Department of Employment Relations

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REVIEW AND PLANNING

DER

SERVING PEOPLE
WHO SERVE WISCONSIN

April 2001

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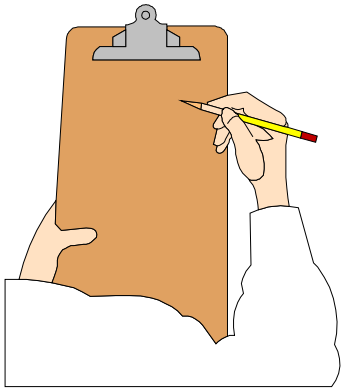
PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PLANNING PROCESS



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PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

The performance review and planning process should add value, identify organizational barriers, offer the opportunity to explore career aspirations and provide employees with feedback and honest dialogue.

The formal meeting between the supervisor and employee serves many purposes that are listed below and ideally it will:

- Provide a meaningful, sincere and well planned process that generates honest and open dialogue, including **corrective and constructive feedback about performance and conduct,** within which two-way feedback about the workplace can occur;

- Allow the employee and supervisor to create **clear and concise performance standards** that relate to the Department's and Division's priorities and directions;

- **Ensure that performance standards reflect key areas** of the employee's responsibilities and duties as indicated in the position description;

- **Use a combination of resources** (which may include peers, customers, coworkers and the employee's supervisors) to gather data from which the employee and supervisor will jointly identify the employee's:

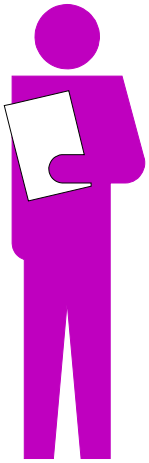
  - ***Skills, knowledge and attitude*** that are adequate, exceptional , or those that need improvement.
  - ***Opportunities for growth*** through changes in the position description or short-term assignments.

- Allow for collaboration in developing and implementing a plan that **identifies training and other learning opportunities** to assist the employee in attaining his or her job and career goals, as well as expected levels of performance;

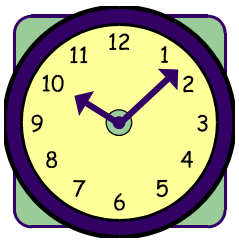
- If appropriate, review identified performance and behavior problems for which coaching was received throughout the year. The process will **document specific performance and behavior improvements that are expected;**

- Celebrate milestones and **recognize achievements**;

- Identify opportunities for dialogue and **feedback throughout the year.**



PROCESS



A. TIMING

Each calendar year, every employee will be evaluated on or before the anniversary date of their appointment to his/her position. Supervisors will establish the annual review date based on significant change in job duties or appointment to a new position.

Four weeks prior to your anniversary date, you should receive notice from your supervisor of the meeting date as well as information on how to prepare for the evaluation session.

B. PREPARATION FOR THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PLANNING PROCESS

For the performance review and planning process to be meaningful and add value to you, begin preparing for it once you receive the meeting notice from your supervisor. Your thoughtfulness in preparing for the review will have a direct relationship to the quality of this experience for you, your supervisor, or your staff. This section provides specific guidance to assist you.

Employee Role and Responsibilities:

Steps	***Resources to assist you***
1. Preparation for the review	***Employee's Checklist*** *(a list of questions you should ask yourself to help prepare)*
a. Review the position description	
b. Examine the previous review period's achievements, performance and challenges.	***Self-Assessment Form*** ***Supervisor Evaluation***
c. Examine the previous review's objectives and draft new ones.	***Performance Review Form*** ***Feedback Guidance***
d. Review training received and identify needed or desired training for the review period.	***Employee Training Plan Form***

Supervisor Role and Responsibilities:

Steps	***Resources to assist you***
1. Establish a time and place for the review that are comfortable for both you and the employee.	
2. Prepare for the review	***Supervisor's Checklist***
a. Review the position description.	
b. Examine the previous review period's achievements, performance and challenges.	***Performance Review Form***
c. Examine the previous review's objectives and draft new ones.	***Performance Reviews & Objectives & Standards Setting*** ***Common Rating Errors*** ***Feedback Guidance***
d. Review training received and identify needed or desired training for the review period.	***Employee Training Plan Form***

C. PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PLANNING PROCESS

Employee: When you have your review meeting you should use:

- The Employee Checklist to help you cover all your important points.
- Any additional checklists, assessments, or evaluations you have prepared.
- The notes you generated during your preparation.

Supervisor: When you conduct a performance review and planning process meeting you should:

- Make sure the setting is comfortable for both of you.
- Use the Supervisor and Employee Checklists to help you cover all of the topics.
- Use the notes you generated when preparing for the meeting.
- Complete the required forms for the evaluation period.

D. POST PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PLANNING PROCESS

Employee: After your review you should:

- Think about the review process and note suggestions regarding ways to build upon what went well or to improve the process.
- Share those thoughts with your supervisor within a couple of weeks of the review, at a time that is mutually convenient for both of you.
- Begin to plan how you will meet your objectives.

Supervisor: After you conduct a review you should:

- Complete the required forms and route them up through the Division management team and onto the Human Resource Section.
- Give a copy of the completed forms to the employee and retain a copy for yourself.
- Think about the review process and note suggestions regarding ways to build upon what went well or to improve the process.
- Share your observations with the employee within a couple of weeks of the review, at a time that is mutually convenient for both of you.
- Start the planning process for "check-ins" with your employee to measure progress on objectives, ensure the objectives are clearly understood, give any feedback on their performance, and confirm that the objectives are still viable.
- **REMEMBER** – The review is a year-round, ongoing process, not just an annual event.

Manager: If you are the supervisor of a supervisor who conducts reviews, you should:

- Read the reviews you receive – Does each review reflect what you have been hearing about the employee's performance? Are they complete, including signatures? Are you seeing the same issues/barriers/problems recurring in reviews? How can you assist the supervisor in helping the employee achieve their career goals? Any items you want to talk to the supervisor about?
- Forward any recurring themes to your management team for resolution. Ideally, this should occur at the lowest level possible, however, some issues may need to be taken to higher levels.
- Conduct performance evaluations on your supervisors. Give your supervisors feedback year-round by following the process above.

E. LEADERSHIP TEAM AND HUMAN RESOURCE TRACKING

All completed forms are due to the Human Resource Unit no later than June 15 of each year. If a supervisor does not complete a performance evaluation for each of their staff by June 15th, they will not be eligible to receive their general wage adjustment (GWA).

The Leadership Team is responsible for considering and acting on major barriers and current program and widespread systematic issues. Divisions should communicate among themselves about trends and barriers identified during the review process. The expectation is that barriers will be addressed at the lowest possible level.

F. ON GOING DIALOGUE, FEEDBACK AND EDUCATION

While the formal review and planning process occurs in a compressed time frame, you are expected to engage in continuous dialogue and feedback throughout the year concerning specified goals and work activities. The annual review should not result in any surprises, but should be a culmination of previous communication and identification of future expectations. Supervisors requiring initial or desiring refresher performance review training or coaching should receive it prior to engaging in the performance review and planning process.

POLICY DIRECTIVE

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PLANNING

Employee performance reviews are part of the Department's management system. They provide a time for supervisors and their employees to formally discuss the past year's objectives, to review accomplishments, to identify barriers and to plan for the future. In addition to the formal performance review process, DER supervisors are encouraged to provide feedback to their employees on an ongoing basis. Ongoing feedback linked with employee self-assessment is the key to a quality performance evaluation review.

Employee performance reviews will help ensure that:

- Employees are given timely and useful performance feedback;
- Career advancement and personal development are discussed by the supervisor and employee;
- All Department staff are evaluated in a consistent manner based upon their contribution to the Department's work plans;
- The best use is made of the talents and abilities of each employee;
- Systems and barriers which impede employee performance are identified and targeted for change;
- The Department's mission and objectives are met as effectively as possible.

In accordance with section 230.37, Wis. Stats., every employee shall receive an annual evaluation. In accordance with the State of Wisconsin Compensation Plan, Section A 2.01(b)2, supervisors will be ineligible to receive General Wage Adjustments (GWA) if they have not completed formal performance evaluations within the twelve month period immediately preceding the effective date of the GWA distribution. Additionally, division administrators must ensure that all supervisors complete training for conducting effective performance evaluations.

Supervisors, with their employees, shall set and evaluate work objectives and performance standards. Supervisors also have the responsibility to help develop employees' skills, knowledge and abilities to better meet the unit's objectives and standards.

Every employee is expected to develop the skills, knowledge and abilities to enable them to perform consistently within the Department's objectives and standards.

Employees are entitled to know how their performance is reviewed and how they can improve or enhance performance.

Therefore:

A. Every employee's performance will be reviewed on a regular basis, as provided below, and communicated to the employee.

   1. All permanent and project employees (full or part time) will be formally reviewed at least once per year using the Performance Evaluation Review Form. More frequent formal evaluations may be necessary if there are continuing performance problems. Review of limited term employees is encouraged but forms need not be submitted to Human Resources.
   2. Annual reviews should be conducted two to three weeks prior to the employee's anniversary date each year.
   3. Employees will also be reviewed during their probationary period using the Performance Evaluation Review Form.
   4. The supervisor should acquaint the new employee with the performance review process when the position description is explained. The supervisor conducts a performance review near the end of the third and fifth month of employment for all probationary employees and also the 8th and 11th month for those with a 12 month probation. (These reviews are prescribed by s. ER 45.05, Wis. Adm. Code). The results of the review will be used as the basis for completing the probationary period.

B. Employee performance must be reviewed against established objectives and standards, or other criteria made known to the employee in sufficient time to allow meeting the required level of performance.

New objectives, standards or other criteria will be established as part of the performance review and planning process. They normally will be discussed and agreed to by both supervisor and employee in writing. In case of disagreement, the supervisor has the authority to establish them. The standards and objectives become the employee's work responsibilities for the coming year. They may be modified through subsequent formal or informal sessions.

C. The annual performance review and planning process should reflect all significant job responsibilities during the entire evaluation period. Position descriptions, current work plans, and Department mission, goals and objectives are useful in identifying appropriate standards and objectives.

1. In order to generate a more comprehensive, meaningful and accurate assessment of performance, standards and objectives should be established in areas that go beyond work specific tasks and responsibilities. These areas assess the *quality* of work including how it is approached, managed, and completed. Skill development areas are also an important part of the performance review and planning process. These include interpersonal skills development (i.e. customer service, work relationships, team work and contributions, establishing partnerships, communication, etc.) and managerial skills development (i.e. leadership, decision making, project management, problem solving, quality improvement, staff development, coaching, etc). A third area that should be included is the identification of specific developmental activities to enhance career mobility and employee learning.

   In situations where there have been chronic or episodic performance deficiencies, developing standards and objectives where concentrated time and effort are needed to get performance back to an acceptable level may be helpful. Performance deficiencies may include work habits that are impeding an individual's or a work unit's productivity. Refer to the DER Supervisory Handbook for more information on Performance Improvement Plans.

   Effective performance standards and objectives have certain characteristics. They are specific, attainable, measurable, job related, nondiscriminatory and timed. Standards and objectives should challenge the employee to stimulate, create additional learning opportunities and prevent boredom.

2. If a new, major responsibility is assigned during the year, an appropriate objective or standard must be developed at that time.

3. During the annual review and planning process, the entire year is to be considered. The supervisor must consider objectives and standards completed earlier in the year and documented in interim reviews. If the employee has worked for more than one supervisor during the year, the supervisor with responsibility on the anniversary date has responsibility for conducting the formal review. The review of past objectives and standards, and/or the establishment of those for the year ahead, should include the input from the other supervisor.

D. The performance review and planning session should also include discussions on organizational barriers and systems issues that may be impeding an employee's work. These should be documented on the formal evaluation document along with suggested solutions. Should common themes emerge across a unit or program's reviews, feedback and specific problem solving strategies should be forwarded upward to the appropriate management level to ensure they are addressed either formally or informally by management.

Finally, accomplishments, special awards, other forms of recognition and other items not captured elsewhere should be documented and celebrated during the performance review session.

E. The employee's training and development needs should also be evaluated and documented using the Performance Evaluation Review Form. Attach a completed training plan to the annual performance review document.

F. Update the employee's position description.

PROCEDURE

Supervisor: 1. Schedules a performance review and planning session with the employee well in advance of the formal review (2 to 3 weeks). If the employee is new, let the employee know that specific responsibilities will be discussed and future work objectives will be planned. The employee is given the performance Review and Planning materials and other appropriate forms for the evaluation.

2. Prepares for the meeting by using the checklist found in the Performance Review and Planning packet.

Employee:

3. Prepares for the meeting by completing the self-evaluation forms and reviewing the appropriate checklist.

Supervisor:

4. Conducts a face-to-face performance review and planning meeting according to the checklists and utilizes information contained in the reference guide to ensure an effective meeting.

Employee:

5. Contributes to the employee performance review and planning meeting by following the checklist. It is the employee's right and responsibility to be actively involved in the review process.

Supervisor & Employee:

6. Prepares, for employee and supervisor signature, the results of the review and planning meeting on Form DER-DAS-001, *Performance Review Form.*

Employee & Supervisor:

7. Writes any appropriate comments, other viewpoints, and additional information on the *Performance Review Form* or attached page(s) if additional space is needed.

Supervisor & Employee:

8. Discuss employee's training and development needs.

Employee:

9. Signs the Performance Evaluation form to acknowledge participation in face-to-face meeting.

Supervisor:

10. Signs the Performance Evaluation form. Gives a copy of the completed Performance Evaluation form to the employee. Keeps one copy. Route in a confidential manner to the Division Administrator.

Division Administrator:

11. Establishes a monitoring system to assure that employee's performance reviews are completed and submitted to Human Resources by the specified deadlines.

Human Resources:

12. Review completed performance appraisals for purposes of improving the Department's performance review process, enhancing supervisor training and other human resource management issues. File copies in employee's personnel file.

Chapter Two

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION TOOLS

This chapter contains forms to facilitate one of the most critical steps in effective performance evaluation – preparation.

- **EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW CHECKLIST**
  SUPERVISOR'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW CHECKLIST

  Intended to assist both supervisors and employees in preparing for the performance review and planning process. Review of these checklists is recommended as preparation for the one-on-one meeting(s) between employee and supervisor.

- **EMPLOYEE SELF-ASSESSMENT**
  SUPERVISOR FEEDBACK

  These forms are intended to assist the employee in thoughtfully evaluating employee performance and supervisor performance prior to the actual review session.

- **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REVIEW FORM**

  The official employee document used to formally document general standards, establish objectives, identify training needs and evaluate performance.

EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW CHECKLIST

As a Department of Employment Relations employee, you need to be an equal partner in the performance review and planning process. You will need to take time to reflect upon, and be ready to actively participate in your review. Some key ideas to help you prepare are listed below:

- What are some major **accomplishments** for which I've been responsible, or in which I have participated?

- Have there been any barriers to the performance of my job responsibilities or personal goals? How would I describe them? What can I do to remove the barrier(s)? How can others help?

- Review my previous performance objectives:
    - Were the objectives meaningful?
    - Did I have a method to measure the results of my work?
    - Did I accomplish what was expected? If not, why?

- What do I want for future objectives both this year and long-term?

- Is there job-related training I feel would enhance my job performance?

- Are there non-training (work environment, equipment) adjustments that could enhance my job performance?

- What are my long-term career goals with the Department? Are there training, educational, or work opportunities I could explore with my supervisor?

- What part of my job responsibilities or performance can I improve or change? What are my personal strengths upon which I want to build? Suggest some changes.

- How does my work contribute to teams to which I belong?

- How can I support my "team" to accomplish our goals or contribute to the direction or vision of the Department? How do I think customers, peers and team members view my performance?

- Have my job responsibilities changed over the past year? If so, I need to discuss changes to my position description with my supervisor. Should my position description be updated? Am I performing job functions that can or should be eliminated or changed? If so, what are they? (Refer to Performance Review and the Position Description)

- Have I taken on, or been given special assignments or add-ons? What do I want my supervisor to know about these responsibilities?

- Does my supervisor know what motivates me and what I consider to be incentives?

- What type of feedback do I want to share with my supervisor? What do I like about my supervisor's management style? What would I like to see different?

- What questions do I want to ask my supervisor?

- What would I recommend to improve the performance review and planning process?

- What would I like to say or ask but am hesitant to bring up?

You should strive to honestly and openly communicate with your supervisor. Allowing time for advance thought will enable you to evaluate and describe you and your team's performance and recommend ways to improve. Be comfortable with your performance review – it's yours. Suggest the location, length and format that will allow you to be an active, equal participant and feel free to suggest a second meeting if you need more time to do a good review.

SUPERVISOR'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW CHECKLIST

As a supervisor, your employees will expect you to take the lead in their formal performance review and planning process. Schedule the review well in advance – at least two to three weeks prior to the due date. Remember that this should be an open and honest discussion, with equal participation from you and the employee. Taking time to plan and develop well-thought-out questions, note observations, and seek recommendations will show employees the importance of performance reviews to both the Department and the employee's career growth. Consider the following and ask yourself some questions:

- Are the time, location and format comfortable for me and the employee?
- What accomplishments, successes and strengths of the employee can I highlight? Have I considered multiple sources of information – what I've seen as well as what others have experienced?
- Have I discussed this person's performance and future objectives with his or her lead worker? Do I want to involve the lead worker in the review process (if applicable)?
- Are there any barriers to success? Can the employee influence the barriers? Can I help?
- Review past objectives and employee's performance.
    - Did he or she accomplish them successfully? If not, why?
    - Are the performance objectives meaningful? Did they accomplish what was needed? Are they related to the position description, work plan or Department's issues?
- Develop future objectives that may be discussed and agreed upon by the employee and me.
- What training would I like to discuss with the employee? What skills need to be further developed?
- What are the employee's long-term career goals? How can I help them meet those goals?
- Does the employee understand his or her role and the importance to the total organization? Does the employee understand his/her goals in relationship to goals of the supervisor and other team members?
- Where do I believe the employee can enhance his/her performance or change a procedure? Do we agree? How do we initiate those changes?
- Does the employee understand the priorities of the Department, program and position?
- Have I, or has the Department, recognized the employee for special or add-on assignments?
- What motivates my employee and what are his/her incentives?
- Has the employee's job changed? Are there job functions that could or should be added or eliminated? Should an updated position description be developed? (Refer to the Performance Review and the Position Description.)
- How effective is my communication with this employee? Have I asked the employee for his or her feedback on my communication? How was my performance as a supervisor? Have I given adequate time, attention, direction, support, mentoring and coaching? (Has the employee filled out the Supervisor Evaluation? Have I confirmed with the employee that I have received the feedback.)
- How do customers, peers and team members view his/her performance?
- How could I improve the performance review and planning process for this employee next year?

Be ready to listen! Ask the employee to recommend solutions. Be aware of recurring work issues or barriers identified in employee reviews. Should you be taking action? Have the necessary forms prepared. Once the formal discussion occurs**,** follow through. Have both you and the employee signed the performance evaluation form(s)?

EMPLOYEE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Purpose: To help you highlight your strengths, identify possible weaknesses or areas for improvement, identify ways you contribute to enhancing your job responsibilities, and identify training needs. This is a tool to help prepare you for the discussion between you and your supervisor.

Instructions: Please take the time to complete this employee self-assessment. Use the spaces provided in each category to elaborate. If there are areas where you see possibilities for self or process improvement, please describe how this might be accomplished or what you feel is necessary to meet or exceed self-expectation.

CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS:

Change Management (Includes ability to perform tasks above and beyond job responsibilities, ability to adapt to new or changing situations, and willingness to accept and deal with change.) Use specific examples wherever possible.

Communication (Includes clear, concise, timely, written, oral or electronic communication, correspondence, grammar usage and presentation.)

Creativity (Includes ways to keep job interesting, new methods of working with obstacles, innovations, process reengineering and procedure enhancements.)

Customer Service (Includes service to internal and/or external customers, i.e. positive communication, timeliness, effectiveness fulfilling needs/requests, courteous, professionalism.) Be specific.

Attitude (Include specific examples of your positive attitude towards your co-workers, customers, job responsibilities, etc.)

Dependability (Includes reliability and responsibility for completing assigned duties on time, and punctuality.)

Job Skills (Includes experience, training, education, task knowledge, task management and understanding of complex assignments.)

Productivity (Includes acceptable work produced and performance under normal or adverse working or workload conditions.)

Quality of Work (Includes accuracy, neatness and thoroughness.)

Team Involvement (Effectiveness working within team environment, positive attitude, initiative and contribution.)

SUPERVISOR FEEDBACK

Purpose: This form is to be used by employees to provide feedback on their supervisor's managerial and leadership skills. The objective of the supervisor evaluation is to highlight strengths, identify areas of improvement and contribute to the enhancement of your area of responsibility and job tasks.

Instructions: Please take some time to complete the supervisor evaluation. Use the spaces provided with each question to elaborate on your assessment. If there are areas where you see possibilities for supervisor or process improvement, please describe how this might be accomplished or what you feel is necessary to meet or exceed expectations.

Please bring the evaluation with you to your scheduled review.

1. Listens to and reacts to my issues and concerns.

2. Provides encouragement and support.

3. Demonstrates effective communication skills (e.g. gives clear, concise directions and guidance for me to follow; provides accessibility, approachability and openness for ease of communication).

4. Is able to deal with conflict.

Supervisor with employee:

Employee with employee:

5. Supports my career ambitions or career abilities.

6. Recognizes workload demands and makes adjustments as needed.

7. Encourages creativity, innovation and wise risk-taking. As appropriate, delegates decisions to lowest possible level.

8. Is willing to help address barriers (i.e. communication, time constraints, training, education).

9. Demonstrates respect for team members, accepts the views of others, and actively supports team decisions.

10. Treats me with courtesy and respect.

11. Is willing to accept and deal with change.

Department of Employment Relations
Form DER-DAS-001 (rev. 2/01)

PERFORMANCE REVIEW FORM

Name: Last	First	Middle Initial	Classification
Division	Bureau	Review Period	Probationary Evaluation O Yes O No

Use of this form is required to evaluate employee performance, per s.230.37, Wisconsin Statutes. Completed forms shall be submitted to Human Resources.

π Position Description dated _____ on file is correct. π An updated Position Description is being developed or reviewed.

BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM, review the employee and supervisor checklists in the Performance Evaluation Review and Planning Kit. The kit also offers additional tools to assist you in the review process.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES	MET OBJECTIVE	COMMENTS/PLAN
Performance standards are statements of the level of performance expected regarding key job areas or responsibilities of one's position. Standards should capture the entire range of an employee's current responsibilities and performance.	*A performance objective is a statement that identifies the specific quantitative, short-term actions that show results. Objectives lead to the accomplishment of a related standard. All standards have one or more objectives.*	*Yes/No*	*Comment on accomplishments. If standard or objective is not met, discuss why and describe next steps.*

Accomplishments: *(Describe special assignments and projects, innovations, recognition awards, or work beyond goals.)*	**Identify Barriers:** *(e.g., equipment, systems, policies, communication, work planning, training)*	**Proposed Solutions:**

Employee Comments: *(Employee's Option --- Add sheets if necessary.)*	**Supervisor Comments:** *(Add sheets if necessary.)*

π Training Plan/Needs Assessment identified and discussed

π **Employees:** Through communicating with my supervisor, I understand the relationships between my performance plan, the Division's work plan, and DER's mission and goals.

π Standards/Objectives for next review period (Attached)

π **Supervisors:** I communicated to the employee how individual performance plan relates to the Division's work plan and the Department's mission and goals.

My supervisor has met with me and we completed the Performance Review & Planning Process.

_____

Employee Signature ***Date***

_____

Supervisor's Name and Signature **Date** _____

_____

Division Administrator **Date** _____

For Probationary Evaluation:

3 months O 9 months O

6 months O 12 months O

Other θ _____

Probation Completion:

Meets Standards O

Does Not Meet Standards O

Chapter Three

REFERENCE MATERIALS

- λ GUIDELINES FOR FEEDBACK – GIVING AND RECEIVING
- λ THE POWER OF CRITICISM
- λ CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD LISTENER
- λ COMMON RATING ERRORS
- λ PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND POSITION DESCRIPTION
- λ SETTING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES
- λ PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO MOTIVATION

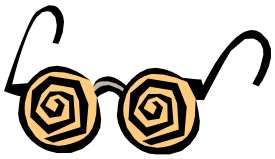
GUIDELINES FOR FEEDBACK

Feedback from others is some of the most important information we receive about our behavior.

Feedback can increase our awareness of what we are doing and how we're doing it, helping us change our behavior and become better communicators. If we aren't aware that what we're doing is causing a problem, there's no reason to change.

Feedback that's sent in a way that is useful is not rejected. Regardless of how accurate the feedback may be, if the person is defensive, the information will be useless. Give feedback so the person receiving the information can hear it clearly and objectively. Clear and objective feedback enables the receiver to understand it and choose whether or not to use it.

Following are guidelines, which may help us make better use of feedback, both as a giver and receiver.



1. **FOCUS ON THE BEHAVIOR RATHER THAN THE PERSON**

Focus on what the person does rather than label them too generally. This technique is less threatening. For example, rather than say, "She's a cry baby." one might say, "She cried a lot during our interview."

2. **FOCUS FEEDBACK ON DESCRIPTION RATHER THAN JUDGMENT**

Describing tells what happened. Judging lends value---good or bad, right or wrong, nice or not nice, etc. A person can more easily accept descriptive, rather than judgmental, feedback. For example, one could say "The counselor was inferior." or one may say, "The counselor did not appear to possess the specialized knowledge needed for my situation."

3. **FEEDBACK SHOULD BE SPECIFIC RATHER THAN GENERAL**

If feedback is specific, the receiver knows what behavior to continue or change. If feedback is general, the receiver may not know what to do differently. As an example, instead of saying "You're handling the situation all wrong." you could say, "Instead of ignoring your supervisor's inappropriate comments, it might be useful for the two of you to discuss the situation in detail, just as you have shared it with me."

4. **FEEDBACK IS WELL TIMED**

In most cases, feedback is most useful if given as soon as possible after the event. A person can more easily remember a situation that happened yesterday than last month.

5. **FOCUS FEEDBACK AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME AND PLACE**

Well-timed feedback also involves emotional reactions. Think about the receiver's readiness to hear what you have to say. Excellent feedback may do more harm than good if it's at the wrong place or time. (As a general rule, praise in public and criticize in private.)

6. **FOCUS FEEDBACK ON A BEHAVIOR THAT THE RECEIVER CAN CHANGE**

The feedback will be more useful if the person can change his or her behavior. Feedback on things that are difficult or impossible to change only frustrates the receiver. For example, telling someone to switch supervisors may not be very realistic, or, a more personal example, telling a person that his or her stuttering makes them difficult to understand, would be frustrating.

7. **FOCUS FEEDBACK ON THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION THE PERSON CAN USE RATHER THAN THE AMOUNT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO GIVE**

Sometimes "less is more." Giving too much feedback can be ineffective. Keep it simple.

8. **FOCUS FEEDBACK ON THE VALUE IT HAS FOR THE RECEIVER NOT ON HOW IT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL**

When giving feedback, think about how it will be received. Feedback can be destructive when it only makes the sender feel better and does not consider what the receiver might feel.

9. **FOCUS FEEDBACK ON IDEA SHARING RATHER THAN GIVING ADVICE**

When we share our information and ideas this allows the person to use what may be best for them. Giving advice tells a person what they should do with the ideas or information. Feedback is best received when it is asked for rather than when it is forced upon a person. Sometimes, however, (such as in the case of a relationship between a supervisor and an employee) it may be necessary to give unsolicited feedback.

10. **CHECK OUT THE FEEDBACK WITH THE RECEIVER**

Once you give feedback, make sure the receiver understands it. Likewise, the receiver needs to make sure he or she understands. The sender may mean one thing and the receiver may understand it differently. One might say to the receiver, "I am not sure I was clear in what I said. What did you hear me say?" Or the receiver might say, "This is what I heard. Is that correct?" The difference between what is meant, what is said, and what is heard are major barriers to effective communication.

You can use the following reference tool when either giving to or getting feedback as part of a performance review, or informally, as the need arises, during work projects and activities.

GETTING FEEDBACK

Step 1. WHAT: Feedback is only meaningful if it's specific. Decide on what you want feedback (e.g., technical, managerial, or interpersonal skills).

Checkpoints - Can you…

- 4 Pick a time when the skill or trait was used?
- 4 Isolate the specific behaviors?
- 4 Elaborate on what you mean?

Step 2. WHO: Who will tell the truth? Based on WHAT you want feedback, decide whom to ask (e.g., supervisors, peers, employees, family/friends, coworkers, internal customers).

Checkpoints - Do they meet your selection criteria? Are they…

- 4 Objective? Are they honest and unbiased?
- 4 Articulate? Are they able to clarify and expand?
- 4 Appropriate? Have they seen me in action?
- 4 Respected? Does their view count?

Step 3. WHERE: Feedback is a private matter. Based on your WHAT and WHO, pick the right place (e.g., a closed office, off-site lunch, taking a walk, conference room, resource center, driving to work, or location where the person has spent significant time or effort).

Checkpoints – Which location is suitable? Is it…

- 4 Quiet?
- 4 Free of interruptions?
- 4 A neutral area?
- 4 Comfortable?
- 4 Private?

Step 4. WHEN: Feedback is best when it is fresh. Based on your WHAT, WHO, and WHERE, seize the right moment (e.g., just finished a project, having trouble with a task, starting a new assignment, recently taken off a project, just before a performance review, or making a career decision).

Checkpoints - Open the conversation when…

- 4 The other person is willing.
- 4 Objectives are clear.
- 4 Stress is low.

Step 5. HOW: Answers depend on how you ask your questions. Practice how you will phrase feedback requests. Here's a formula to follow:

1. Describe the area about which you want feedback.
2. Disclose the reason you are asking for feedback.
3. Ask for details and examples.
4. Ask for suggestions on what actions to take.

Checkpoints - But can you be…

- 4 A good listener?
- 4 Non-defensive?
- 4 Appreciative?
- 4 Vulnerable?

GIVING FEEDBACK

Step 1. WHO should receive it? Who will benefit from your feedback (e.g., someone you supervise, a colleague, a team member, or a mentee)?

Checkpoints - Be sure they…

- 4 Have the ability to develop new skills.
- 4 Can accept criticism or compliments.
- 4 Desire to improve job performance.
- 4 Believe your intent is helpful.
- 4 Respect your opinion.

Step 2. WHAT needs to be heard? Pick a technical, managerial, or interpersonal skill and pinpoint (e.g., skill strengths, developmental areas, aspects of performance that either exceed or fail to meet your expectations, or impact of behavior on others).

Checkpoints - Can you provide data…

- 4 On both the technical and managerial skills?
- 4 That links performance to potential?
- 4 That focuses on behavior not personality?

Step 3. WHERE can it be given? Based on your WHO and WHAT, pick the right place (e.g., a conference room, resource center, neutral area, location where the person has spent significant time or effort, your office, their office).

Checkpoints - Can you avoid…

- 4 Places where you will be overheard?
- 4 Unplanned moments in hallways?
- 4 Noisy or crowded lunchrooms?
- 4 Interruptions?

Step 4. WHEN is it appropriate? Based on your WHO, WHAT, and WHERE, select the right moment (e.g., a project is finished, task appears difficult, during a performance review, a desired assignment is not offered, plateauing or burnout is apparent, a change is considered).

Checkpoints - Initiate discussion when you…

- 4 Can be a catalyst for change.
- 4 Sense willingness to listen.
- 4 Can be objective.
- 4 Want to commend excellent performance.

Step 5. HOW to give it? Want some pointers on how to phrase feedback? Here's a formula to follow:

1. Describe the issue using a specific example.
2. Disclose your feelings and the impact of the behavior.
3. Discuss the receiver's perspective.
4. Offer suggestions for growth.
5. Decide on a follow-up strategy.

Checkpoints - Can you…

- 4 Speak from first-hand experience?
- 4 Encourage joint problem solving?
- 4 Avoid blame or judgment?
- 4 Offer understanding and empathy?

THE POWER OF CRITICISM

If you've ever had to criticize the work or behavior of one of your employees, a coworker, or a supervisor, you know how difficult it is. Criticism carries a sting and the sting hurts! Yet, avoiding criticism can lead to greater conflict or even outright sabotage, offering little relief. Criticism may be an important problem-solving tool. We need to recognize it can be an early warning signal of greater conflict. Criticism can also be a valuable form of communication if used with sensitivity.

Here are some suggestions for the next time you need to give criticism and avoid its destructive potential.

DISHING IT OUT . . .

1. **Be Clear About Your Goal.** If your goal is to punish the other person, be prepared for a negative outcome. If, however, your goal is to solve a problem or improve a behavior, approach the interaction in this way and expect a positive outcome. Looking at how things can be improved in the future is likely to be more constructive than blaming someone for past actions.

2. **Be Considerate.** Find a time and a place that are mutually satisfying and private. Tell the person that you have something important you want to talk with them about. Whatever you do, don't make this a public event.

3. **Be Direct.** Don't beat around the bush or begin your message with words or phrases that downplay its importance. Simply share your concern in a direct and straightforward manner.

4. **Be Specific**. Identify specific incidents so the receiver understands precisely what is bugging you and how his or her actions have affected you. Making vague statements like, "Your work has been lousy lately." or "You never have any time for me." isn't very helpful.

5. **Be Supportive.** Demonstrate through words and body language that you care about the other person and that you want to strengthen the relationship. Help the other person develop positive changes. Don't simply offer them a list of what they've done wrong.

6. **Be Timely.** Speak to the person as soon as possible after the event. Don't let criticism pile up and feed your anger. Besides, waiting is unfair to the person and only serves to reduce your impact.

7. **Speak for** Yourself. Don't be a spokesperson for the criticism and complaints of others. Instead, speak entirely from your own experience. An exception to this rule might be in the case of supervisors who have a responsibility for the overall functioning of a work unit or bureau, and thus, a responsibility to act on the criticisms of others.

8. **Don't Expect Miracles**. You can reasonably expect that the other person will listen to you and consider your concern. It is not reasonable to expect the other person to fully agree with you, or, if they do, to change overnight. There may be good reasons for a person's behavior. Be open to a wide range of responses.

BUT CAN I TAKE IT?

If you are on the receiving end of criticism here are further suggestions.

1. **Don't Catastrophize.** When you're being criticized, it doesn't help to catastrophize by saying to yourself or to other people, "Oh, this is the end of my career!" or, "I'll never be able to show my face in this place again!"

2. **Don't Become Obsessed by the Criticism.** It won't help to bemoan the fact you didn't do it right the first time. Since you didn't do what you could have done, all you can do now is learn from the past and vow to do better in the future. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes.

3. **Use Positive Self-Talk.** Use this experience as an opportunity for growth or to gain a new perspective. Tell yourself that there may be at least a grain of truth in the criticism, and that while you may be able to learn from the experience, you are not a bad or worthless person because of your actions.

4. **Count to Ten.** If you feel anger welling up inside, "count to ten" before you respond. Give yourself time to sort out your feelings---tell the other person that you would like to think about what they said before you respond. If the person who is criticizing you seems to be getting carried away, ask them to take a moment so they might state their complaint more clearly.

5. **Seek Out Support.** Reach out to family, friends, or other caring persons. Allow your support to buoy you up and help you sort out your feelings. Friends can help you recognize that this not the end of the world.

6. **Acknowledge Truth.** After you have had time to think things through and talk out your feelings with friends, you may realize that there was some truth to the criticism. If so, openly acknowledge it and talk with the other person about how you can make changes in the future. If, after examining the criticism you believe it is not accurate or unjust, communicate that and allow room for further discussion.

7. **Recognize That Time Heals.** This experience will lose its sting as other events and happenings come into play. Recognize this and carry on with your day-to-day activities.

*References: Health Notes, Wisconsin Clearinghouse "The Power of Criticism" by Roger T. Williams 4903N ****

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD LISTENER

1. **Good listeners are willing to work at it.**
Listening is hard work. An individual who is really listening will usually experience actual physiological symptoms (i.e., a faster heart beat). Good listeners demonstrate interest and alertness through eye contact, posture, and facial expressions.

2. **Good listeners judge content, not delivery.**
It is easy to be harsh in our internal criticisms if we focus on relatively unimportant characteristics of the person speaking instead of listening to what's being said. Such things as the speaker's dress, voice, physical characteristics, or mannerisms can be used as excuses for why we don't listen to someone. Good listeners direct their attention to the message and away from the distractions.

3. **Good listeners deal effectively with distractions.**
Physical distractions and complications can seriously impair the listening process. Loud noises, phones, stuffy rooms, overcrowded conditions, or uncomfortable temperatures may get in the way of hearing the speaker. Internal distractions could include impending deadlines or particular problem areas. A good listener will acknowledge these distractions and offer alternatives, i.e., a better place, a more convenient time, or another person who may be more able to listen to the concern.

4. **Good listeners hear the complete message.**
Good listeners are patient and listen to the total message before they form their own responses. Strong opinions or a contrasting point can take precedence over the message in the listener's mind. When this happens, the listener can withholds his or her evaluation to better understand the speaker's point of view. The listener must learn not to get too excited about the speaker's point until he or she is certain about what was meant, not how the listener decides to interpret the message.

5. **Good listeners listen for the ideas.**
A good listener is able to pick out the central theme of the message. A good listener focuses on the major points and relies on the lesser details to help in understanding the total picture.

6. **Good listeners deal effectively with emotionally charged language.**
Emotionally laden words are difficult to ignore. Good listeners can identify words that may trigger anxiety and emotion within themselves and reduce their impact. Respect the power of the spoken word.

COMMON RATING ERRORS

The following are common subjective errors, which can be made by raters during performance evaluations. Supervisors, and others asked to provide feedback, may wish to review this list and increase their awareness prior to reviewing someone's performance.

The Halo Effect - Judging an individual favorably or unfavorably overall on the basis of only one strong (or weak) point on which the rater places a high value.

The Contrast Error - An individual is judged either positively or negatively because of comparisons with others or staff previously evaluated (rather than on the relevant competencies needed for success in the position or on the agreed upon performance objectives).

The Similar-To-Me Error - A rater inflates the evaluation of an individual because of a mutual personal connection, rather than job related criteria.

The Recency Error - The evaluation is based largely on the employee's most recent behavior rather than on the behavior throughout the performance review period.

The Primary Error – The evaluation is based largely on the employee's early behavior rather than on the behavior throughout the performance review period.

Leniency or Strictness Error - The rater tends to give individuals either unusually high or unusually low ratings.

Central Tendency Error - This error occurs when the rater is reluctant to assign extremely high or extremely low ratings resulting in all individuals rated average.

THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND THE POSITION DESCRIPTION

A Position Description:
A position description should tell us why a job exists, the primary duties and responsibilities, and how much time is spent on those duties over the course of one year. The position description should not describe temporary duties or responsibilities, or describe personal characteristics or qualities of an existing or potential employee.

When Should a Position Description Be Updated?
The formal performance review is a good time for employees and supervisors to review and, if necessary, make changes to position descriptions. As permanent changes occur, record them either on a copy of the PD, or elsewhere. You should maintain a record of what job responsibilities have been added, what job responsibilities have been removed, and the month and year the changes occurred. Develop and submit an updated position description if job responsibilities within a goal or worker activity have changed 10% or more. However, if you have questions or concerns about how changes to the position description might affect classification, contact your Human Resources office to discuss the changes.

How Do I Write a Position Description?

The Position Summary - Describe the job accurately but briefly in the summary statement, and use the rest of the position description as supportive or demonstrative information. The position summary should give brief, specific, clear, and precise information about the job. Use this section to show the scope (range or extent of responsibility), complexity, and nature of the work.

Goals and Task Statements - In formatting this portion of the position description, list the main or primary duties and responsibilities of the job. These are the goal statements. List the most important duty first, regardless of time percentage. Make sure that each goal has a percentage of time assigned to it. Anything with a time percent of five percent or lower is probably a task or activity rather than a goal. The exception is the Affirmative Action statement that is listed as two percent on most supervisory position descriptions. Once you have determined the main or primary duties and responsibilities of the job, deciding how the position will accomplish these duties and responsibilities will result in a list of tasks or activities. Eliminate all but the most important tasks. If there is a task or activity within a goal that accounts for more than 10% of the total responsibility, assign it a time percentage.

What Do We Do Next?
The position description should be signed and dated by both the employee and his or her classified supervisor, and forwarded to the appropriate Human Resources staff person, who will review, sign, and return copies to the employee and supervisor. If you need additional information about writing a position description, please refer to the Guide to Position Description Writing. Contact your Human Resources staff for a copy.

SETTING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES

Clearly defined performance standards and objectives form the basis of any sound performance review process. When creating performance standards, base them on job related requirements reflected in job descriptions and specifications. Properly established performance standards are aligned with DER's strategic mission and goals and program work plan objectives through job requirements that convey acceptable and unacceptable levels of performance.

A **performance standard** is a statement, describing the level of performance expected regarding key job areas or responsibilities of one's position. The extent to which performance standards capture the entire range of an employee's responsibilities is another important factor. When a performance review focuses too narrowly on one aspect of the position's responsibilities, for example, the *number* of permits drafted over a given time frame, instead of more important, but less quantifiable, performance dimensions such as partnerships or customer service, an inaccurate picture of the performance may result.

Just as performance standards can be too narrow in focus, they can also be influenced by other factors outside the employee’s control. For example, employees using newer computers with greater capacity may be more productive than those using older equipment. Or, the volume of wastewater plant operations in one location of the state may be quite different than in another, impacting workload and influencing productivity and service levels across regions.

Finally, how stable or consistent are the standards over time? For example, requiring each bureau director to recruit a fixed percentage of female applicants per year might be very unrealistic for a number of reasons. Program turnover, budget issues, labor market availability for different occupations, and timing of recruitments can all impact program achievements during the same time period.

A **performance objective** identifies the specific quantitative, short-term activities and tasks that are outcome based and serve to meet or accomplish a performance standard. An objective may include the rate expected, time lines, volume, accuracy, work results, etc.

Performance standards and objectives permit managers, other employees, and customers to specify and communicate precise information about quality and quantity of output. As a result, performance standards and objectives written in quantifiable and measurable terms are critical. The acronym SMART offers a good formula for setting standards and objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed.

As an example, a performance standard might be: “Serve as a contributing member of the Performance Review and Planning Team from June, 1997 to June, 1999, to develop an enhanced performance review process.” Performance objectives may be: “Attend all meetings of the team, participate effectively following established group norms, and report progress at monthly meetings of bureau staff.”

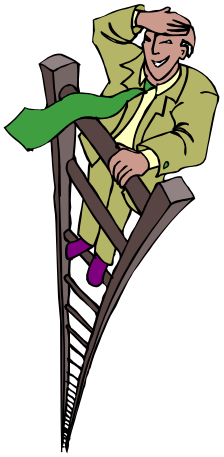
Following the “SMART” formula, this standard is for a specific time period. The team has a specific charge (a tangible outcome) and projected timeline for products and deliverables. As a member, the employee is expected to attend all meetings, follow the ground rules set by the team, participate in team discussions and product development, and complete other assignments. The employee will also provide feedback about the work progress and other related issues via a method and at intervals mutually agreed upon in advance by the employee and the supervisor.

Finally, as much as possible, setting performance standards and objectives should be a collaborative process between the manager and employee, and, if appropriate, involve customers or other stakeholders. According to literature on organizational behavior, a key consideration in creating meaningful performance standards and objectives is to ensure that at least some of them are challenging, thereby preventing boredom and creating learning opportunities.

SAMPLE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES

STANDARDS	**OBJECTIVES**
A. Lead and direct the statewide compliance and enforcement team during FY'99. Work with the team sponsor to assure team effectiveness.	A. Make a presentation to the Air Leaders in September 1998 identifying the following: 1. Time needed by members for team activities. 2. Recommended areas for work plan adjustments.
B. Improve knowledge of Windows NT, Word and Excel to enhance computer skills needed for departmental reporting.	B. Successful completion of SER Learning Center one-day training courses in Windows NT, Word, and Excel by August 31, 1998. Demonstrate application of knowledge by successful completion of department's 1.5-hour test by December 31, 1998.
C. Demonstrate knowledge of all aspects of park operations by successfully performing leadworker responsibilities.	C. Will explain the correct procedure(s) to adequately perform an evening law enforcement shift. Upon review of actual documented situations, will have demonstrated good judgment in performing evening law enforcement shift rules.

THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO MOTIVATION



Did you know that various job dimensions such as autonomy and variety can affect personal and work outcomes such as motivation, quality of work, satisfaction, absenteeism, and even turnover? The following section explores how you can design your job so you feel that your work is meaningful to you and valuable to the Department. In some situations, civil service rules and contract agreements may influence the types and extent of modifications. Employees will need to discuss job design thoroughly with their supervisors to determine appropriateness and feasibility for their program. Employees will also need to check with the Bureau of Human Resources or your Human Resources Manager before initiating any job design activities.

Improving the nature of work by making jobs more appealing is one approach that affects motivation. As a supervisor or employee, you may want to ask yourself some questions before the performance review and planning process. For example, do you feel challenged by your work and enjoy your tasks?

Start by looking at the repetitive nature of the position. One approach, **job enlargemen**t, redesigns a position to perform an increased number of different tasks, all at the same level of intensity. An assembly-line worker performing all the tasks to make a product instead of repetitive tasks making all the same parts, is an example of job enlargement.

Studies done on job enlargement have shown that combining various functions into larger jobs performed by the same person can spur motivation. Although it can be initially more difficult and expensive to train people to perform enlarged rather than specialized jobs, the payoff can be enhanced career development and greater customer service levels.

Job enrichment is another motivational tool you can use to improve job performance. Job enrichment gives you more tasks to do, provides different tasks at a higher skill level, and offers more responsibility. Job enrichment gives you greater opportunity to become involved in how you do your job and could lead to more job satisfaction. Following are some tips to help you evaluate the different dimensions of your job:

1. **Skill Variety:** the level at which a job requires a number of varied activities using several of the employee's skills and talents. Employees will differ on the degree of job satisfaction and variation desired. However, the performance review period may be the most genuine time to generate this discussion.

2. **Task Identity:** the extent to which a job requires completing the work from beginning to end. In some types of work or work settings, the employee may feel a greater sense of accomplishment completing a task.

3. **Autonomy:** the extent to which employees have freedom and discretion to plan and carry out their jobs. Are supervisors micromanaging so employees exhibit less creativity? People feel personally responsible and accountable for their work when they are in jobs with more autonomy.

4. **Feedback:** the level of response a supervisor gives to an employee so the employee can gauge his or her effectiveness. Feedback should be provided soon after a project is completed as well as throughout the year.

Prior, during, and after a performance review a supervisor and employee may want to inventory their work tasks to ensure they include these dimensions. Following are some tips:

1. **Combine task**s. Instead of having several people perform specific tasks to complete a project, have each employee perform the entire job. The skill variety and task identity associated with the job will increase.

2. **Establish customer relationships**. If appropriate, design jobs so you provide the employee performing customer service enough tools to perform effectively and enhance job autonomy, giving him or her the freedom to manage their relationships with customers.