succeeding?
3. If appropriate, when should the employee carry out those responsibilities (e.g., for specific projects).
4. What level of authority does the employee have with respect to job tasks?
5. Which job responsibilities are of most importance and which are of least importance?
6. How do the employee's responsibilities contribute to the department, division or university goals and objectives.
7. Why is the employee doing what he or she is doing?
8. How can the manager help the employee accomplish the tasks?
9. How will the manager and employee work to overcome any barriers?
10. Does the employee need to develop new skills/abilities to accomplish tasks (development planning).
11. How will the manager and the employee communicate during the year about job tasks, to prevent problems and keep current?

Outcome of Performance Planning:

The purpose of performance planning can best be defined in terms of outcomes. By the conclusion of the performance planning session the following outcomes should have been achieved:

- The job task and objectives of the employee will be aligned with the goals and objectives of the department and division. The employee will understand the link between his or her responsibilities and the overall goals.
- Job responsibilities will be modified to reflect any changes in the work context.
- Supervisor and employee will agree to the major job tasks and objectives for the employee, how success will be measured, what assignments are most or least important, and the level of authority the employee has with respect to each job responsibility.
- The supervisor and employee will identify any help the manager can provide, any potential barriers to achieving the objectives, and means for overcoming the barriers.

- A formal document (a performance plan) will be produced that summarizes the discussions and agreements and is signed by both the supervisor and employee (see Performance Objective Planning/Interim Review/Final Outcome – Form C).

Supervisor's Role

- Have a thorough understanding of the work involved – the critical functions and key tasks.
- Review job description to ensure that information is accurate and up to date.
- Keep in mind the performance planning process involves a relatively equal partnership between supervisor and employee. They negotiate together, because they share a common interest – success.
- Since the supervisor may be more expert in the "big picture" issues his/her responsibility is to discuss how the employee supports the organizational needs of the department or division and fits with other employees in the unit.
- Know what constitutes "successful performance" and effectively communicate this. Because the employee is an expert in the job, it is the employee who should, by and large, generate the criteria used to gauge success, with the supervisor's involvement.
- Identify priority areas, if appropriate, among the core and job-specific competencies that will be emphasized in the evaluation.
- Communicate how the results of the employee's work contribute to the department's, division's or university's goals.
- Ask the employee what information, resources, tools, training and supervision is needed.
- Create a climate for real dialogue and teamwork during the meeting.

Employee's Role

- Have a thorough understanding of the work involved – the critical functions, key tasks.
- Review job description to ensure that information is accurate and up to date.
- Understand what constitutes "successful performance" of the core competencies related to the job.
- Come prepared to share and discuss your personal objectives and the measures of success related to each objective.
- Understand how the results of your position contributes to the department's, division's, or university's goals and objectives.
- Communicate what information, resources, tools, training and supervision is needed.
- Ask questions to clarify information and inform the discussion.

Getting Specific: Job Responsibilities and Objectives:

A job related objective is a statement of a specific result or outcome the employee is expected to create or contribute to. Here are some helpful pointers in setting objectives:

- Make each objective as specific as possible.
- Focus each objective on a single job responsibility or outcome.

- Specify when the result should occur and any limits on resources.
- Keep the objectives short, to the point, and direct.
- Focus objectives on results or outcomes, if possible, not on how the employee is to achieve the results.

Developing Criteria for Success (Setting Standards):

Standards of performance are statements that outline what criteria will be used to determine whether the employee has met each objective. The employee should, by and large, generate the criteria that will be used to gauge success, with the supervisors active involvement. Generally performance standards should be:

- specific,
- attainable with effort and "stretch", and
- as objective and measurable as possible

If core competencies have been identified by the department, division or university they can often be used to help set objectives and performance standards.

Discussion of Barriers and Help Need

Since the principle goal of the performance planning process is to support employee success and foster employee growth and development, it is important that the supervisor and employee discuss any difficulties, challenges, or problems that might interfere with achieving the objectives and meeting standards. As a partner in the process, the supervisor's role is to actively participate in identifying ways he or she can assist the employee in being successful. This dialogue may also include the identification of training or development needs of the employee that are important to his or her success.

Discussion of Priorities and Authority

It is important that the supervisor and employee agree on which objectives are most important and which are of less importance. The purpose of this discussion is to help the employee know where to allocate his or her time without having to consult with the supervisor on everything. A simply way to do this is to designate a priority for each task or objective. For example, you might rate them as priority one – essential, priority two important, and priority three – least important. The setting of priorities should be a fairly straightforward process. Remember, the employee and supervisor should do it together, so they arrive at a common understanding. This discussion also ensures the priorities reflect what the department or division needs in order to achieve their respective goals and objectives.

Employees need to know when they can make decisions on their own and when they need to consult the supervisor. For each objective, discuss the level of decision making available to the employee. A supervisor might use the following rating system:

- Complete Authority: No need to get permission or report afterward
- Act and Report: Employee can make decision and act, but needs to report decision to the supervisor.
- Ask: Employee needs to get decision or permission to decide from supervisor

Decisions about level of authority should be affected by the ability and track record of the employee, the importance and nature of the decisions involved, what the employee needs to do the job efficiently and effectively, and what the supervisor needs in the way of information. It is important that both the employee and supervisor come to a mutual understanding regarding level of authority.

Section 4: Coaching

Definition and Expectations

Coaching is an ongoing process of communication between the supervisor and the employee focused on improving current performance and building capabilities for the future. It involves the supervisor and employee working together to share information about work progress, potential barriers and problems, possible solutions to problems, and how the supervisor can help the employee. It is a dialogue that links performance planning and performance review. It involves informal conversations or notes, as well as more formal coaching meetings and written documentation. Coaching includes a variety of activities, such as:

- observing performance
- providing instruction
- directing employee's efforts
- providing encouragement
- correcting poor performance
- recognizing excellent performance
- listening to employee concerns and ideas
- removing barriers to performance

Coaching should occur on an as-needed basis throughout the year and may be initiated by either the supervisor or the employee. Supervisor and the employee should be encouraged to document these discussions as appropriate.

The ongoing communication between supervisor and the employee should allow the two parties to answer the following questions:

- How are things going with respect to job responsibilities?
- What is going well?
- What is not going so well?
- Is the employee on track toward achieving objectives and meeting performance standards?
- If things are not on track, what needs to change to get things on track?
- How can the supervisor lend a hand to support improvement (even if everything is on track)?
- Has anything changed that might affect the employee's job tasks, objectives or priorities? If so, what changes should be made to the employee's job tasks and objectives?

Supervisor's Role

- Provide ongoing performance feedback to prevent problems from arising.
- Provide ongoing performance feedback to employees to recognize excellent performance.
- Solicit ideas and suggestions from the employee for improving work processes.

- Work with the employee to remove barriers to success and identify strategies to minimize barriers.
- Discuss the employee's learning and professional development needs.
- Solicit employee feedback on supervisory coaching effectiveness.

Below are general guidelines for the supervisor to keep in mind when coaching an employee:

- Do allow time for coaching. Even on informal basis, it takes time to do it well.
- Do ask how you can be of help to the employee.
- Do ask the employee what prevents him or her from performing, if the coaching is about not meeting expectations.
- Do ask the employee for solutions to the problem.
- Do describe the employee's performance as specifically as possible. Describe what impact it has on others, the department or division.
- Do write down what you and the employee each agree to do.
- Do talk about follow up. Will you meet again to discuss the issue? When?
- Don't be distracted by interruptions.
- Don't assume the employee knows what you are thinking.
- Don't assume that the performance issue exists because the employee has a bad attitude.
- Don't end on a threatening or negative note. Re-state your support and willingness to help the employee be successful.

Employee's Role

- Ask you supervisor for coaching when it is needed.
- Listen and respond to feedback from coaches.
- Provide feedback to your coaches about what they need to know to help you be successful.

Section 5: Multiple Sources of Feedback

Definition and Expectations

Getting feedback from multiple sources helps employees know when they are doing something really well, and when it would be helpful to do something a little differently. Multiple sources of feedback could include one or more of the following:

- Self-evaluation
- Upward feedback (people who report to you)
- Peer feedback (people with whom you work)
- Customer feedback (people you serve both in and outside the unit).
- Work environment surveys (an expanded form of upward feedback)

Every employee should receive feedback from at least one other source in addition to their supervisor and their own self-evaluation.

Why Collect Feedback from Multiple Sources?

Gathering feedback information from multiple sources regarding an employee's performance can serve the following purposes:

- To determine instances of great or poor performance
- To identify the causes of performance problems
- To ascertain the factors behind excellent performance
- To provide evidence to determine whether the employee has achieved his or her objectives and met standards

Self-evaluation as a Form of Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very helpful to employees, by encouraging them to reflect on their skills, areas of growth, and how their work contributes to the larger organization. Self-evaluation helps the employee prepare to actively engage in the performance review, and demonstrates that improving performance is a shared responsibility. Finally, self-evaluations that are shared with the supervisor prior to the performance review provide valuable information to the review process (see Employee Self-Assessment – Form D).

Customer and Work Environment Surveys as a Form of Feedback

Feedback from both internal and external customers can provide valuable information not only about individual performance, but also unit performance as well. This source of feedback serves to target areas of performance improvement that creates the greatest value-added benefits for customers served by the employee or department. Feedback through this source is critical for those individuals serving a significant customer base of either internal or external customers.

Workplace surveys are a special type of upward feedback and are particularly useful in assessing the performance of individuals in supervisory positions and above. Feedback from unit employees (employees are in essence a type of customer) provides an excellent source of information in assessing critical leadership competencies. Feedback through employee surveys can help target specific improvements leaders need to make in their interpersonal skills, which are the "softer management skills" needed to be a successful leader.

Supervisor's Role

- Gather feedback information from other sources – customer input, workplace survey, peer feedback, etc.
- Read and reflect on the information provided from these multiple sources before the performance review; develop questions and comments in response to the feedback.
- Schedule time to discuss the feedback information with the employee either prior to or during the performance review.

If self-evaluation is used as a form of feedback to the performance management process, the supervisor should:

- Emphasize the importance of self-evaluation as a method for both the supervisor and employee to learn.
- Prepare the employee for self-evaluation by discussing it briefly in the performance planning discussion.
- Give the employee a copy of the self-evaluation form; compare it to the performance review form and discuss any difference.
- Allow a reasonable amount of time for the employee to complete the self-evaluation form prior to the annual performance review.
- Read and reflect on the self-evaluation the employee submits before the performance review; develop questions and comments in response.
- Schedule time to discuss the self-evaluation with the employee either prior to or during the performance review.

Employee's Role

Assuming self-evaluation is a form of feedback used in the performance management process, the employee should:

- Take adequate time to complete the self-evaluation form in a thoughtful way, including comments as well as ratings for their performance.
- Use the self-evaluation to create information to share with and questions to ask the supervisor during the review discussion.
- Make a copy of the self-evaluation and give it to your supervisor well ahead of your scheduled performance review.

Section 6: Performance Review

Definition and Expectations

Performance review is an extremely important component of the entire performance management process. It is the culminating discussion between the supervisor and employee regarding:

- where performance exceeded, met, or fell below expectations,
- the learning and development needed and received,
- objectives that were set and achieved by the employee, and
- feedback from others affected by the employee's performance.

Performance reviews succeed under the following conditions:

- The supervisor takes on the role of helper and problem solver, rather than primary evaluator.
- The employee is actively involved in the partnership and engaged in realistic self-evaluation.
- The supervisor uses appropriate interpersonal skills to involve the employee.
- The employee understands what to expect, in terms of content and process, before walking in the door.
- The supervisor treats the review meeting as important, something that should not be delayed and rescheduled.
- Both parties understand the why of performance review – that it's not to punish, but to improve performance so everyone wins.

The Dilemma of Individual Performance Review

Our culture and many organizations require that employee performance be evaluated on an individual basis. However, if we focus solely on employee performance and do not look at context or conditions that limit performance, then efforts at continuous improvement fail. Supervisors need to recognize that individual performance is not completely (or even mostly) under the control of the employee. Job performance is influenced by multiple factors, including:

- individual effort and skill
- decisions of others
- resources made available
- work systems and processes

During the performance review:

- Provide specific feedback on the employee's performance, including priority objectives identified during performance planning.

- Offer the employee an opportunity to share his or her self-evaluation, if one has been completed.
- Discuss learning and development needs of the employee.
- Set objectives for improvement.
- Set learning and development objectives, if appropriate.
- Answer employee questions with regard to the performance review.
- Sign performance review and obtain the employee's signature.

After the performance review:

- Make a copy of the review for the employee and yourself.
- Return the original to the appropriate individual in the unit for filing.

Suggested Guidelines for Conducting a Performance Review

1. Make it "priority time."
    - Create an agenda for the meeting
    - Minimize interruptions

2. Set a tone of collaboration.
    - Start the discussion on a positive note
    - Encourage the employee's participation

3. Be clear about your purpose.
    - Reinforce that the discussion will address strengths and areas of improvement

4. Review performance objectives.
    - Discuss the performance objectives and critical priorities
    - Be clear about performance standards

5. Discuss performance that exceeds, meets, and is below expectations.
    - Use language that is clear and specific; use examples
    - Describe performance, not personality

6. Ask the employee what he or she thinks.
    - Allow the employee to speak freely before responding to his or her comments
    - Actively listen to the employee
    - Clarify the employee's concerns, then address them

7. Set objectives to:
    - Improve performance in selected areas
    - Build on strengths
    - Develop the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities
    - Align the employee's work with the needs of the department or division

8. Agree to follow up.
    - Schedule at least one interim check-in on performance during the year
    - Ask how the employee prefers to receive feedback (written or verbal)
    - Discuss how the employee likes to be recognized for good work

9. Close with encouragement.
    - Offer your help and support
    - End on a positive note by summarizing the employee's strengths and contributions

Pitfalls to Avoid in Performance Review

- Halo error – appraiser giving favorable ratings in all areas based on impressive performance in just one area.

- Horns error – Downgrading an employee across all performance dimensions exclusively because of poor performance in one dimension.

- First impression error – Developing a negative or positive opinion of an employee early in the review cycle and allowing that to negatively or positively influence all later perceptions of performance.

- Recency error – Allowing performance, either good or bad, at the end of the review cycle to play too large a role in determining an employee's overall performance evaluation.

- Leniency error – Consistently rating an employee higher that is deserved.

- Severity error – Rating an employee consistently lower than is deserved.

- Central tendency error – Avoiding extremes in rating across all performance dimensions.

- Clone error – Giving better ratings to an employee who is like the rater in behavior and/or personality.

- Spillover error – Continuing to downgrade an employee for performance errors in prior review periods.

Employee's Role

Before the performance review:

- Confirm the meeting with your supervisor.
- Gather any documentation regarding your performance that you have collected throughout the year. Consider submitting quarterly progress reports on achievements.
- Completed your self-evaluation; make a copy and give it to your supervisor in advance of the meeting.

- Review your objectives and standards of performance set during the performance planning meeting.
- 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:

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

After the performance review:

- Keep copy of the performance review for future reference.
- Use the information gained in the performance review to build on strengths and improve areas for growth.

Appendix A

Coaching and Mentoring for Improved Performance: Examples of Best Practices

Performance coaching and feedback is essential for employees because it helps them to answer four basic questions:

1. Where are we going as an organization?
2. How are we getting there?
3. How do you expect me to contribute?
4. How am I doing?

The answers to these questions constitute much of what gives meaning to an employee's efforts. Organizations need to give feedback and coaching to make sure that employees' efforts stay aligned with the organizational and unit goals and the expectations of direct supervisors.

The main goal of coaching and feedback is engagement of employees to enhance performance. Retention of employees represents a secondary goal of coaching and feedback.

Good feedback and coaching is about more than having a series of meeting – it's about manager and employee building and open an trusting relationship.

Best Engagement Practices for Coaching and Giving Feedback

Best Practice #1: Provide Intensive Feedback and Coaching to New Hires

Good managers know that they need to proactively manage the new hires' joining-up process. Here are some specific steps that can jump-start a positive coaching relationship.

1. Plan how you want the new hires to spend the first day on the job and arrange to spend quality time with them at the beginning and end of the first week.
2 Meet with the new hire on day one to reaffirm how their job fits into the organization's mission and objectives.
3. Conduct an "Entrance Interview" focused on discovering in-depth the new hire's best talents and professional goals.
4. During the first week, discuss performance expectations in detail for the first ninety days, and ask the new hire to draft a performance agreement that summarizes the stated objectives as targeted results that are specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic.
5. Pair up the new employee with a respected peer or senior coworker to be a mentor or buddy during the first six months or longer.
6. Make it clear that giving feedback is your responsibility and getting feedback is the new hire's responsibility. In other words, new hires need to understand that when they feel they

are not getting enough feedback, they need to seek it out from you, from a coworker, from a customer instead of passively waiting for someone to give it.
7. Look for opportunities to directly observe and debrief new employees as frequently as possible during the first few weeks. As events cause change in the first-quarter objectives, revise them as appropriate to make them more realistic or achievable.
8. Meet with new employees at the end of the first three months to discuss progress on written objectives, and create new objectives for the next quarter. During this meeting, be sure to ask about any expectation that have not been met so they can be brought to the surface and openly discussed instead of being allowed to fester.

These same guidelines apply to employees you may inherit when taking over a new group of employees or when a new employee transfers into your unit.

Best Practice #2: Create and Culture of Continuous Feedback and Coaching

A frequent feedback culture is a reflection of a result-driven manager who wants to make sure that employees have the feedback they need just in time to use it and make a difference for customers. Here are some ideas on which to build a positive feedback culture through training.

1. Begin with the assumption that every employee is responsible for getting feedback and not dependent or passively waiting for manager to give it.
2. If it is the responsibility of every manager to give timely and frequent feedback to all employees, but the supervisor is not the sole initiator of feedback.
3. Make sure that all managers are trained to understand the essential conditions for effective feedback – that the feedback giver is credible, trustworthy, and has a good intentions; that the timing and circumstances are appropriate, the feedback is given in a personal and interactive manner, and that the message is clear and helpful.
4. Include a training module for employees on how to receive feedback that also encourages them to overcome any resistance they may have to seeking it.
5. Emphasize the importance of managers making sure the feedback they are about to give is accurate before they give it.
6. Communicate clearly and unequivocally that feedback is not to be reserved for periodic, formal occasions, but is expected to be given and sought on an ongoing, continual basis, driven not by the calendar, but by the situation.
7. Look for logical times to give feedback to an entire team of people, such as at the end of a major project.
8. Stress the importance of overcoming the natural defensiveness that people have about receiving feedback by giving positive feedback along with negative. Encourage employees to build on their strengths as the preferred strategy for improving performance.
9. It is not enough to point out shortcomings. Employees need help figuring out what actions they need to take in order to do better.
10. Because feedback improperly given can have a negative impact on performance, training should include time for managers to practices giving it and employees to practice receiving it.
11. Along with training, offer a variety of feedback tools, such as internal and external customer questionnaires, 360-degree feedback instruments, and less formal feedback questionnaires.

12 Make all managers and employees aware of available feedback tools and training.

Best Practices #3: Train Managers in Performance Coaching

Good performance coaching is less about recruiting the right people and inspiring them. Rather good performance coaching involves carefully observing your employees, stopping their activity and giving detailed feedback and teaching the proper way, and asking questions to ensure the employee understood.

Five-Step Coaching Process

1. Get the employee's agreement that a problem exists.
2. Mutually discuss alternative solutions.
3. Mutually agree on action to be taken to solve the problem.
4. Follow up to measure results.
5. Reinforce any achievement when it occurs.

This process is not about placing blame or even assigning motives to employees for their behavior. Rather it is focused on producing positive behavior going forward.

Four Common Performance Management Routines of Great Managers

1. The routine is simple. (Simple formats allow manage to focus on what to say and how to say it.)
2. The routine forces frequent interaction. (Meaningful feedback happens when it follows on the heels of an event.)
3. The routine is future-focused. (Postmortems can lead to recriminations. Positive energy comes from discussing the future).
4. The routine lets employees keep track of their own performance and learnings. (Creates more employee ownership of the self-discovery process.)

Best Practice #4: Make the Performance Management Process Less Controlling and More of a Partnership

Over the past 20 years, most companies have been moving to a formal performance review process that reflects a partnership relation between the manager and employee. The partnership approach in contrast to the more traditional approach is shown below:

Partnering Approach	Traditional Approach
Employee-driven	Manager-driven
Adult-to-adult mode	Parent-child model
Manager's tool	An HR exercise
Results-focused	Personality issues
Specific objective	Vague objectives
On-going discussion	Yearly event
Pay liked to goals	Rank for pay

Best Practice #5: Terminate Nonperformers When Best Efforts to Coach Don't Pay Off

Despite a supervisor's best efforts to coach non-performers or change the nature of their job assignment, there will be times when it is simply best to let the employee go. The problem is that, all to often, other valued employees know when that time has come long before the supervisor does, and the supervisor's failure to act can adversely impact their commitment.

Keeping poor performers means that development opportunities for promising employees gets blocked, so those subordinates do not get developed, productivity and morale fall, good performers leave the organization, and the organization attracts fewer "A" quality employees.

There is not greater disrespect you can do to a person than to let them stay in a job where they are not respected by their peers, not viewed as successful, and probably losing their self-esteem. To do so under the guise of respect for people is not acting with integrity.

Source: Branham, L. and Saratoga Institute. (2005). ***The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave.*** American Management Associate: New York.

Appendix B

How to Write Effective Performance Objectives: Helpful Hints for Supervisors and Staff

The individual performance objective-setting portion of the performance management process can be very rewarding for employee and supervisor, if the following guidelines are kept in mind during the process:

- Objectives should be discussed and agreed upon jointly by employee and supervisor.
- Resources (if necessary to achievement of objectives) are negotiated in advance.
- Progress is monitored on a regular basis.

Using the **"SMART"** objective model is a best practice way of writing effective individual performance objectives. The **"SMART"** model involves developing objectives that meet the following criteria:

S	**Specific** -	objective should state its expected outcome or result simply, concisely, and explicitly
M	**Measurable** -	accomplishment of the outcome can be assessed quantitatively, qualitatively, charted, or behavioral elements observed
A	**Achievable** -	objective is challenging but realistic given current conditions, resources, and time available
R	**Relevant** -	objective is aligned with department/division/university goals and objectives
T	**Time-bound** -	deadlines are set for accomplishment

Breaking Down the "SMART" Objective Model

With the **"SMART"** objective model in mind, let's briefly look at each element of the model and review some examples.

Making your objectives specific – Your performance objective(s) should be a brief summary statement and include, if appropriate, any details relevant to the desired outcome or result. Use simple, clear, and concise language in stating the objective. To help make your objective specific consider using the following format:

To [Action verb] [Key result] by [Date] at [Cost of (if applicable]

There are two types of objectives: outcome objectives and performance objectives.

Examples of outcome objectives are:

> "The football program will be ranked third in the nation."
> "The bookstore will earn $500,000 in net profit this year."
> "The division will achieve a customer satisfaction rating of 90% this year."

Performance objectives, unlike outcome objectives, involve specific tasks and frequently focus on improvement. Examples of performance objectives are:

> "The football program will raise its national ranking from number 20 to number 5 this year."
> "The bookstore will increase its net profit by 12% over last year."
> "The division will improve its customer satisfaction rating from 80% to 90%."

Making your objectives measurable – Measurable achievement is how you will know your objective has been accomplished and to what degree. You have two main choices; "discrete" or "continuous" measures. You can use a "discrete" measurement; you either hit or missed an objective; succeeded or failed. Be cautious in using discrete measures, because missing an objective by a "whisker" and calling it "failure" can be discouraging. Examples of objective statements using discrete measures are:

> "Reduce customer checkout wait time to an average of five minutes."
> "Ensure that 98% of all construction projects are completed on time and within budget."
> "Maintain a return on net assets at a minimum of 10% a year."
> "Process and validate travel expense claims within 3 days."
> "Maintain staff turnover rate at 2%."

As an alternative, you may choose to measure success using "continuous" results or a sliding scale. For example a rating system can be used to determine how effective you have been in meeting performance objectives, (e.g. a range of 1-4 where 1 is unsatisfactory and 4 is distinguished performance). A word of caution – the continuous measurement system takes more effort and subtlety of thought and may involve more subjective evaluation. This method is best explained by an example. Let's say your objective is to "better manage your monthly budget and start saving money." What you would "measure" is your monthly budget balance and your possible outcomes could be:

	Outcome	**Measure of Success**
1.	Overspent by 10% or more	Unsatisfactory
2.	Meet monthly expenses projections	Needs improvement
3.	Saved at least 5%	Met expectations
4.	Saved at least 10%	Distinguished performance

This example illustrates a clear articulation of what would be considered unsatisfactory through to what would be viewed as exemplary performance. Giving a range of results helps you succeed by keeping you motivated. Also, the top rating may be an aggressive stretch target that will push you to achieve, and provide a challenge.

Making your objectives achievable - To ensure achievable results your objectives should be developed in the context of the work systems and processes available to you, the resources (i.e., people, technology, facilities, information, time, and financial) at your disposal, and the general work environment in which you perform your work. Absent these considerations, you may find yourself setting unrealistic objectives that, for reasons beyond your control, are not attainable. In developing achievable objectives, think through the individual tasks you will need to accomplish and the resources required to achieve the desired outcome or result. In addition, you should consider what actions you will take if circumstances change or your initial actions are not as successful as planned. Be willing to adapt and be flexible to changes beyond your direct control. By thoroughly thinking through the process, you will have a complete understanding of the scope and magnitude of effort needed to achieve the desired outcome or result.

Making your objectives relevant – Individual performance objectives should be supportive of one or more department/division/university goal and objective. The following questions may help generate ideas for developing your own performance objectives.

- What can I do to improve the overall effectiveness of the department or division?
- What needs to be done to improve the quality of our service?
- What refinements can we make to our business processes? What needs to be eliminated or be introduced?
- What is my department or work group ready to do now that we could not do last year?
- What employee suggested program or process changes can I collaborate on to help the initiative succeed?
- What skills, service/product deliverables, or processes must be updated to meet customer/client/stakeholder needs?

Making your objectives time bound – An effective objective answers the question: "By when?" Putting real dates and deadlines on work activities that support your objective(s) ensures you will achieve the desired outcome or result on time and as committed. As you set the completion date for an objective, take into account the resource factors you considered in determining the achievability of the objective (i.e., people, technology, facilities, information, and financial).