

PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS: Tips for Supervisors

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MOORHEAD

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

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

Good performance management doesn't just help the employee, it can contribute to building a high-functioning and productive team. Benefits of effective performance management can include motivated and engaged employees, increased retention of good employees, reduced costs to recruiting and training new employees, less time spent on corrective action issues, and positive departmental and university reputation as a great place to work.

What's required?

- In general, the University requires that supervisors conduct a performance review of each employee in writing at least once annually per Minnesota State Statute.
- The performance review is a communication tool between the employee and the supervisor and is part of the official personnel file.
- The performance review looks at specific areas, goals, and standards of performance and the employee's progress toward meeting them, as well as future goals and employee development.
- Managers and supervisors should use the approved performance evaluation tools:
 - [Dragons Learn Performance Review Template \(for supervisors\)](#)
 - [Dragons Learn & Reflect – Self Evaluation \(for employees\)](#)

Writing and preparing for the review

1. Set a calendar date and time that is mutually convenient for both you and the employee, and that will allow enough time for each of you to prepare. A private office or conference room is a good choice for privacy and no interruptions. Schedule enough time for discussion [1 to 1.5 hours].
2. Gather:
 - the up-to-date job description
 - goals and activities set from the current review period
 - work rules and procedures
 - any feedback or letters from customers/co-workers
 - current disciplinary memos
 - the previous performance review
 - employee self-evaluation

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3. Review the position description for accuracy and revise if there are inaccuracies or changes needed. Do not let inaccuracies with a position description delay the completion of the annual performance evaluation. Base the responsibilities on what you and the employee know are the current duties of the job.
4. If your employee chooses to do a self-evaluation, be sure to obtain that early enough so you have a chance to review it as part of your preparation. The employee's input can help you remember specific performance details as well as provide insight on how you can best support them in the coming 12 months.
5. Give real thought to your responses, utilize the narrative sections and provide behavioral and measurable outcomes that are detailed and specific. Be fair and objective in completing the evaluation and base your responses on the performance over the entire past year.
6. Compare the actual, specific performance results and behaviors to the objectives. Stay away from an attitude or personality focus. If addressing poor attitude in the evaluation, remember to avoid generalization and provide detailed and specific examples. Make sure you have clear and consistent expectations for all your employees, based on performance on the job.
7. Acknowledge really good work just as readily as work that needs improvement. It can be easy to take strong performance for granted and only point out problems.
8. Remember to avoid:
 - Halo Effect - tendency to overrate a favored employee or an employee who had a prior good rating
 - Horns Effect - tendency to rate an employee lower than circumstances warrant
 - Recency Error - letting outstanding work [or unsatisfactory work] immediately prior to the evaluation offset an entire year of performance
 - Cookie Cutter Effect - not focusing on individual specific performance. Rating all your employees, or groups of employees the same
9. Send a copy of your evaluation to the employee prior to the review, so they may have their initial emotional response in private.

Conducting the review

1. Schedule a time, in a quiet and private location, to meet with the employee and discuss the evaluation.
2. Welcome the employee; put the employee at ease. Outline your plan for the evaluation. What will the meeting look like?
3. Begin by talking about the year as a whole for the department, team results (briefly), and what you think as a supervisor went well.
4. Read through your supervisor portion of the evaluation together. Have two copies; one for you and one for the employee to follow along.
5. Focus on: being objective but constructive, emphasizing strengths, being detailed and specific with your comments, supporting the employee's efforts to improve, obtaining employee participation in communication, aligning performance with our core values of Grit, Humility, and Heart.
6. Set goals, expectations, and objectives together for the next performance period. Use this to discuss continuous performance improvement.
7. Summarize the session and end on a positive note.

Completing the review process

1. Both the supervisor and the employee should sign the review. Signing the review does not mean the employee agrees with the review; it means that the review has been shared with the employee.
2. Remember, even if you and an employee disagree on a point, you can both express your opinions, but you are the supervisor and your evaluation is the final statement. Employees can submit written response to be included in their personnel file.
3. Provide the employee with a copy of the evaluation packet. The original should go in the employee's personnel file (supervisor provides to HR Office by December 31). Supervisor should retain a copy in their supervisor file for quick reference throughout the year.
4. You and the employee should exchange ongoing feedback about performance goals and standards throughout the year.

Responding to employee behaviors

1. Your employee may disagree with your ratings and that is ok. You do not (and should not) change your ratings simply because your employee disagrees. Use this as a time to ask open-ended questions on why they feel differently and if they have specific examples of different behavior. IF after you've considered some of the discussion the employee offered and feel that changing your rating is warranted, that is an option.
2. Employees may not always respond and that is ok, too. The review is meant for a two-way conversation. Encourage your employee that their input is essential to you. If necessary, you can offer to reschedule the meeting or schedule an additional meeting to allow the employee more time to gather thoughts and discuss openly.
3. Employees may be overly emotional. Try to calm them down and be empathetic towards their feelings. You can offer to stop and reschedule the meeting if necessary.
4. Employees may opt not to sign the review and that is ok. They are only signing to signify they received the review, not if they agree or disagree. If they won't sign, simply document they wouldn't sign and provide the review to Human Resources to be placed in the personnel file.

Support throughout the year

1. Meet with your employee regularly throughout the year so that you can provide timely and specific feedback on their performance. These meetings are a great opportunity to discuss ongoing support or training needs the employee may have.
2. Actively initiating and collaborating with employees is a great practice. Work towards creating a supervisory relationship where employees feel safe and welcomed to discuss concerns or issues.
3. Have ongoing conversations with employees on their goals, especially as they change. Keep notes on your employees' achievements and overall performance throughout the year – this will be incredibly useful for the next annual evaluation.
4. Don't forget to celebrate and recognize good performance. Ask your employees how they like to be appreciated and recognized for good work (individually, in a group, over email, note, a small gift, or other).