The Supervisor's Toolkit

Making the Transition to Supervision

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Managing Performance – The Most Important Thing You Do!

Managing the performance of your employees is at the core of your job. It’s what you get paid to do. A performance review system provides a process for assessing the effectiveness of the work performance of an individual employee basis as well as that of your overall organization.

Observation and Feedback

Observing an employee’s work performance and providing the employee feedback should not be limited to an annual event. Rather, observation and providing feedback should be a routine part of your supervisory duties and should be done in a timely fashion.

Observation

Observation involves noticing specific facts, events or behaviors related to work performance. The observations made form the basis for effective performance feedback. The purpose for making observations of your employees’ behavior is to identify and describe it in relationship to work performance. In addition to supporting feedback, observations of an employee’s behavior may suggest actions that may be taken to support, develop or improve her/his performance.

Feedback needs to be based on observable or verifiable data. When observed and/or verifiable, feedback is more likely to influence an employee’s future behavior. Feedback that cannot be supported by concrete examples of behavior (e.g., rumor, unsubstantiated accusations, mere feelings) have little or no positive impact.

Feedback

Feedback can be defined as information about past behavior, positive or negative in nature, which is delivered in the present and which may influence future behavior. Feedback should be provided regularly and close in time to the actual observed behavior. As a general rule, you should provide feedback on behavior as you observe it. You should not wait until the annual performance evaluation to give feedback about an employee’s performance. When observation and feedback are done well and in a timely fashion, issues raised during the annual performance review will not be a surprise to the employee.

A Note of Caution – Do not rush feedback for the sole reason of making it timely. In emotionally charged situations, it is usually best to delay performance
feedback until emotions have cooled. Further, make sure that you conduct feedback in an appropriate setting. Take the time to find an appropriate time and place. Take into account the need for privacy.

**Behaviorally Based Feedback**

When providing an employee with feedback, be sure to describe the performance in terms of actual, observed behavior. Feedback should not be based on assumptions, interpretations, generalizations or judgments about what the behavior or facts mean. Compare the following two examples of feedback:

1. “That was a very poor report. I wish you were more committed to doing a good job.”

2. “Your report was not prepared in the standard format and the content was based on data that was over a year old.”

Note that Statement #1 focuses on judging the employee as having a lack of commitment and “telling” the employee that the report is “poor” without further specificity. This approach is not very helpful in terms of getting the employee to correct his/her performance. The 2nd approach, however, provides the employee with specific information about the report. The information clearly conveys to the employee what needs to be improved without making judgments about the employee’s character.

Now, compare these two feedback examples:

1. “That was not your best work.”

2. “The project was completed two weeks later than you had stated it would be and that led our customer to believe we were not competent. What will it take to ensure that you deliver on time in the future?”

By basing performance feedback on specific facts, your employees can learn what specific behaviors they need to change in order to meet performance expectations. Example #1 provides the employee with only vague feedback. Statement #2 gives the employee more detail about the problem with the project and why it is important to improve. Statement #2 also asks for the employee’s input regarding performance improvement and eliminating any future problems in this area.
Guidelines for Providing Behaviorally Based Feedback

1. Behaviorally based feedback should be founded on specific, observable or verifiable data and information. It should be delivered as close to the event or behavior as possible.

*(e.g., “I observed you arriving to work at 9:30AM on Monday, Tuesday and, again, on Wednesday. You know your scheduled start time is 9:00AM.”)*

2. Feedback should be provided in cases of positive performance as well as in cases where performance is not up to expectations.

3. After describing your observation to the employee, ask for input prior to deciding what the behavior actually means.

*(e.g., You have observed your employee arriving to work late for a number of days. Before deciding that she/he is just irresponsible, get an explanation. You may find that there is a valid reason for the behavior or that factors exist that may help you better understand your employee’s behavior.)*

4. Discuss the impact and/or consequences of the performance. Do not make threats or promises. When an employee understands the impact of his/her behavior, he/she will know why it’s important to the organization to change the behavior.

*(e.g., “As a result or you being late, other staff members had to stay overtime to cover your desk.”)*

5. Communicate through your tone of voice and body language, as well as your words, that your intent is to be helpful when you are giving feedback. The goal of feedback is to reinforce positive behavior or to improve behavior so that your employee can ultimately maximize their success.

Documenting Performance

An effective performance review system requires that documentation be kept throughout the year to record discussions regarding your employees’ performance. Whether the performance is negative or positive it is imperative that it be adequately documented. Documentation provides a history of an employee’s performance, evidence to resolve any misunderstandings and provides the basis for the final, year-end evaluation rating.
As managers and supervisors we are often confronted with situations where an employee is not performing up to standard. Obviously, these types of situations require us to make decisions about what type of action to take. Ultimately, the quality of the decisions we make regarding work performance issues will have a great impact on the final results. The following process will help provide you with a framework in which you can make sound decisions.

**Question #1**

*Does the employee know what is expected of him or her?*

If the answer is “yes”, then you must ask yourself why isn’t he/she doing what’s expected of him/her?

If the answer is “no” or “not sure”, then you need to explain (educate) the performer about exactly what is expected?

**Question #2**

*Does the employee know how to do what is expected of her or him?*

If the answer is “yes”, then you must ask yourself why isn’t he/she doing what she/he knows how to do?

If the answer is “no” or “not sure”, then you need to show (train) the performer exactly how to do what is expected?

**Question #3**

*If the employee knows what’s expected and knows how to perform the task, then why isn’t he/she performing to standard?*

This will lead you to possible causes:

- The performer lacks the required personality and/or intellectually based traits to perform the task.
- The performer is not personally motivated to perform the task.
Coaching & Counseling

The Coaching Process

Coaching is an interpersonal relationship between you and one or more of your associates in which you are attempting to guide and develop them toward improved job performance. In coaching interventions all parties involved agree on the purpose and the goals. The four steps in the process are:

1. Explanation
2. Demonstration
3. Application
4. Follow-up

Explanation

In this step you need to clearly explain the situation—the performance that needs to be improved. You’ll need to decide to do it verbally, in writing or use a combination approach.

Demonstration

Generally you demonstrate the desired performance in conjunction with the explanation. The desired skill or behavior is modeled in some way.

Application

In the application the learner attempts to follow the explanation and demonstration by performing the skills or modeling the behavior. You, or a delegate, in the role of coach observes and provides feedback on the performance. The learner continues to practice until the coach indicates that the desired performance standard has been achieved.

Follow Up

You, or a delegate, periodically reviews the performance and continues to provide feedback and corrects any mistakes. The follow-up step is generally the most neglected step.
Counseling is a one-to-one relationship between you and an associate. The purpose of counseling is to help the associate to see his or her work situation more realistically and to develop ways of solving job performance problems. Through the counseling interaction, your associate is given the opportunity to gain insight into his or her behavior by thinking through the situation. The six steps in the process are:

(1) Preparation  
(2) Confront the Problem  
(3) Express Your Concern  
(4) Get the Associate’s Perception  
(5) Confront with Facts  
(6) Resolution

**Preparation**

Start by checking your sources of information and gathering the facts. Next, prepare an outline of the counseling situation that includes the points you want to cover and follow it.

**Confront the Problem**

Always have a face-to-face meeting with the associate involved. Right up front, state the purpose of the meeting. Don’t take notes. However, if your associate insists on taking notes, then you might also want take some.

**Express Your Concern**

State how the problem is affecting the associate’s performance and how the problem is impacting others in the organization. Explain why you are concerned. Include praise for your associate’s strengths and recognition for past contributions.

**Get Your Associate’s Perception of the Problem**

Listen closely and actively to your associate’s response. Maintain eye contact. Withhold your own opinions, judgments and “solutions.” If you must say something, then stick to clarifying questions or reflection statements.
Confront with the Facts

If your associate denies having the problem, rely on your documentation. Deal with each issue separately. Work hard to determine where any disagreement lies. Don’t allow the associate to make comparisons with other employees. Keep the focus on your associate. KEEP YOUR OWN EMOTIONS UNDER CONTROL!

This step is the whole purpose of the counseling process and has a series of sub steps:

- Get agreement on the problem.
- If agreement can’t be reached and the meeting has deteriorated, stop the session and reschedule.
- Get your associate’s involvement in finding a solution.

Resolution

- Get your associate to make a commitment to take action.
- Spell out the details. What will happen. How it will be accomplished. Who will be involved. And, by what date the action will be completed.
- Get your associate to agree to and “own” the plan of action.
- Offer your support and ask your associate if there’s any way you can be of help.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting.
- Provide praise and recognition for any changes as soon as they occur.
- Remain friendly and positive throughout the process.
Constructive feedback not only helps employees do their work more effectively, but also improves communication between you and your employee. Frequently, supervisors, subordinates, and coworkers do not provide enough constructive feedback to each other. When specific and accurate information is provided in a constructive way, both employees and supervisors can improve or change their performance.

Importance of providing Feedback

All employees who are performing competently should receive frequent praise and encouragement. Those who are not performing at the expected level should be informed of any problems and "coached" on how to improve. Apprising employees of good performance helps maintain their motivation and signals them to continue in this direction. Communicating with employees in a positive manner when they need to improve their performance will help prevent chronic work problems and minimize surprises during the Performance Review.

There are two important principles to remember in providing feedback:

- Both positive and corrective feedback should be given as close as possible in time to when the relevant performance occurs
- The performance should be documented

Guidelines for Giving Positive Feedback

Positive feedback is defined as providing feedback to someone who has done something well and deserves praise for his or her efforts. In providing positive feedback, the following general rules should be followed:

1. Respect the individual's privacy by choosing a time and place to speak without interruptions or being overhead by others. However, there may be occasions when it is appropriate to praise an employee publicly.

2. Clearly describe what the individual did to deserve praise.

3. Express personal appreciation and explain how the behavior helps in performing the everyday duties and responsibilities
4. Ask if there are any job-related problems that the individual may need help with. Employees particularly appreciate it when their supervisors care enough to ask how they might help with any work problems.

5. If necessary, the supervisor should schedule a follow-up meeting to see if the employee's concerns have been addressed.

**Guidelines for Giving Corrective Feedback**

Corrective feedback is defined as providing feedback to someone who has not done something well and who requires some corrective action to improve performance. Good corrective feedback is provided in a constructive way that will continue to motivate the individual. In providing corrective feedback, the following general rules should be followed:

1. Respect the individual's privacy by choosing a time and place to speak without interruptions or being overhead by others. Privacy is especially important when giving constructive feedback.

2. Focusing on the problem, not the individual. Avoid personalizing feedback, e.g., "Chris, the billing in the unit is two weeks behind; I'd appreciate your input concerning how to bring it up to date," NOT "Chris, you are slowing up the billing!"

3. Identify exactly why the problem causes difficulty for the unit and cannot be allowed to continue.

4. Ask for the person's help in resolving the problem and discuss the ideas he or she offers for its solution.

5. Reach agreement on specific actions that each person will take to solve the problem. Confirm this agreement by restating it and by assigning a specific time frame or deadline to complete action.

6. Schedule a follow-up meeting to examine the effectiveness of these actions.

7. Never threaten the individual with ambiguous consequences if the behavior doesn't change, e.g., "Shape up or you'll be very sorry." The purpose is to motivate a change in behavior for positive reasons.
steps can and should be taken through the disciplinary process if behavior does not change.

8. Never use feedback as a way to "put a person down" or "in their place," to embarrass the individual in front of others, or to relieve anger.

9. Attempt to leave the person motivated to perform better. If he or she is not motivated to improve, then the feedback was non-productive.
Administering Discipline

Part of managing human performance is using properly administered discipline to correct unacceptable behavior or to prevent poor performance. The administration of discipline is at times unpleasant, and is certainly something that neither party looks forward to. But when dealing with problem or difficult employees and all other means prove to be ineffective, discipline remains your only option. Remember that the point of discipline is twofold:

1. Keep employees from repeating poor performance or unacceptable behavior.
2. Keep other employees from committing the same unwanted performance.

- Be Consistent – If one person gets suspended for not completing a required report four times in one month, then anybody/everybody should be suspended for the same offense.

- Avoid Emotionalism – This holds true even if your employee loses his/her temper or gets childish about the situation.

- Match “Crime with Punishment” – Discipline needs to be administered in proportion to the offense. **Always check with Human Resources before taking disciplinary action!**

- Discipline to Improve Performance – Discipline must not be seen as a way to “get even” but as a way to modify or change behavior.
Rules for Administering Discipline

- Do not Delay Discipline – Putting off administering disciplinary action can mean that the offending employee, as well as other team members, can lose the significance of the event and the action taken.

- Don’t Hold Grudges – When an employee behaves in an unacceptable manner, remember that it is the performance you don’t like, not necessarily the individual. Make this clear to the employee.
Motivating Employees

Successful supervisors/managers know how to motivate their employees. Although everyone is motivated by different needs, most people will tell you that two of the most important things they look for in a company are mutual respect and personal involvement. When workers feel good about themselves, the work they do, and the company they work for, it is much easier to gain their cooperation. Below is a list of ways in which you can pull the very best out of your employees:

**Involve employees in decision-making process.** Give employees a share in decision making. If not deciding what is to be done, then how it is to be done, or when or in what way, by whom. Let their "share" increase over time.

**Keep employees informed.** Keep employees informed about changes that can directly affect them such as policy changes, procedure or rule changes, product information changes, and performance changes.

**Be aware of the morale level of your employees.** Be sensitive to changes in morale. Know when and why it goes up or down.

**Maintain an open-door policy.** Be approachable, available, and interested, not distant.

**Develop a caring attitude.** A good manager trains, develops, counsels, guides, and supports her employees.

**Be sure to listen.** Always listen to and try to understand what employees are communicating.

**Always treat your employees with respect.** Be thoughtful and considerate of the person you are dealing with.

**Ask for suggestions.** Be sure to invite suggestions and new ideas from employees concerning work. Be willing to put good ideas into action by making changes.

**Give "constructive" criticism.** An effective manager gives constructive criticism and never makes personal attacks.

**Recognize your employees.** Give appropriate praise and recognition for a job well done.

**Outline job responsibilities.** Make certain employees know exactly what is expected of them and how their performance will be evaluated.

**Maintain high standards.** By involving employees in establishing high standards of performance, you will build their pride and self-confidence.
Motivated Employees just don’t happen. They are the product of a motivated, energized workplace. The following “thought starters” should help you develop that positive, motivating work environment that’s critical to your organization’s success:

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Think starters</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Think of three ways you can add some fun and variety to your employees' daily work routine.</td>
<td>a.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Identify areas where your employees can provide input on and make choices about their work.</td>
<td>a.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b.</td>
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<td>3. In what ways can you encourage your employees to take ownership of their work in the work environment?</td>
<td>a.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. In what ways can you encourage your employees to act as leaders in the work environment?</td>
<td>a.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5. Specifically, what actions can you take to foster teamwork in your department?</td>
<td>a.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. What about teamwork between your department and other departments that you deal with everyday?</td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>b.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c.</td>
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<td>7. How can you minimize negative criticism directed at the operation or other employees? by (Hint: Do you allow people to learn from their mistakes? Do you actively and regularly communicate important information to your employees before they hear it through the ‘grapevine’?)</td>
<td>a.</td>
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8. What types of goals and/or challenges can you give to your employees to make them more productive?
   a. ____________________________________________________________
   b. ____________________________________________________________
   c. ____________________________________________________________

9. How can you let your employees know that they are appreciated each day?
   a. ____________________________________________________________
   b. ____________________________________________________________
   c. ____________________________________________________________
Team Building Checklist

This checklist identifies critical factors in team effectiveness. As a team leader, you have the responsibility to ensure a yes response in all areas.

**Step #1:** Use this checklist to target team success. This checklist identifies critical factors in team effectiveness. As team leader, you have the responsibility to ensure a yes response in all areas.

**Step #2:** Rate each area on a scale of 1 to 5 (five being best.) To get the team on track, give particular attention to the low scoring areas.

Ongoing evaluation of these areas and continuing to answer the questions in a positive manner will allow your team to operate at top levels.

**I. Team Goals:**

___ 1. Does your team have clear goals?

___ 2. How will the team know when the goals have been achieved?

___ 3. How will success be measured?

___ 4. Are the goals seen as important to the team?

___ 5. Do the goals challenge the team to use their skills and abilities?

___ 6. Does the team have a high level of commitment to achieve the goals?

    Area Rating: ________

**II. Team Support:**

___ 1. Does the team feel management will support the team efforts?

___ 2. Does the team get the information they need to accomplish the goals?
Team Building Checklist

___ 3. Is recognition for effort and accomplishment provided for the team and its members?

___ 4. Are risk taking and creative thinking supported?

___ 5. Is the team leader open to team input?

___ 6. Does the leader listen to individual team member concerns?

Area Rating: _______

III. Team Communication:

___ 1. Does the team communicate effectively?

___ 2. Is there conflict within the team? How effectively is conflict resolved?

___ 3. Do team members feel comfortable discussing key issues?

___ 4. Are different points of view respected?

___ 5. Does the team keep a record of record issues raised and decisions made.

Area Rating: _______

IV. Team Culture:

___ 1. Do team members trust and respect each other.

___ 2. Are team members treated with dignity and respect?

___ 3. Is there a climate of professionalism?
Supervisors’ Toolkit

Team Building Checklist

___ 4. Do team members understand their individual roles responsibilities?

___ 5. Do team members encourage each other?

___ 6. Is knowledge share effectively within the team so that each member can be more successful?

Area Rating: _______

V. Team Performance:

___ 1. Do team members have clearly defined and measurable standards?

___ 2. Do team members have the skill required to do their job?

___ 3. Are team members required to adhere to team standards?

___ 4. Does the team actively seek information about how well they are doing?

___ 5. Does the team ask for customer feedback?

___ 6. Does the team have a concern for continuous improvement?

___ 7. Does the team make an effort to review and eliminate outdated policies and procedures?

Area Rating: _______
Supervisors’ Toolkit

Situation Review Steps

When faced with a work situation that seems too big to get your arms around, having a systematic process to help you sort out the issues is essential. Working your way through the following process steps will facilitate your work planning efforts:

1. **Identify Job Concerns**
   - Separate your concerns into major categories such as personnel, projects, budget, work procedures, etc.
   - Note the possible impact of or reason for each concern.
   - Make your list visible and update it regularly.

2. **Separate and Clarify Your Concerns**
   - Separate each complex concern into single issues. You can resolve each issue one by one.
   - Make sure that each single concern is based on facts, not opinions or hypotheses.
   - A single concern should describe a single problem, decision, or concern.

3. **Establish Priorities for Addressing Your Concerns**
   - Use the following factors to prioritize your concerns:
     - **IMPACT** – describes the seriousness of the concern or the effect of the concern.
     - **URGENCY** – describes the time constraints or pressure to address a concern.
     - **Trend** – describes the potential for change in the seriousness of the concern.

4. **Determine Your Starting Point for Addressing Your Concern**
   - Is the concern a problem for which you do not know the cause?
   - Does the concern involve making a choice from several options?
   - Does the concern involve implementing a plan?
Change Management is really “Transition Management?”

Transition is not just another word for change, although the words are sometimes used as though they were the same.

Change involves the emergence of a new situation, and it is likely to be made up of one or more external events. Transition, on the other hand, is the psychological reorientation that people go through as they come to terms with those events and the new situation. Change takes place very quickly. Transition takes a long time, often beginning even before the change takes place and always continuing long after it is complete.

All change follows a three phase cycle – a cycle of Endings-Transitions-New Beginnings. It’s useful to keep this concept in mind as you plan for manage your operation and employees through change.

A Transition Management Approach

To effectively manage transition, you need to have a workable plan.

Step 1: Develop and execute an effective change-management plan.

People need to be able to see how their situations are going to change so they can deal effectively with the resulting transitions.

Step 2: Identify where groups and key individuals are in the three-phase transition process.

Transition is a three-stage psychological reorientation process triggered off by change. It starts with an ending, continues through an extended neutral zone, and finishes with a new beginning.

Phase 1-Ending/Loss: Only after people have left behind the old life can they begin to grasp the new.

Phase 2-The Neutral Zone: A time when the old identity is gone but the new identity is not yet established.

Phase 3-The New Beginning: A new identity, a new sense of purpose, a new store of energy, and a new sense of commitment have been realized.
Step 3: Develop and implement strategies for managing endings and losses and focus them on those parts of the organization where people are in that first phase of transition.

Step 4: Develop and implement strategies for leading people through and profiting from the neutral zone, and use them in those parts of the organization where people are in the second phase of transition.

Step 5: Develop and implement strategies for helping people to make a new beginning. Direct your efforts toward those parts of the organization where people are in the third phase of transition.

**The Key**

It’s transition, not change that people resist.

- They resist giving up who they are and how their world has been
- They resist the chaos and emptiness of the neutral zone—a state that has been compared to being “between trapezes”
- They resist the risky business of launching a new beginning—doing and being what they have never done and been before

Unless we can help people through the transition and build in to the organization reliable ways of providing such help whenever there is a change, all those reorganizations and mergers and downsizings and cultural changes that we need to make are going to fail. Worse, everyone of them is going to leave wreckage behind.