

Conducting the Review Discussion

1. Establish importance by holding it in a private setting with no interruptions.
 - a. Provide a relaxed format.
 - b. Have all materials at hand.
 - c. Establish rapport immediately.
 - d. Clearly explain the purpose and format of the discussion.
2. Start on a positive note. Set the tone as one of communication and feedback, not one of judgment and critical evaluation.
3. Confirm that the employee has a copy of the position description (if job duties or standards are used), self assessment and the expectations that were established at the beginning of the review period. These forms are critical; you and the employee will use them as the basis of the review discussion.
4. Discuss the employee's job responsibilities to determine if a separate meeting should be scheduled to determine if significant changes need to be made for next year. If there are concerns regarding the achievement of the actual job responsibilities, solicit feedback from the employee in order to determine his or her understanding of the job. This is an opportunity for you to compare your perception of the job with that of the employee. Clarify expectations and any misinterpretations. Explain how the employee's job and role fit in with the goals of the department and/or university. This is generally a separate process, which is not a part of the performance review discussion because it should occur during the year.
5. Compare the employee's actual performance to established expectations. Use documentation to discuss specific instances of performance. Be honest, accurate and candid. Base your assessment on actual occurrences and provide examples. The employee has the right to hear what contributed to his/her performance being rated as Top Performer, Valued Performer or Opportunity for Improvement.
6. Be sure to give credit for achievements and work done well. Give specific examples and mention resulting benefit to the university, the department and/or to their own personal development.
7. Focus on important job dimensions. Do not deal with minor infractions of little significance. Discuss them at the time they occur and then forget them: unless you see a trend developing. In addition, don't let the employee divert you from the subject at hand by wanting to rehash these minor infractions.
8. Apply effective communication skills.

- a. Encourage the employee to talk. Ask open-ended questions. Ask for the employee's assessment, comments and suggestions.
 - b. Use your listening skills and do not interrupt. Check for understanding.
 - c. Avoid emotionally loaded expressions, such as, "You always..." and "You never..."
 - d. Apply coaching techniques.
9. When you must criticize, criticize the employee's performance, not the employee personally. Describe the employee's behaviors, not personality traits or attitude. Constructive feedback focuses on specific action, never on the individual. Discuss positive, as well as, unsatisfactory performance. Provide specific examples, remind the individual of previous conversation, and explain why these behaviors are problematic or how they benefit the organization.
10. Minimize your role as a judge. Attempt to collaborate.
11. Never compare one employee with another. It has little productive value and can create resentment and jealousy.
12. Check for presence of barriers or constraints to performance, such as inadequate working conditions, excessive workload, absenteeism of a critical contributor, etc. Seek to gain an understanding, rather than simply pushing for an agreement on your assessment of the employee. Ask what you can do to be of greater help. Emphasis should be on improvement and learning for the future rather than criticism of the past.
13. There should be no surprises. You should have addressed poor performance at the time it occurred. If the employee's performance has not improved, discuss it again and develop an action plan. The performance review discussion is not the place to mention instances of poor performance for the first time. If poor performance is significant, a Performance Improvement Plan should be developed.
14. Concentrate on overall performance, not isolated incidents.
15. Avoid common rating errors in forming your opinion about the employee's performance.
16. Remember: The aim of the performance review process is to evaluate past performance, and more importantly, to look ahead and provide the employee direction for the future.
17. Receive feedback from the employee in a constructive manner.

- a. Listen carefully and seek to understand what is being said. Do not interrupt.
- b. Avoid trying to come up with a solution on the spot. Say, "I will need to look into that."
- c. Ask questions—get more information. Ask for examples.
- d. Liberally use the phrase, "Tell me more."
- e. Try not to get defensive. Behaviors that hinder one from effectively receiving feedback are:

- 1. Justifying
- 2. Building a case
- 3. Denial

- f. Do not take it personally. Be open-minded because there may be a better way to achieve the same outcome.
- g. Admit mistakes. Do not try to assign blame on someone or something else.
- h. Do not allow the employee to divert the discussion about someone else's performance.
- i. Thank the employee for the feedback.

18. End the performance review discussion on a positive note by discussing anticipated achievements and any other topics you think may encourage and motivate the employee.