Performance Management at Ohio State
The First Conversation ~ Performance Planning

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Introduction – Welcome to Coaching and Feedback

“The manager needs to look at the employee not as a problem to be solved, but as a person to be understood.”

- Nigel Nicholson

Historically performance management processes have been designed to instill feelings of compliance – forms that must be completed by a certain date with little or no perceived relevance to the goals and values of the department or the university. At Ohio State, we have a performance management process that is designed to instill the levels of commitment we need to fuel a high performance culture. Our institutional values guide the entire process of performance management.

In this first conversation, Performance Planning, we will discuss how the manager and the employee work together in setting goals and objectives that are clear and attainable and in line with the values of Ohio State.

Also included in this conversation are practice exercises to help you deepen your skill in writing objectives and goals, whether you are experienced or just starting out. It is important to note that the word “goal” is used in this manual but it is interchangeable with the word “objective”.

It is key to remember that these are conversations. Clear communication between manager and employee is central to developing the relationship that will facilitate the entire performance management process.

“People see this as a moment of real challenge, and it is. But I also view it as a moment of real opportunity. We need to be the architects of our own destiny rather than its victims. And we will do so by focusing on talent and culture and using those to create major changes in the way we do our work.”

- E Gordon Gee
**What is Performance Planning?**

The first conversation in the performance management process is **performance planning**. During this conversation, employees should come to a clear understanding of:

- What is expected
- What kind of support they will get
- How the job is accomplished using our Institutional Values.

Performance plans should be developed annually, and, if job responsibilities or priorities change, more frequent revisions are appropriate.

**Outcomes of Performance Planning**

Performance Planning produces:

- Agreed-upon expectations and goals for the employee’s performance;
- An understanding of what the employee will need with regard to resources, materials, information and training in order to be successful; and
- An understanding of what the employee needs from their manager with regard to coaching, feedback and support.
Roles and Responsibilities

The approach to planning and establishing objectives and goals involves both the employee and the manager.

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring the employee is aware of the responsibilities of their position;
- Helping the employee understand how their goals align with the unit goals and the university’s goals;
- Helping the employee understand Ohio State’s Institutional Values;
- Serving as a coach and mentor to the employee in establishing goals for the performance cycle; and
- Creating and sustaining a healthy work environment.

Employees are responsible for:

- Having a thorough understanding of their position responsibilities;
- Providing information for discussion with the supervisor relating to any necessary changes in the current position description;
- Providing input on their suggested objectives and goals and areas of focus for the upcoming performance cycle;
- Understanding what constitutes “successful performance” in accomplishing objectives and goals and demonstrating institutional values;
- Understanding how their position and goals align with and contribute to the goals of the unit and the university;
- Communicating to the supervisor what information, resources, training, etc. may be needed to aid in success;
- Asking questions to clarify information; and
- Being accountable for their own performance.
Chapter One – Setting Goals

Goals are short, clear statements of what needs to be accomplished. Goals have a beginning and an end. They may be task-focused so the outcome is the completion of a project, or they can be learning focused so the outcome is an acquired skill or new level of knowledge. Individual goals should align with university goals, department or team goals and/or the employee’s career aspirations. Goals make it possible for people and organizations to move forward in a pre-determined direction.

Purpose of Goals:
- To act as a compass – point the way
- To help us prioritize activities
- To boost our sense of accomplishment and satisfaction
- To help us reach our full potential

Setting goals works when…

- The goals are challenging and specific
- Feedback is given that enables the person to measure progress towards the goal
- The manager and employee are both truly committed to the goal
- The person has or can acquire the necessary skills and abilities
- Goals are reviewed regularly for continued relevance

The clarity and specificity of a goal has a direct bearing on whether or not the goal will be attempted or achieved. We need to be clear in the purpose and direction of our work, which is why goals are so important to performance management.
How to Write Goals

High performance means more than “business as usual” or “just getting the job done.” High performance involves reaching toward new and compelling outcomes that lie beyond normal expectations.

Exercise:

How does setting clear and challenging goals enable high performance? What is it about a goal that moves us toward high performance?

Notes:

Examples:

- Goals challenge employees to reach higher and further.
- Goals provide a mechanism for the employee and the manager to evaluate the employee’s performance.
- Goals offer an opportunity for employees to use existing strengths and build new ones.
**Exercise:**

If you are a manager, select a position of one of your employees (think about the position not the employee). If you are an employee think about your own position and the job requirements. What does high performance look like for this position?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Job Function (what we do)</th>
<th>High Performance Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Anticipates customer needs and issues in such a way as to help them solve future problems, not just current ones.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Values (how we do it)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity and Personal Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness and Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity in People and Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you want to learn more about behaviors that demonstrate Ohio State's values go to the Excellence to Eminence web site and/or follow this link to [Aligning Behaviors](#).
SMART Goals

SMART goals are characterized by the following:

S - Specific – The more specific the goal, the more likely the success. Specificity takes the guess work out. Managers won’t find themselves saying, “Well, this is NOT what I meant!” Employees won’t find themselves saying, “Well, why didn’t you say you wanted THAT?” Managers need to be very clear themselves on what they expect so they can be clear with their employees and set them up for success. Employees should know exactly what’s expected of them so there is no room for interpretation, guesswork, or trial and error.

Specific goals answer the following questions:
- Who is involved?
- What needs to be accomplished?
- Why? What's the purpose or benefit of accomplishing the goal?
- How does the goal fit with the vision and goals of the department?

M - Measurable – While specific goals help clarify the “what” of a goal, measurable goals clarify the “how much”, “how well”, or “to what level or degree” of a goal. Measuring takes the guesswork out of determining if a goal was actually achieved or not. Unfortunately, most managers tend to make vague quality demands of their employee and then assume their employees know how to translate those statements into the level of quality the manager wants or needs.

If goals are measured, managers won’t find themselves saying, “Well, this isn’t the quality I was looking for.” Employees won’t find themselves saying, “I had no idea you wanted it done like that.” Measurable goals answer the question, “How will I know when it’s accomplished?”

A - Action oriented – Goals that are action oriented help keep the focus where it should be; on the employee’s behavior. Many times goals are aimed at the end result, no matter how the employee gets there. The assumption, of course, is that the employee uses legal, ethical and moral ways to accomplish goals.

At Ohio State the end result is important but we also care about how it is done. Behavioral goals are aimed at how an employee gets the results expected of them based on the institutional values and the department’s values. Focus action oriented goals on results AND behaviors.

R - Realistic – When goals are realistic they keep an employee on track and motivated. When employees hit realistic targets, they gain self esteem and confidence (confidence in themselves and in their manager). Realistic goals make it possible to hold employees accountable. The more involved an employee is in writing the goals, the more likely he or she will push to keep them realistic. Seek a balance between too low a goal and too unrealistically high a goal.

Realistic goals also need to be relevant to the vision, goals and values of the department. Employees deserve and want to feel they are part of something bigger than their own job. They will be more motivated and make better decisions when they understand how they fit in with the bigger picture.

T - Time Bound – Time bound goals measure the “when” of the goal. Time bound goals help managers and employees monitor and gauge progress and stay on track. Time bound goals remove ambiguity of when a goal should be accomplished. Don’t use words like “often” because often to one person is completely different than “often” to another.

With time bound goals, you won’t hear managers saying, “Clearly you should have done this by now.”
Chapter Two – Goal Setting Steps

It’s great to set goals but if you don’t put them into action, they’ll never get accomplished! The manager and the employee together will:

- Focus it as much as possible
- Write a goal statement, using SMART criteria
- Brainstorm as many action steps as you can
- Narrow down and finalize the action steps
- List the action steps in the order they must be completed
- Assign deadlines for each one
- Review your goals frequently and revise as needed

“When we set our goals and break them into bite-size pieces, there is no limit to what can be accomplished.”
- Anonymous

- Identify the result you want – what are you reaching for?

Moving from Goals to Action!

Action plans are the steps that are necessary to achieve a goal. These questions must be answered for action plans to be effective:

**What** specific steps need to be accomplished to achieve the goal?

**How** do the steps (or tasks) need to be ordered?

**When** must each task be accomplished?

**What** resources are needed to accomplish each task?

**How** will each step be measured?

**Who** else may be involved in this?

Action steps are specific to the person, time, place and environment. For the same goal to be accomplished by different individuals in different settings, the action plans may very well be different given:

- The individuals unique combination of skills, abilities, and experiences
- The resources available in the organization or external environment
- The priority that the organization places on the particular goal
- The amount of time the individual has to focus on the goal
Practice – Make it a Performance Goal
Remember your SMART criteria

Set-up a new data base
Rewrite:

Increase team morale
Rewrite:

Respond to customers
Rewrite:

Advise students
Rewrite:

Set-up for event
Rewrite:

Clean classrooms
Rewrite:
Tips

When planning and setting objectives it comes out better if there is a mix of:

- Real motivation and clear direction
- Creative thinking that reaches for the objective and is open to experimenting
- Courage to face dead ends and bumps in the road and learn to convert them into new motivations and directions
- Willingness to challenge the status quo
- Willingness to take a risk and knowledge that there will be uncertainty in achieving the objective

“Without goals and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination.”
~ Fitzhugh Dodson

Remember…

- Start small. Set one or two goals that are critical.
- Keep goals posted.
- Managers and employees should talk about goals frequently.
- Track progress in writing – it will help with performance reviews.
- Recognize and celebrate completed goals!
Chapter Three – The Conversation

Managers and employees should engage in the planning conversation together. Both parties should bring their thoughts, ideas, and questions to the conversation. This time together allows the manager and employee to plan for the upcoming year and ensures both parties are on the same page. During a planning conversation, managers and employees should ask and answer the following questions:

- What are the specific goals to be accomplished during the performance period?
- What results will constitute “high performance”?
- How will they be measured?
- How will these results contribute to the unit’s success and the success of the university?
- What values must be adhered to and what behaviors will exhibit these values?
- Why are the values important and how will they help the employee meet the expected results?
- How will the values be measured?
- How will performance be tracked during the year? (e.g. regular one-on-one meetings, coaching sessions, etc.)
- How will the employee’s performance be evaluated at the end of the performance management cycle?
- What does the rating scale look like?

During the planning conversation, managers and employees must be curious listeners while asking clarifying questions. The following questions will help ensure they are on the same page:

- Is this a reasonable goal?
- How do you feel about this?
- What do you see as the priorities for our team, department, and the university?
- What are your most important goal(s) for the coming year?
- Is there anything I could do to make your job easier?
- How do you think our business is going to change in the future as a result of...(e.g. move from quarters to semesters)?
- What has worked well for you in the past? What have you seen others in my situation do?
- What are other choices? What options do I have?
- Do you think this is something the department really needs? Is this something the university needs?
- Is there anything I should add to make this a “smarter” goal?
Chapter Three – The Conversation, continued

How do the Institutional Values play into this?

I am curious about…
Can we talk about this some more? I do not agree with….
What is the next step? When can I follow up with you?
What can we commit too?

The planning conversation is also a time for managers and employees to reconnect. The following discovery questions will help managers and employees further develop their relationship:

Describe how you best like to learn.
What do people say you do best?
What talents are you most proud of?
What is the most important thing you and I should talk about?
What was the best working situation you’ve ever had?
What do you wish you had more time to do?
What things are you doing that you would like to stop doing or delegate to someone else?
May I ask your advice about…..?

As the manager and employee set goals for the upcoming performance year, it’s important to follow-up the planning conversation with the development conversation. Sometimes the two conversations will occur at the same time. Other times, the conversations can take place over a series of meetings.

In order to effectively have this conversation, the manager and employee must discuss the employees’ strengths and areas of opportunity. Questions to help the employee think about their development during this next year are:

How can the employee use their strengths to reach their goals?
How can the employee develop other skills to enhance their performance?
What resources does the employee need?
How can the manager support the employee to ensure their success?

For more information on employee development, see The Second Conversation, Development.