

Town of Vienna

A GUIDE TO COMPLETING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Introduction

A successful Employee Performance Evaluation program measures an employee's performance and behavior on the job through an objective and unbiased process. The performance evaluation is based on the results shown by the employee in carrying out his/her assigned duties and responsibilities throughout the look-back period of evaluation.

- ◆ This means that everything in the evaluation period counts with equal merit, whether distant or recent.
- ◆ The evaluation also serves as a tool for determining the outcome of an individual's probationary period.

It Begins with the Cohort Team.

To prepare for the evaluation effort, all Supervisors within a department will meet each year as a “cohort” to discuss the employee evaluation effort and what each competency level means to the team. *This helps to ensure equity across the team of Evaluators.*

The Supervisor's Responsibilities

It is a supervisor's responsibility to establish the job expectations for each of his or her employees; then to train, to mentor, coach, encourage, correct and manage the employee's performance.

Wrong:

It is not enough to hand out a job description to an employee. A job description contains general explanations without measurements or specific expectations or objectives.

Right:

A supervisor insures that duties, tasks, responsibilities and levels of authority and *expectations are appropriately communicated* to each of his or her subordinate personnel, and that each person is *adequately trained* to perform the tasks anticipated to be performed.

An Effective Evaluation

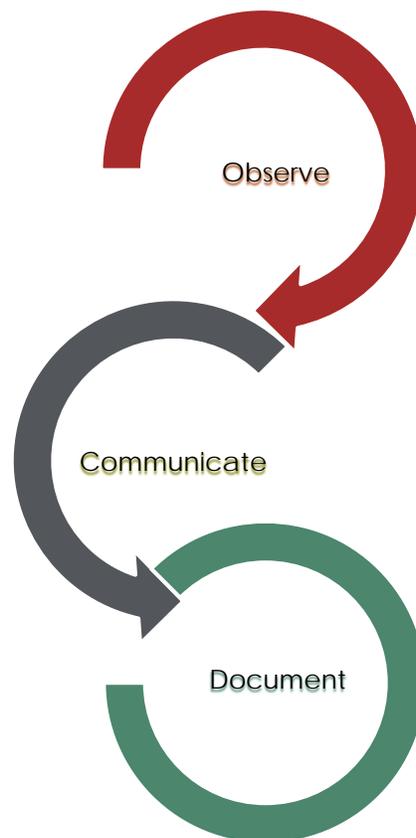
The effectiveness of any performance assessment depends almost entirely upon the understanding, impartiality and objectivity with which it is accomplished.

Objectivity requires the ability to identify both the strengths and weaknesses of an employee's performance impartially and to explain these constructively to the employee.

The care and skill used by the supervisor in rating employees are measures of good supervisory practice. In turn, ratings of supervisors by their own supervisors or managers will, in large part, include how effectively they fulfill their own evaluating responsibilities.

The Supervisor as Evaluator

During the year (the evaluation period) and prior to the performance evaluation meeting, the supervisor assumes the dual, continuing, role of "Evaluator." To be an effective Evaluator, the supervisor follows a cycle of practices with each employee.



Observe

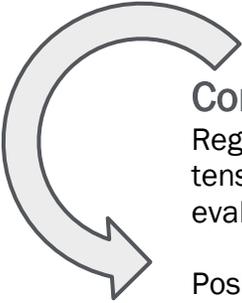
Regular proactive observation of an individual's patterns of performance and behaviors gives the supervisor insight and opportunities for realigning the employee to the organization's expectations.



Communicate

Regular communication, coaching, and feedback during the year help to reduce tension and anxiety about the performance evaluation on the part of both the evaluator and the employee.

Positive and negative feedback is much more effective when given in real time. An employee should not be surprised by results contained in the evaluation, since the evaluator should have previously discussed all performance-related issues throughout the year (the evaluation period).



Document

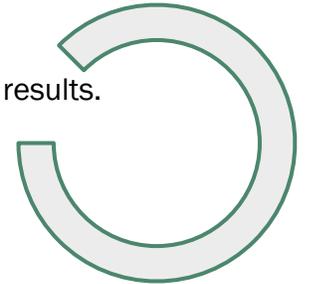
During the review period, the supervisor should have been collecting and recording significant, job-related events that pertain to each performance criterion. This provides a factual basis for ratings and overall assessment.

Documentation gathered should be accurate and specific, both positive and negative, including the context in which they occurred as well as the date they occurred. It is important to distinguish between fact and opinion in documenting performance.

Documentation should focus on facts. Facts are events, behaviors, or results. Facts are described through things that are known, seen, or heard.

Document Examples:

- copies of employee work product
- notes of discussions between the supervisor and employee
- copies of communications between the supervisor and the employee
- recorded observations of the evaluator/supervisor
- commendations from others



Prepare!

Solicit & Reassure.

- To help reduce anxiety and create a positive environment for enhancing performance, the evaluator (supervisor) may ask the employee to submit input regarding his/her performance, including accomplishments relating to goals from the previous year and possible goals for the upcoming year (see Page 2 of Employee Performance Evaluation form).
- The employee needs assurance that he or she is not being asked to write his/her own performance evaluation, but simply being asked to provide his or her perspective. The input is not mandatory and lack of it will not negatively impact performance evaluation ratings.
- You may choose to ask your employees to draft a complete self-evaluation as a part of the evaluation exercise. It is not mandatory. This would be for discussion purposes and you may agree or disagree with an employee's perspective of his or her assessment. The supervisor's evaluation supersedes and is final. (If you do it for one employee, you must do it for all employees in your unit.)

Avoid Bias

The performance evaluation should not be completed from memory, as the results would likely focus on recent or memorable events, having positive or negative consequences. In fact, in appraising performance, the following common terms are used in describing ways that are subjective forms of rating employees and are to be avoided.

See next page for examples of common bias situations.

Biases

First Impression (Primacy Effect)

Supervisors form an overall impression about the employee on the basis of some particular characteristics of the employee identified by them. The identified qualities and features may not provide adequate basis for overall evaluation.

Halo Effect

The individual's performance is completely appraised on the basis of a perceived positive quality, feature or trait; e.g., "she is always here, rain or shine." In other words this is the tendency to rate an individual uniformly high or low in other traits if he or she is extraordinarily high or low in one particular trait. If a worker has few absences, his or her supervisor might give him a high rating in all other areas of work.

Horn Effect

The individual's performance is completely appraised on the basis of a negative quality or feature perceived. This results in an overall lower rating than may be warranted if the performance were objectively evaluated.

Excessive Toughness or Leniency

Depending upon the Evaluator's own standards and values employees may be rated very strictly or leniently. Some managers take the line of least resistance and rate people high while others, by nature, believe in making the assessment excessively severe. The unnatural extremes can render a system ineffective. If everyone is rated high, for example, the system has not done anything to differentiate among the employees.

Central Tendency

An Evaluator rates all employees as average performers. That is, it is the Evaluator's attitude to rate people as neither high nor low and follow the middle path. For example, a teacher with a view to play it safe might give a class grade equal to a B ("Meets Standards" or "Satisfactory"), regardless of the differences in individual performances. If everyone is rated the same, the system has not differentiated among the employees.

Personal Biases

The way a supervisor feels about the individuals working under him or her—whether he/she likes or dislikes them—has a high level of effect on the rating of their performances. Personal bias can stem from various sources unrelated to the performance on the job.

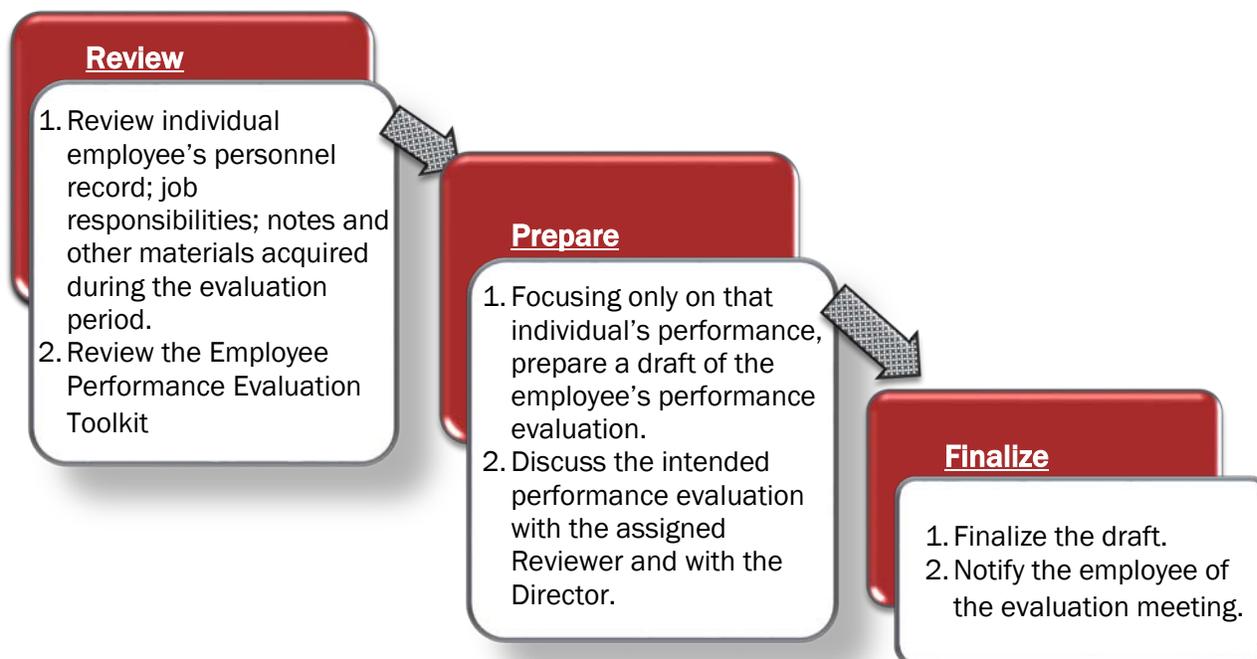
Spill-Over Effect

The present performance is evaluated much on the basis of past performance. The person who was a good performer in the distant past is assured to be doing well today.

Recency Effect

Rating is influenced by the most recent behaviour or events while ignoring the commonly demonstrated behaviours during the entire evaluation period.

Complete the Evaluation Form.



Prepare for the Evaluation Meeting.

Review all items you considered when you evaluated the employee's performance and behavior, and have them available during the interview. The following are some suggestions that supervisors may find helpful when discussing the evaluation with the employee:

Have on hand factual information, such as attendance records, time schedules, and other records and/or examples, showing either above average or deficient performance.	Be clear about the strengths and weaknesses in his/her performance about which you are going to talk.	Have specific suggestions about how he/she can improve in those areas where you believe improvement is needed.
FACTS	CLARITY	SUGGESTIONS

The Meeting: 2-Step Method

How the supervisor discusses the evaluation with the employee will have a major influence in shaping the employee's perception of the supervisor, the Town, the program and his/her desire to improve or sustain good performance.

Step 1: Setting the Stage

- ✓ No one can achieve perfection. Everyone has some shortcomings or “room for improvement.” Do not use the evaluation as a weapon to compel employees to conform to an exact pattern of behavior, but to encourage them to meet and exceed the minimum standards of performance; to strive for excellence.
- ✓ Do not go into the employee meeting before reviewing the rating form to recall why you rated the employee as you did. (Hopefully, you have made prior notes.)
- ✓ Keep the job duties and tasks in mind and a copy of the job description, as appropriate. Consider any special circumstances that may have affected the rating.
- ✓ Organize a simple, straightforward plan for conducting the discussion. Adapt the plan to the personality of the employee, his or her point of view, and the existing circumstances.
- ✓ Provide for privacy during the interview. Arrange a meeting place free from distractions and noise and with at least a minimum of comfort.
- ✓ Think what you want to accomplish:
 - What, specifically, do you want the employee to do differently as a result of the discussion?
 - What effect will this discussion have on the employee’s morale?

Step 2: Conducting the Meeting

- ✓ Do not seek to dominate the employee by reason of your position as supervisor.
- ✓ Prevent the discussion from becoming argumentative by relating under-performance objectively, with compassionate honesty, insofar as possible.
- ✓ Your discussion with the employee should clearly define the specifics related to the performance criteria and the employee’s job responsibilities.
- ✓ Ensure mutual understanding of performance expectations.
- ✓ Give the employee an opportunity to speak freely, to ask questions, and provide feedback.
- ✓ Be open and receptive to ideas and suggestions; actively listen to determine how you can provide support for the employee in the next performance period.
- ✓ If the employee refuses to sign the evaluation form, do not force the issue. Remind the employee that it is simply an acknowledgement that the evaluation has been given and that he/she can provide comments or additional information for the record.

Conclude the Interview.

- Ask the two 360° questions concerning your help or hindrance in the employee's ability to achieve his or her goals during the year. Fill in the answers and have employee initial them.
- Be sure the employee understands what is expected of him/her in the next year.
- Allow the employee to write comments on the evaluation form if he/she objects to the rating; advise the employee that he or she can submit comments within five (5) working days, in accordance with A.R. 2.16.
- If there is a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), remind the employee of the date of review of the PIP.
- Make sure the employee receives a copy of their completed and signed (or unsigned, if refused) evaluation. Ensure you note an employee's refusal to sign an evaluation.
- **Thank the employee for his or her contributions to the unit, department, and to the Town.**

Begin the Cycle for the Next Evaluation Period!