



PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT GUIDE

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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

What is performance management?

Performance management is about getting the best from your staff in order to achieve the best for your organisation.

It involves

- setting clear goals and expectations
- good communication
- improving effectiveness
- developing potential
- managing behaviour.

With good performance management strategies in place, your staff will

- know what they are expected to do
- have the right skills, knowledge and ability to be able to do the work
- feel supported by the organisation in their work
- be given constructive feedback on their work
- be able to share and discuss ideas about how the organisation will be successful.

In practical terms, performance management can involve

- setting targets and work plans
- day to day contact on work issues
- supervision meetings
- appraisal meetings
- learning and development plans

Why is it important?

When staff are clear about what they need to do, what standards they are expected to achieve and feel supported in their job, they will be more able to contribute to the goals of the organisation. They are also likely to be happier and more enthusiastic in their work and remain in their job.

Managers will also have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their staff. Good performance management will ensure better use of the skills and talents that are available, and improve less effective performance.

Managers and Management Committee members will be better able to cope with issues of poor performance and repeated misconduct promptly, fairly and openly.

Benefits of good performance management are many:

- better motivated staff
- better relationships between staff and management
- increased staff retention
- getting the most out of staff
- tackle problems early and fairly
- keeping skills and knowledge within the organisation for longer.

Who is going to do it?

All staff should be line managed by a more senior person within the organisation. This person needs a good understanding of the role of line manager and should be properly trained. They should have a clear understanding of the organisation as a whole, its aims and objectives. They should also have a clear understanding about what the staff member is required to do to help achieve these aims and objectives.

The most senior member of paid staff, often the Chief Executive or Director, should also be managed by a representative of the Management Committee or Board of Trustees, such as the Chair.

Preparing targets and work plans

It is important to set and agree clear goals, with tasks to be completed by specified dates and standards to be achieved (e.g. speed of response, accuracy etc).

The goals can be work-related and also linked to the learning and development of the individual. They should also relate to the overall objectives for the organisation, which will be listed in your business plan.

These goals, tasks and standards can be listed in a workplan which the employee can add to and update as they achieve their work through the year.

What is a supervision meeting?

In addition to day to day communication between managers and staff, it is useful to hold supervision meetings.

Supervision meetings are regular, private, uninterrupted meetings held between an employee and their line manager. They should be at set periods e.g. every 4 to 6 weeks, and should get the priority they deserve and not be postponed or cancelled if possible.

They would normally last about an hour. Although this will vary they should not be too brief to be meaningless, nor unnecessarily too long.

The employee should be encouraged to add their own items to the agenda for the meeting. Alternatively there could be a set agenda with standing items, but both parties can add items at the start of the meeting (suggested agenda below). How much time is spent on items will vary depending on the needs of the employee and the organisation. Some items will just be a matter of a quick check between manager and employee that there are no outstanding issues. Other items may require a more in-depth discussion.

The manager and employee should look at any work targets and personal development objectives, review workplans and cover any other issues or problems as well as the next steps to be taken. They also provide an opportunity to consider ongoing support and learning requirements as well as discussing practical issues such as leave, TOIL, sickness absence etc. The manager should also fix the date of the next meeting at the end of the session.

Example supervision meeting agenda

(Please note that it is unlikely that you will need to cover all of these items in great depth at every supervision meeting).

- 1) Manager and employee agree the agenda
- 2) Review of work done
 - Progress against objectives
 - What went well and why?
 - What could have been better and why?
 - What could be done to make it better in the future?
- 3) Positive & Constructive feedback to staff member
 - Achievements
 - Any areas of concern about performance or conduct, and in relation to the rest of the team
- 4) Checking with the staff member
 - Any concerns, difficulties, workload issues?
 - Any support needed?
 - What type of support (training, coaching etc.)?
- 5) Future plans
 - Short-term plans until next meeting
 - How do they relate to long-term objectives?
 - How will they be achieved?
 - Review learning and development plan
- 6) Other issues
 - Any issues outside work having an impact on work?
 - Sickness absence
 - Annual leave
 - TOIL
- 7) Date of next meeting

Line managers should keep notes of the issues raised and action agreed, and ensure that a copy is given to the staff member. The manager should store the notes securely.

Alongside the job description and work plan, this will provide a formal record to help managers assess performance, highlight, encourage and praise improvements and successes but also recognise where things are going wrong. Together, the staff member and line manager can analyse and identify any problem and reasons for it, and decide and agree on the action to be taken.

Only if all else fails, or if it is a case of gross misconduct, should disciplinary action be considered.

What is an appraisal meeting?

Appraisal meetings are the yearly review of the employee's work progress and performance. They are also sometimes called 'performance and development review' meetings. Their aim is to consider what has been achieved over the year, reflect on the past performance and also to set agreed objectives and training needs for the next 12 months.

The nature of the meeting should be that the employee being appraised does most of the talking. Nothing which is said in the appraisal should come as a surprise to the employee.

Staff members should be asked to complete a self-appraisal form to consider alongside their job description and agreed goals from the previous appraisal. Line managers should also complete a pre-appraisal form and prepare by looking over supervision records, notes from the last appraisal and the job description, as well as considering what you would like the employee to achieve in the next year.

Pre-appraisal questionnaire for the employee

It would be useful in preparation for the appraisal if both parties note down answers to a list of questions.

Example of employee's pre-appraisal questionnaire

(Please note that this should be adapted for use by the line manager.)

- What were your main duties and responsibilities over the last year?
- What skills and abilities do you use in your work?
- Are there aspects of your work where you feel you need more experience or support?
- What do you enjoy most about your work?
- What have been your successes in the last year?
- What do you enjoy least about your work?
- What problems have you had in the last year?
- What would help improve your performance at work and your job satisfaction?
- What do you hope to achieve over the next year?
- What training do you think you need over the next year?
- Are there any other comments you want to make about your work?

The appraisal interview

Managers should keep questions simple, such as 'what do you enjoy about your work?' or 'why do you think that happened?' Managers should ask open questions (such as 'what, how, who, when, why'), and ask for information. Don't presume anything.

Example agenda for the appraisal interview

- Explain the course of the meeting
- Progress towards achievement of agreed objectives
 - Highlight something that the employee has done well
 - Discuss other areas of the job that the employee enjoys
 - Discuss areas where the employee is less confident or able
 - Were there any obstacles to achievement?
 - How might these be overcome?
 - Are there any changes to duties or responsibilities since the last appraisal?
 - Does the job description need to be updated?
- Agree goals for the next year
 - Are there any obstacles to achievement?
 - How might these be overcome?
- Review the staff member's learning and development plan
- Discuss any other issues that the employee wants to raise
- Summarise your view of their overall performance, the points covered and the agreed action.

After the meeting, the manager should complete an appraisal form. This will include a list of the employee's achievements over the year, the objectives set for the next 12 months and action points agreed and proposed timescale, details of any learning and development agreed. The employee should be asked to confirm the accuracy of the record and add any additional comments.

Both manager and employee can review how the goals and objectives are followed up at the regular supervision meeting, including following up learning needs.

Example headings for Appraisal Form

- Name of employee
- Job title
- Name of line manager
- Date of appraisal
- Review of current performance
- Assessment of constraints to meeting previously agreed objectives
- Goals for the coming year
- Learning and development review and plans
 - Courses and learning opportunities experienced during the year and their contribution to performance
 - Learning needs for the coming year and plans for meeting them
- Has the job description changed?
- Implications for the organisation's management
- Employee's comments
- Signatures of employee and line manager with date

How can you ensure that performance management is successful?

It is essential for there to be time to prepare for the supervision and appraisal meetings, so that both parties can look back over the last notes and over the work they have done since the last meeting.

Managers should be wary of focusing solely on a particular incident, or allowing one factor such as poor timekeeping to affect the way they consider all work achievements, or comparing employees rather than considering each individual in relation to their targets.

However managers should be confident about pointing out weaknesses or failures where they really exist, because they will be able to back them up with notes and records. Ignoring an issue will not make it go away, and tackling problems constructively will help the employee and the organisation.

In order to do this properly, all those with line management responsibilities (including Management Committee members or Trustees) must receive relevant training in performance management.

What role does learning and development have?

The best way for an organisation to be successful is to get the full potential from its staff. If all staff are encouraged to develop and learn, their performance can continually improve.

Supervision and appraisal meetings can be considered as learning opportunities, where staff are encouraged to think about how they want to develop and what they need to do to achieve this. This could be through attending training courses, coaching or mentoring (from individuals outside the organisation or from line managers), online learning, reading, through networks etc.

It is useful to keep a record of the plans for learning and development for each staff member and review with the staff member any learning they have undertaken.

This guide provides basic information about performance management including straightforward examples of supervision and appraisal systems. It is particularly aimed at small organisations and explains how performance management can get the best from your staff.

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Reference: Voluntary and Community Action for London