

JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY



PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW
GUIDE

HOW TO CONDUCT A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

An appraisal interview should help improve an employee's job performance by:

1. Using this opportunity to communicate your appreciation for the employee's contribution
2. Informing the employee of his or her overall performance appraisal and the criteria used for determining the rating.
3. Having an open proactive dialogue with the employee about how he or she can correct any performance weaknesses and build upon strengths.
4. Clarifying any misunderstanding about performance expectations of the employee
5. Building and cultivating a stronger working relationship between the supervisor and employee
6. Establish goals and objectives for the coming year

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

More harm than good can result if the appraisal interview is improperly conducted. Therefore, careful planning is necessary prior to conducting the interview. The supervisor should select 3 – 5 goals applicable to the employee's position requirements. **NOTE:** If there is more than one incumbent in the same position, **all** should be evaluated with the same chosen criteria. Additionally, the Supervisor should:

1. Schedule an appointment time sufficient for both the supervisor and employee.
2. Provide a private environment to keep interruptions to a minimum.
3. Review pertinent employee information, including personnel records, performance and or project status reports, and position descriptions.
4. Decide what is to be accomplished in the interview. Avoid ambiguity to: (1) clarify the chosen performance criteria, (2) carefully measure the reasons for giving specific ratings, and (3) determine which areas of improvement are needed.
5. Consider the employee's point of view. Anticipate what his or her reaction to the discussion might be, remembering that each employee is different and each may react differently in an interview.
6. To begin the discussion satisfactorily, have an opening statement carefully prepared (e.g. *We are here to discuss your performance rating...*)
7. Maintain a positive attitude. At the time of the interview, if the supervisor is upset or angry, the interview should be rescheduled for a more appropriate time.
8. Have the necessary forms or information ready to present during the scheduled interview; searching for such information during the interview is distracting.

BEGINNING THE INTERVIEW

The supervisor's introductory remarks often set the tone of the entire interview. For that reason, it would be advantageous for the supervisor to create a friendly, constructive atmosphere at the outset. The supervisor should:

- Be natural. The approach should be friendly, courteous and professional.
- Put the employee at ease and establish a rapport. This can be done with a pleasant greeting and a friendly statement of interest to the employee, which would prompt a reply.
- Explain to the employee the purpose of the interview and the appraisal process. The employee should have a clear understanding of the criteria used in determining the rating.

DISCUSSION OF THE APPRAISAL

This is the crux of the process - the supervisor should be prepared to face various reactions from the employee. Most employees are doing a satisfactory job and are happy to know where they stand and how they can improve their job performance. However, dealing with employees who are poor performers or who are skeptical of the ratings is more difficult. The following guidelines may be useful in approaching either situation. The supervisor should:

1. **Compliment the employee without going to extremes.** Failure to recognize good performance may cause a "*What's the use?*" attitude. However, overdoing the compliments will raise questions about the supervisor's sincerity and abilities.
2. **Constructive criticism.** If pointing out a weakness, offer the employee a constructive means to correct it.
3. **Clarify the reasons why the rating was given.** Cite specific examples of performance - deal with facts and avoid generalities.
4. **Be sure the employee understands what is expected of him or her.**
5. **ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN.** Allow the employee to express reactions to the evaluation; this can result in discovering the underlying causes for marginal performance. This process should not be a one way dialogue, but a meaningful conversation.
6. **Do not interrupt** – but make sure the discussion is not sidetracked by irrelevant topics.
7. **Ask the employee for suggestions on how job performance can be improved.** Use this opportunity to guide employees towards improvement.
8. **Keep the appraisal job-centered.** Avoid discussion regarding personality shortcomings, unless they adversely affect departmental operations or the employee's performance.

9. **Maintain objectivity.** Do not display anger or hostility, regardless of any hostile remarks the employee may make - remain calm and professional.
10. **If the employee gets angry, listen.** Do not expect to convince the employee of anything while he or she is angry.
11. **Allow the employee their self-respect.** Nothing is gained by “proving” the employee wrong, being sarcastic, overbearing, or unduly stern.
12. **Develop and cultivate the employee’s commitment on specific steps for improvement and any follow-up activity.** This commitment should be documented. You may want to consider having a mid-year conference as a follow up to the discussed improvement plan.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

1. Summarize the discussion and the employee’s plan(s) for improvement.
2. Schedule a follow-up interview, if necessary.
3. End the interview on a positive, constructive note.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

The supervisor should consider the following questions. If “yes” has been answered to each question, the appraisal interview has been successful.

- Does the employee clearly understand the goals and objectives of his or her position?
- Does the employee clearly understand the reason for any unsatisfactory ratings?
- Does the employee have a clear understanding of what and how performance improvements can be made?
- Is the employee motivated to improve?
- Does the employee understand the repercussion of what will happen if his or her performance does not improve?
- Were plans for performance follow-up clarified to the employee?
- As a result of the interview, did a better relationship occur between the supervisor and employee?

The supervisor should record the essential points of the interview and note anything that could have been done differently to make the next interview more effective. It should be remembered the interview is part of a continuing process of communication between the supervisor and employee. The next step is follow-up.

PITFALLS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

PITFALLS	SUGGESTIONS
<p>1. <i>The isolated incident</i></p> <p>A rating should not be based on a few isolated incidents. When this is done, the rating is unfairly influenced by non-typical instances of favorable or unfavorable performances.</p>	<p>1. Consider the entire appraisal period. Enumerate high points and low points in performance, and then assign a rating that typifies the employee's normal performance.</p> <p>Do not attempt to assign a rating to an element of performance and then create justification to support it.</p> <p>Be able to explain the reason for each rating.</p>
<p>2. <i>The "HALO" Effect</i></p> <p>Examples: An employee's work is of good quality; therefore other ratings (such as those on promptness or quantity) are higher than normal. Another employee is frequently absent, with the result the ratings on other factors are unusually low.</p>	<p>2. Rate each factor independently.</p> <p>When rating more than one person simultaneously, it may be helpful to rate all employees' performance on one factor rather than one employee's performance on all factors.</p> <p>Use the overall rating to give weight to individual factors.</p>
<p>3. <i>The "CLUSTER" Tendency</i></p> <p>The tendency to consider everyone in the work group as above average, average, or below average. Some raters are considered "tough" because they normally "cluster" their people at a low level. Others are too lenient. "Clustering" overall ratings usually indicates the rater has not sufficiently discriminated between high and low levels of performance.</p>	<p>3. In a group of people in similar jobs, performance is likely to be spread over most performance categories.</p> <p>Review your own record as a rater. Check the tendency to be either "too tough" or "too lenient" in your appraisals.</p>
<p>4. <i>Rating the Job and Not the Individual</i></p> <p>Individuals in higher-rated jobs are often considered superior performers to those in lower-rated jobs. This normally means confusion exists between the performance appraisal and how the job is evaluated.</p>	<p>4. Consider how an individual is performing in relation to what is expected.</p> <p>Rate the person's performance, not the job.</p>

5. Length of Service Bias

There is a tendency to allow the period of an individual's employment to influence the rating. Normally, performance levels should be higher as an individual gains training and experience, but this is not always the case.

5. Recognize that some people may never achieve top ratings, regardless of length of service.

Watch closely the progress of newcomers and be ready to recognize superior performance if it is achieved.

**PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL
INTERVIEW NOTES**