

Organization and Human Resource Consulting

Coaching to Improve Performance

Addressing Performance

Considerations for addressing performance that is below expectations:

- Address performance concerns when they arise.
- Be honest and be caring. These two qualities are not mutually exclusive.
- Hold two-way conversations. Seek to understand the employee’s perspective.
- Recognize your role in helping the employee be successful.

Documenting Performance

Document conversations related to improving performance. The primary reason to document is to remember what was said. The second reason is to be aware of patterns or trends. There are two types of documentation files:

- **Supervisor’s Working File** – this is for you to keep in a locked drawer. It is for informal documentation such as coaching notes. All documentation in the file should be factual and objective. Information in this file may be subject to public disclosure.
- **Employee’s Personnel File** – this is housed centrally in your college and/or department and is for formal documentation. According to university policy, this file moves with the employee if s/he transfers to a new department. Disciplinary actions issued (verbal or written reprimand, suspension, etc.) must be placed in this file. All documentation in the file should be factual and objective. Information in this file may be subject to public disclosure.

Tips for holding a conversation to improve performance

The following tips will help you prepare for and hold a conversation to improve performance:

1. **Discuss in private**
Hold the conversation in a private location.
2. **Describe the situation**
What is the performance context?
“Hi _____, I’m interested in talking about _____.”
3. **Describe behaviors**
What did you see or hear?
“I’m concerned that _____.”
If a policy or rule was violated, clearly state that here.
4. **Describe the impact**
What is the impact of the behavior on results, customer satisfaction, team morale, etc?
“The reason this concerns me is because _____.”
5. **Listen**
Listen to understand the employee’s point of view.

Tips for holding a conversation to improve performance, continued

6. Determine needs

Ask open-ended questions about what the employee needs to be successful.

“What do you need to be successful in carrying out _____?”

“What training would be helpful?”

“In what ways can I support you?”

7. Come to an agreement

Come to an agreement on what you will do differently and what the employee will do differently.
Determine time frames for these improvements.

8. Review

Discuss how and when you will reconnect to review how things are going.

9. Document your agreement

Explain that you will be documenting this conversation.

Ask the employee to sign the document indicating that this conversation took place.