

Integrity in Performance Evaluations

Why do performance evaluations? Because it is an important part of, and reinforces, the overall performance management effort. It provides formalized summary documentation and feedback of whether and how employees met work expectations.

Time Invested to Provide a Meaningful Performance Evaluation

Yes, it takes time and effort to prepare and deliver a performance evaluation that is meaningful to the employee and the organization. It can be uncomfortable to tell an employee their work product or behavioral interactions are not aligned with the department's or County's goals, values, or priorities. It's even more awkward to avoid having those discussions throughout the year, saving it all up for the year-end performance evaluation. Likewise, it's unfair to withhold praise for a good job when it's done.

Best Practices

The trend is to move away from one-and-done, year-end, formal recognition, and to move toward ongoing, informal, and spontaneous recognition and feedback throughout the year. This approach motivates employees and is meaningful because the feedback and recognition are specific to the project or task at hand.

Throughout the year, regularly dedicate time to consider employees' performance, share feedback, and note it in a draft evaluation document. Adding the feedback to a draft performance evaluation throughout the year records examples of how the employee is doing, and results in more meaningful annual evaluations and discussion.

Record as You Go

Make writing the evaluation a work-in-progress, year-round. Supervisors should regularly connect with employees, and take notes on the highlights of discussions, including information that will support an accurate assessment of work performance. These practices help produce a valuable, accurate document by year's end. Recording examples of the employee's work experiences and behaviors makes completing the final document an easy task, reflective of the entire year's performance. Supervisors should capitalize on opportunities to connect with employees and recognize achievements in the moment. Then take the next moment to jot it down in the draft evaluation.

Accurate, Specific, and Relevant

It's the supervisor's responsibility to explain performance evaluation results to the employee. That's relatively easy when the supervisor and employee have been meeting throughout the year, and work examples have been shared as they occur and subsequently noted in the performance evaluation. When recorded close in time to their occurrence, examples are more likely to be accurate, specific, and relevant.

Adding to the draft document throughout the year allows supervisors to capture changes in goals, priority assignments, or areas of emphasis. By discussing changes in work projects or areas of focus, the supervisor can ensure the employee understands current goals and priorities and remains aligned with organizational or departmental initiatives. These conversations also create opportunities to gain employee support and investment in the areas most important to individual and organizational success.

No Surprises

The best kind of evaluations are ones where there are no surprises. The evaluation document is customized and personalized to the employee. However, don't solely rely on a written document to provide all the feedback and recognition for an employee's hard work throughout the year. Supervisors should remember to express their appreciation for a job well done.

Continual Feedback

Don't we all want to find meaning and value in the work we do? Reinforcing and acknowledging desired approach emphasizes a performance-based work culture beyond simply showing up for work.

Don't get left behind and caught in the same old traditions. On a day-to-day basis, manage employees with the mindset of recognizing performance, whether it be an accomplishment or something straying from the desired path. Maintaining regular and open communication with employees is the best way to guide successful performance.

Goals, Last Year and Next Year

Employees who understand their role and how it supports the organization's goals and values find it easier to be proactive to address change, make sound decisions, deliver on commitments, and use good judgment. Reflect on the stated goals and responsibilities from the employee's last evaluation, and state next year's goals and responsibilities, detailing areas of focus where the employee needs to correct, improve, achieve, or acquire.

Giving a well prepared performance evaluation is important. Providing a written performance evaluation and engaging in meaningful performance focused discussion with each employee reinforces the County's expectations and alignment of the employee's work.

Following these practices will maintain integrity in the annual, overall performance evaluation.