

Performance Evaluation Tips for Supervisors

NOTE: The following are tips and suggested steps for supervising and evaluating employees in most types of work organizations.

This document is designed to help improve communication, employee job satisfaction, and productivity – the purpose of any performance evaluation. This document supports the "Behavioral Anchor Chart" that accompanies it. Before reading further, stop now and examine these pages found at the end of this document.

An Up Front Word of Caution about the Role of Assistant Supervisors

Do you have an “assistant supervisor” overseeing an employee’s work, however, does not “grade” or “evaluate” the employee? If so, you may face a special challenge in the context of supervision. The following issues associated with this type supervision structure may need to be addressed or it could undermine the performance evaluation process.

Assistant supervisors who are not recognized as official evaluators of an employee, but who influence their work direction and quality, should always contribute substantively, though perhaps informally, to performance evaluations. Invariably, these individuals are relied upon by upper level supervisors “the true evaluators” and these informal relationships therefore are prone to frequent relationship conflicts in performance evaluation process.

The reason is simple: An employee who has a relationship with a supervisor who does not contribute to the evaluation will less a sense of urgency about cooperation with this individual. This will, by design, contribute to relationship conflict.

It should be understood and communicated in writing that the assistant supervisor—although not an evaluator—is the eyes and ears of the evaluator, and as such will contribute to overall performance grade. The employee (supervisee) should receive a copy of this individual’s contributions to the performance evaluation that is approved by the official evaluator. This process changes the “dynamic” and more cooperation is obtained from the supervisee.

The assistant supervisor who plays no official role in supervision evaluation can easily be perceived as a hostile agent by a troubled employee or used by an employee with substandard performance to explain away performance shortcomings as primarily the result of unfairness or a difficult and conflict laden relationship with the assistant supervisor. You need to avoid this dynamic. The easiest intervention is making the assistant supervisor the official evaluator, but in many organizations, this is overlooked to the detriment of the evaluation process. Acknowledging the assistant supervisor's influential role keeps these important, but unofficial workplace supervision relationships effective, productive, and respectful.

Introduction

To the degree that employees remain happy, healthy and productive, the mission of any organization is virtually assured. Without an effective performance evaluation system, employees are denied an opportunity to participate in a proven, critical process that improves job satisfaction and performance. So, without effective performance evaluation, no organization can succeed.

It is possible that you will observe significant positive changes once your employee understands the performance evaluation process and his or her role in making it successful. This requires that you start off on the right foot in a relationship with your employee that is based upon trust. At the moment you start participating in a performance evaluation system, see your employee as fully capable of satisfactory performance of all essential functions. Unless an employee is currently on performance improvement, the advice is to begin with a clean slate and trust your employee. This is critical to successful initiation of any new performance evaluation system.

Follow the tips below and use them during the year to make the Performance Evaluation process a positive, useful, and rewarding experience for your employees.

The first time you use the behavioral anchors chart with a performance evaluation DO be reasonably lenient in your grading. If something is in the "gray zone" and you are not sure how an item should be rated, grade up! Pass out the chart to your employees and ask for their feedback or any changes they would like to see incorporated in it. Then, consider them and adopt those that make sense.

Before the Evaluation

During the year, find regular opportunities to PRAISE and THANK your employee for specific tasks that they do well. Thank employees individually. Don't just say "thanks for doing a good job." Say, "Susan, you really do a good job arranging the details for the annual conference this year. I feel I can count on you." Specific statements are remembered by your employee, generalized statements of approval are not. Here's why: The employee will literally replay such messages to him or herself improving the likelihood of maintaining a positive relationship with

you and your work unit.

Make sure all employees have a copy of the behavioral anchors that correspond to their essential functions for their position. This is a draft that ideally they have created with you and that matches your vision as a supervisor, which in turn complements the goals of the department and also the individual employees' work and personal development goals. This chart is a contract of sorts between you and the employee you are evaluating. It will be reviewed by your employee many times during the year.

Invite all employees once a year to comment or make suggestions to behavioral anchors and issue a new set or changes to correspond with new work goals. This once a year process keeps the relationship forefront in the mind of employees and helps prevent a "rut" and a mundane existence from forming in your work unit. Indeed, consider making changes to reflect work goals that you and your team or employee desires during the year. Create a vision. Make it exciting. Create "buy in" and get everyone involved.

Create a supervision file folder for each of the employees you supervise. Place NO secret notes in this file. Your employees should know what you are keeping track of or keeping an eye on. Consider placing good things in this folder, too. DON'T put only negative job performance issues in the folder. Ask your employees to keep track of their own significant work achievements so they can put them in the folder anytime they wish. Encourage them to do so. This has a significant impact on keeping employees focused on positive behaviors.

Place within the folder a blank copy of the behavioral anchors worksheet. Mark supervisor notes on this blank form to make it easy for you to remember what is important. Be sure that you have made the employee aware of your concerns.

During the year, conduct one annual official review. Never, ever skip it. Many work organizations neglect performance evaluations and years go by in some organization without employees ever being evaluated. Failure to conduct performance evaluations adds to the risk of conflict, violence in the workplace, broken rules, risk taking behavior, poor self-discipline and a host of other undesirable behaviors that impede productivity, harmony, and morale.

Prior to the annual review, schedule three private 10-minute meetings with your employee(s). Hold these meetings (called interim reviews) three months, six, and nine months before the final annual review. Schedule them at the beginning of the year so you know, and your employee knows, when they will take place. It is very powerful and strategic to do this. Never cancel such appointments unless there is an emergency. Cancellation will have a negative impact on your employee no matter what is said to the contrary. Canceling a performance evaluation is tantamount to studying days on end for a test, being ready, and then having the test postponed at the last moment. Poor employees will love it. Your best employees will resent it.

At any time during the year, hold a private meeting with your employee when you believe a behavior on the behavioral anchor chart has slipped to the "Needs Improvement". This should not be first discovered by the employee during an interim review meeting and should never be a surprise at the annual review.

Write down the important performance related points you plan to bring to your employee's attention at the performance evaluation meeting. You can use the blank worksheet for this purpose (see attached.) Take time to do this before your meeting.

Write down positive, valuable work characteristics about your employee. NEVER say that there aren't any. This is never true. The fact is there ARE ALWAYS some. Always mention these positive attributes first. Start out positive in meetings that discuss performance

At the Annual Final Evaluation meeting with your employee, prepare to present your employee's graded performance evaluation. Know why you are grading the employee at any level. Be prepared with specific reasons for your judgments. If your employee does not agree with your judgment, you can explain your decision.

Again, remember to encourage employees to provide you at any time during the year with specific work accomplishments they want placed in their Supervisor Notes file. Consider these when you construct a final evaluation.

The Annual Final Evaluation Interview

Schedule enough UNINTERRUPTED TIME for your meetings.

Always act and be supportive of your employee.

Begin the evaluation interview by asking the employee to rate themselves on each of the behavioral anchors. Listen. Be patient. Don't be argumentative.

With two copies of the behavioral anchors chart in hand and two copies of a blank worksheet go over the items one at a time with your employee. Have your employee self-evaluate each item on the behavioral anchor chart items (a - k). Then, tell the employee what you put down as his or her grade. Discuss the matter.

FIND opportunities during your meeting to praise your employee for what is obviously good work as you discuss each item on the evaluation form. Also be honest in saying that you have concerns where they exist.

If your employee disagrees with any rating, provide your reasons for the rating. Use past discussions, notes of incidents, or other facts to back up your decision. Nothing you use should be “NEW” to the employee. If a customer from the community complained about phone calls that weren't returned two months ago, and you never told the employee about it, don't surprise the employee with such information now. To do so will undermine your credibility and the performance evaluation process. In the future, bring such issues to the attention of the employ right away.

You should feel free to change your mind if you think the employee's argument for a higher rating is valid. Do not fear "losing face." You may want to consider the employee's input and decide later. If you disagree, do not get emotionally involved, angry, argumentative, or frustrated. Simply accept employee feedback. Thank the employee for his or her opinion, and let the employee know you will consider his or her reasons. Then, decide tomorrow and give a final answer at that time.

Tell your employee exactly what can be done to earn a better rating on any item if desired by the employee. Be very specific. The changes or improvement should be quantifiable (measurable.)

Invite your employee to visit with your supervisor if a disagreement still exists over an evaluation rating. Don't panic. This is an appropriate process. Your supervisor might change the rating. It happens sometimes. There is no reason to feel embarrassed, apologize, or believe you have been undermined. Do expect your supervisor to discuss the matter with you before making a change and communicating back with the employee. Take responsibility to ask for, and expect a private meeting with your supervisor prior this final determination so your verbal input can be provided.

Thank your employee for his or her contributions to the department. Express hope and faith that your employee will make any changes decided upon in the evaluation meeting.

After the Evaluation

End the evaluation with written agreement on what you and your employee have agreed to achieve for the near future.

Be aware of your employee's positive achievements during the year, but expect your employees to remember them better than you. (See above.)

Ask your employees to discuss the “group vision” for next year if this is appropriate. What would they like to accomplish as a team for the department consistent with its goals and the direction the organization is heading?

What next level of accomplishment would the group like to achieve? Consider what should change on the behavioral anchors grid to reflect this new vision for next year. They will own the standards associated with these goals.

During the year, refer employees to the EAP when they are performing below standard without correcting their performance. Never pre-screen who, or who should not, visit the EAP based upon your beliefs or assumptions about personal problems.

If performance problems (attendance, conduct, attitude, availability, quality of work) exist – make the referral in your corrective interview. Regardless, if an employee earns "needs improvement" in any category, then refer to the EAP. EAP referral is not a punishment or a 'bad thing'. An EAP referral is an accommodation. It supports the employee in the event a known or unknown personal problem, self-diagnosable or not self-diagnosable, exists.

Seek EAP help for yourself to obtain guidance on managing difficult supervision situations. Don't be a lone ranger. This concept in employee assistance states that supervisors should not need help for themselves in dealing with tough situations.

Do's and Don'ts During Evaluation Meetings

Never make judgmental statements about your employee's character or personality. For example, don't say, "I can't trust you, or you can't be trusted." Instead, say, "On two occasions, after I gave you assignments that you did not complete on time." Don't say, "You don't work fast enough." Instead, say "The project must be completed within one week. You frequently take two weeks to complete these types of projects. This prevents me from giving you other important assignments."

Do not argue with your employee.

Do not threaten employees with a disciplinary action that you can't propose or act on later.

Do give your complete attention to your employee during an evaluation meeting. Don't talk on the phone, eat your lunch, or permit other distractions. Give your employee eye contact.

Don't contrast your employee's performance or abilities with a fellow coworker. "If you were more like Sally, you would be perfect."

Don't discuss other coworkers' performance evaluations with your employee.

You should expect employees to periodically disagree with your ratings of them. This is normal.

Listen and don't interrupt your employee when he or she disagrees with you. Look at your employee, listen, and be patient with his or her remarks. Don't become emotional, or reciprocate with hostile or offensive language. If you have had a lot of conflict with your employee, it may be difficult to suspend the tension you feel, but it can seriously sabotage your attempts to objectively document and deal one way or another with a difficult employee. Consider some job coaching help from the EAP. The EAP frequently helps supervisors and employees to experience better

communication.

Are you personal friends with your employee? Do you socialize on weekends and in the off hours? If so, you are participating what is commonly called a "dual relationship." Personal relationships will always subordinate themselves to the employment relationship. And there are significant risks associated with dual relationships. Talk with your EAP about what these risks might be for you and your employee because every relationship is different.

With regard to the above, employees know if you have a different type of relationship with one of their coworkers, especially if appears more favorable. This knowledge interferes with their belief that you are completely objective and will interfere with your ability to influence their productivity. What should you do about this conflict of interests? The wisdom of supervisors who have answered this question the hard way is avoiding dual relationships. Getting your social needs met outside the work organization will reduce severe stress associated with difficult decisions you must make with your employees that conflict with the personal friendship.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION BEHAVIORAL ANCHORS TOOL

	Outstanding	Very Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
a. QUALITY OF WORK:	Employee consistently scores exceptionally high on quality control inspections. Solves all problems within the scope of essential functions.	Employee consistently scores very high on quality control inspections. Solves nearly all problems within the scope of essential functions.	Employee's quality scores are generally satisfactory. Solves problems within the scope of essential functions.	Employee's quality scores are generally not acceptable. Solves few problems within the scope of essential functions.	Employee quality scores are consistently poor. Fails to solve most problems within the scope of essential functions.
b. QUANTITY OF WORK	Employee consistently completes work beyond scope of duties or beyond assigned area.	Employee frequently completes work beyond scope of duties or beyond assigned area.	Employee completes work within the scope of duties and assigned area.	Employee sometimes does not complete work within the scope of duties and assigned area.	Employee frequently does not complete work within the scope of duties and assigned area.
c. INTEREST	Employee consistently demonstrates enthusiasm and willingness to try new ways of completing work assignments.	Employee frequently demonstrates enthusiasm and willingness to try new ways of completing work assignments.	Employee occasionally demonstrates enthusiasm and willingness to try new ways of completing work assignments.	Employee does not demonstrate enthusiasm or willingness to try new ways of completing work assignments.	Employee frequently resists doing new things or trying new ways of completing assignments.
d. ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY	Employee always follows policies regarding attendance and sick leave reporting. Always on time; rarely sick.	Employee consistently follows policies regarding attendance and sick leave reporting. Consistently on time; rarely sick.	Employee consistently follows policies regarding attendance and sick leave. Consistently on time. Employee's whereabouts are consistently known.	Employee does not consistently follow policies regarding attendance and sick leave. Frequently not to work on time. Whereabouts of employee are often not known.	Employee frequently fails to follow policies regarding attendance and sick leave reporting. Frequently not to work on time. Fails consistently to report whereabouts.
e. RESPONSIBILITY & DEPENDABILITY	Rarely needs follow-up on instructions. Always wears proper protective equipment and takes all proper safety precautions on job.	Occasionally needs follow-up on instructions. Always wears proper protective equipment and takes all proper safety precautions on job.	Regular follow-up on instructions needed. Consistently wears proper protective equipment and takes all proper safety precautions on job.	Follow-up reveals frequent difficulty with instructions. Sometimes does not wear proper protective equipment or take proper safety precautions on job.	Consistent difficulty in carrying out instructions. Consistently does not wear proper protective equipment or take proper safety precautions on job.
f. USE OF TIME	Exceptional skill in managing use of time. Helps others to make better use of their time by sharing knowledge and related skills. Coworker look up to employee as model for themselves.	Goods skills in managing use of time. Is never counseled about time management issues. Completes assignments on time.	Manages time well. Completes assignments. Rarely is counseled about time management issues.	Frequently does not manage time well. Frequently has incomplete assignments. Must be consistently counseled about time management problems.	Fails to manage time adequately. Frequently has incomplete assignments. Must be consistently counseled about time management problems.
g. COOPERATION	Accepts assignments eagerly from supervisor. Always demonstrates positive and team-focused attitude.	Accepts assignments eagerly from supervisor. Usually demonstrates positive and team-focused attitude.	Accepts assignments from supervisor. Frequently has a positive and team-focused attitude.	Sometimes does not demonstrate a positive attitude about work assignments or is resistant to supervisor or coworkers.	Frequently resists and questions assignments and/or amount work. Attitude toward work and assignments has negative effect on work group.
h. INITIATIVE	Regularly recognizes job-related problems and initiates corrective action without being asked.	Frequently recognizes job-related problems and initiates corrective action without being asked.	May infrequently recognize job-related problems and initiate corrective action without being asked.	Does not recognize job-related problems and does not initiate corrective action without being asked.	Refuses or expects others to identify job related problems and take corrective action. Resists reasonable requests accept additional duties.
i. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	Always demonstrates value for mutually respectful relationships with coworkers, customers, supervisors.	Always demonstrates value for mutually respectful relationships with coworkers, customers, supervisors.	Always demonstrates value for mutually respectful relationships with coworkers, customers, supervisors.	Complaints occasionally are reported by about interpersonal communication, attitudes, or willingness to be helpful.	Consistent complaints are reported by others concerning interpersonal related communication, attitudes, willingness to be helpful.
j. ACCEPTS CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM	Always accepts suggestions and criticism. Consistently asks for feedback. Always willing to implement suggestions and ask questions when unsure.	Consistently accepts suggestions and criticism in constructive manner. Asks for feedback. Consistently willing to implement suggestions. Ask questions if is not sure.	Accepts suggestions and criticism in a constructive manner. Acts on suggestions provided and feedback given. Usually asks questions when not sure of directions given.	Is sometimes defensive when given criticism. Does not frequently consider ownership of problems and difficulties on job. Resists discussions about performance.	Consistently defensive when criticized. Blames others for mistakes and work problems. Unable or unwilling to accept responsibility for problems/behavior.
k. GENERAL APPEARANCE	Uniform is always neat and repaired. Wears appropriate attire to work and appears well groomed and clean every day upon arrival.	Uniform is consistently neat and repaired. Wears appropriate attire to work and appears well groomed and clean every day upon arrival.	Uniform is generally neat and repaired. Consistently wears appropriate attire to work and appears well groomed and clean every day upon arrival.	Frequently does not appear clean and well groomed. Uniform may be occasionally in disrepair. May not consistently appear neat.	Frequently wears improper attire. Uniform is frequently not worn or in disrepair. Usually comes to work appearing unclean or disheveled.

Employee: _____

DISCUSSION AND FOLLOW-UP WORKSHEET - Issues, Achievements, Agreements, Expectations

Outstanding

Very Good

Satisfactory

Needs Improvement

Unsatisfactory

Instructions:

Follow these instructions to help your employee improve performance. Use the EAP when a value remains in an unacceptable range.

- A. Without using the performance improvement worksheet shown here, meet with your employee to discuss performance.
- B. Discuss performance strengths and weaknesses. Discuss what should be improved over the next three, six, nine, and twelve months.
- C. Discuss the values shown in this chart a—k, or change them so they are more suitable. Decide upon the anchors—what will be measured in each square. Be detailed. Consider allowing work teams to define these anchors. Add your own input, but the supervisor is the ultimate decision maker. (Employees are usually be harder on themselves in this exercise. Be realistic.)
- D. Change values of anchors each year to accomplish new goals.
- E. Meet privately with each employee for 10-15 minutes several times a year to discuss performance matched to this tool.
- F. In the final grading period, ask employee where they "land" on the chart and discuss final grades. Consider grading up, not down if performance falls between values and there is sincere disagreement.
- G. **Goal: Employees always know where they stand on performance, and a more constructive sense of urgency to match expectations. Employee can self-monitor and self-improve. Hint: Frequent meetings (E) are key.**

	Outstanding	Very Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
a. QUALITY OF WORK:					
b. QUANTITY OF WORK					
c. INTEREST					
d. ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY					
e. RESPONSIBILITY & DEPENDABILITY					
f. USE OF TIME					
g. COOPERATION					
h. INITIATIVE					
i. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP					
j. ACCEPTS CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM					
k. GENERAL APPEARANCE					

Employee: _____

DISCUSSION AND FOLLOW-UP WORKSHEET - Issues, Achievements, Agreements, Expectations

Notes:

	Outstanding	Very Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
a. QUALITY OF WORK:					
b. QUANTITY OF WORK					
c. INTEREST					
d. ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY					
e. RESPONSIBILITY & DEPENDABILITY					
f. USE OF TIME					
g. COOPERATION					
h. INITIATIVE					
i. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP					
j. ACCEPTS CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM					
k. GENERAL APPEARANCE					