

AN AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARD
FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Performance Management

AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARD



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AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARD FOR
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Performance Management Standard

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AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARDS INSTITUTE, INC.



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Suggestions for improvement of this document are welcome. They should be sent to the Society for Human Resource Management, Secretariat, HR Standards, 1800 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314.



Foreword

The information contained in this Foreword is not part of this American National Standard (ANS) and has not been processed in accordance with ANSI's requirements for an ANS. As such, this Foreword may contain material that has not been subjected to public review or a consensus process. In addition, it does not contain requirements necessary for conformance to the Standard.

ANSI guidelines specify two categories of requirements: mandatory and recommended. The mandatory requirements are designated by the word “shall” and recommended requirements by the word “should.” Where both a mandatory requirement and a recommendation are specified for the same criterion, the recommendation represents a goal currently identifiable as having distinct compatibility or performance advantages.

ABSTRACT

Every organization, regardless of its mission, strives to reach objectives through its workforce. Successful results are achievable if all members of the organization team know and share strategic goals and know and achieve their individual goals. Therefore, effectively managing employee performance is critical to organizational success.

Over the years, consensus has developed about the minimum elements of an effective performance management system, particularly in three areas—goal setting, performance review and performance improvement plans. This Standard defines these minimum effective elements without restricting firms from customizing to match their unique business climates.

The Standard is structured at a high level. Specific consideration and responses are also addressed for consideration by individual organizations based on specific performance management environments and requirements.

TASKFORCE MEMBERS

At the time it approved this document, the Performance Management Taskforce, which is responsible for this Standard, had the following members:

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1.0 Scope, Purpose, Application, Interpretation

1.1 SCOPE

The scope of this Standard is limited to three elements of a performance management system: goal setting, performance review and individual performance improvement plans. Although a performance management system encompasses many other elements and interfaces, such as compensation planning, individual or team development plans, and job descriptions, these elements are not addressed in this document.

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard is to put goal setting, performance reviews and performance improvement plans in the context of a performance management system and to identify the minimum elements required for them to be effective. Recognizing that all organizations have unique cultures and objectives, the Performance Management Taskforce intends for these standards to be applicable to the broadest possible range of organizations—large and small, public and private, union and non-union, and for-profit, not-for-profit and nonprofit.

1.3 APPLICATION

Organizations hoping to build, redesign, update or evaluate a performance management process can use this Standard as a guide.

1.4 INTERPRETATION

To achieve consistent application of this Standard, suggestions involving changes in the requirements or disputes over its interpretation shall be referred to the following organization:

HR Standards Secretariat
Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
1800 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Fax: 703-962-7807
E-mail: HRSTDS@SHRM.ORG
Website: <http://www.shrm.org/hrstandards>

If it is determined that your inquiry requires an interpretation of the Standard, the inquiry must be submitted in writing, and SHRM will forward the inquiry to the appropriate Standard's taskforce leader for a taskforce response.

2.0 Normative References

The following Standard contains provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this American National Standard. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreements based on this American National Standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the standards indicated below.

2.1 NORMATIVE

The following documents contain provisions, which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this Standard. At the time of publication, the editions indicated are valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties applying this standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the documents listed below.

None.

2.2 INFORMATIVE

The following publications may provide valuable information to the reader but are not required when complying with this Standard.

Pulakos, E. (2004). *Effective practice guidelines: Performance management*. Alexandria, VA: SHRM Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.shrm.org/about/foundation/products/Pages/PerformanceManagement.aspx>.

Pulakos, E. et al. (2012). *Building a high-performance culture: A fresh look at performance management*. Alexandria, VA: SHRM Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.shrm.org/about/foundation/products/Documents/Perf%20Mgmt%20EPG-FINAL%20for%20web.pdf>.

Mathis, R., & Jackson, J. (2010). *Human Resource Management*. 13th ed. New York: South-Western Cengage Learning.

3.0 Executive Summary

Every organization, regardless of its mission, strives to reach objectives through its workforce. Successful results are achievable if all members of the organization team know and share strategic goals and know and achieve their individual goals. Therefore, effectively managing employee performance is critical to organizational success.

Despite the impact performance management can have on individual and business success, effective performance management is difficult to do consistently and well.

Over the years, consensus has developed about the minimum elements of an effective performance management system, particularly in three areas:

- Goal setting: the process of establishing objectives to be achieved over a period of time.
- Performance review: the process of assessing progress toward goals.
- Performance improvement plans: the process of addressing a specific individual performance issue.

Performance management is the foundation for organizational effectiveness for employers worldwide. To innovate, develop, sell and maintain goods and services that deliver value to customers, clients or stakeholders, organizations must employ techniques that encourage and motivate employees to perform to their full potential in a manner that adds value to the organization.

Effective performance management processes serve a critical function in communicating expectations to employees, providing ongoing feedback and coaching, and in some cases addressing performance issues.

In many organizations, the human resource department has the role of oversight and control of the performance management system, but the objective of successful performance management is shared by all members of management. Senior management support for a performance focus is key, as is the creation and maintenance of a corporate culture that supports individual and team accountability for solid performance.

The Standard presented here addresses three elements of an effective performance management system and is intended for the broadest possible application to effective processes for small or large organizations of all varieties and structures.

Although the Standard has been written using individual performance as an example, the principles of effective performance management in this Standard may also be applied to team performance management.

Whereas this Standard offers guidelines for structure and timing, an effective performance management system is dynamic and flexible enough to accommodate differences or changes in business priorities and organization cultures.

4.0 Glossary

4.1 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Alignment	Refers to synchronization between top management and the workforce. Performance goals for individuals and teams should be aligned with the organization's goals. Ideally, each level of goals should "cascade" from the goal level above.
Coaching	For the purposes of this Standard, this term is used interchangeably with "counseling."
Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)	In the United States, refers to the written agreement between a union and management. A collective bargaining agreement is a legal contract between the employer and a group of employees who are represented by a union. It establishes employment terms and conditions for a specified period of time. Depending on the collective bargaining agreement, the possibility exists for preferential treatment for union members in the event of a layoff or other similar situation.
Competencies	Performance criteria based on behaviors. Some organizations develop a set of competencies expected of their employees at each level and measure performance against these competencies. Competencies are "knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO) needed for effective performance in the job in question."
Goal Area	A grouping of related goals.
Goals	Objectives set to drive performance toward achievement. They are expectations for outcomes agreed upon by employer and employee. These may be project goals, duties to be fulfilled or measurements of behaviors.
Individual Development Plans (IDPs)	Career planning tools designed to strengthen employee skills and develop an employee for future opportunities. Individual development plans fall outside the scope of the Performance Improvement Plan Standard, but are defined here to distinguish their purpose and use. An individual development plan (also known as a career development plan) may be used in conjunction with the performance appraisal process as a final documented step to assist employees in goal setting and individual development for future career planning purposes. It may or may not indicate a performance deficiency, but usually forms the basis for a strategic partnership between the manager and the employee to achieve goals in a defined upcoming performance period for the employee's personal career development.
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Quantifiable performance measures based on predetermined success factors of a business, department or project. KPIs may vary by project, department or business, be weighted differently by each project, department or business, and be either financial, nonfinancial or both.
Manager	Used generally in this document to refer to the individual with oversight of performance for workers. In some instances, this position may be called supervisor or team leader. In matrix organizations, this position may be called a coach.
Likert Scale	An evaluation scale indicating an escalating level of agreement or performance; for example, typically a five- or seven-point scale from worst to best.
Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)	A documented process specifically developed to address an individual's unsatisfactory performance issues. The PIP may be used by managers as a means to identify specific goals for an employee's performance improvement, timelines for goal attainment and measurable outcomes that define success against those goals. Terminology can be varied regarding performance improvement plans, and some employers may use the phrase synonymously with individual development plans (defined above). However, the need for a PIP results from specific situations that differ from the career planning design and the use of individual development plans. PIPs are used as part of a well-designed performance management program but are not typically a regular component of the performance appraisal process as it applies to all job incumbents. Instead, the PIP may emerge as an outcome or recommendation of a performance review or may be used on an as-needed basis outside the employer's regular performance review cycle. The PIP is often the first written step in a progressive discipline process, although it may be preceded by coaching and other verbal performance discussions and/or written communications.
SMART	An acronym that captures the elements of effective goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable (or Attainable), Relevant (or Realistic, Reasonable) and Time-Bound.
Union	In the United States, an employee labor organization formed to bargain with management through a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) regarding wages, hours and work conditions. Intended to refer to any kind of employee bargaining structure, including European Works Councils.
Workforce	Refers to all workers over which management has performance oversight. This will always include paid employees but may also include volunteers, contingent workers, temporaries and/or contractors.

4.2 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
IDP	Individual Development Plan
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
SHRM	Society for Human Resource Management

5.0 Overview of Performance Management

Performance management is the system of maintaining or improving the job performance of employees through the use of performance planning processes, along with coaching, mentoring and providing continuous feedback. Over the years, many organizations have implemented performance planning processes. These processes are designed to focus on reviewing the employee's performance by his or her coach, more commonly known as the manager or supervisor.

The traditional intent of a performance review is for an employee and manager to examine, at least annually, the employee's duties, competencies and accomplishments. In addition, the performance review provides an opportunity to develop goals for the coming year and to discuss career advancement issues to ensure the employee's development and growth.

Not all organizations use a formal performance review process and, in some cases, are bound by collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). However, if practiced fairly with a balanced approach, a performance review process can help engage all employees and create a sense of personal responsibility, including in a union environment. These outcomes, in turn, can lead to a healthy work environment that instills pride in its workers and leads to the accomplishment of organization goals.

As generations change, the needs and values included in a performance review process may also change. Therefore, leaders must amend their concept of performance reviews to ensure they capture what is valued by the new generations of workers and specifically a focus on:

- Motivation and learning.
- Coaching and mentoring.
- Effective methods of recognition.
- Effective methods of communication.

Even though these areas have been embedded within the traditional style of performance reviews, a focus on these four components for the next generation's workforce ensures that the human resource function stays relevant and continues to be an innovative, successful leader in employee empowerment.

5.1 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AS A SYSTEM

One of the key advancements that differentiate human resources from its more administratively focused predecessor, personnel management, is the emphasis human resources places on performance management.

More specifically, the routine of examining employee or team performance becomes a process when behaviors and outcomes are subsequently re-measured against goals and past results are compared against most recent results. However, the process evolves to become a system when the measured outcomes of one cycle become the primary input of the next cycle. The importance given to feedback and the formal creation of a feedback loop connects performance management to systems theory.

The most comprehensive application of a dynamic performance management system occurs when the cause and effect connections of current performance are used to define and align future performance. In the field of human resources, the latter connection can be achieved by incorporating the concepts of goal setting and performance improvement plans into the feedback processes of a performance management system.

5.2 FLEXIBILITY OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

This Standard is not designed to promote any particular type of performance management process. A multitude of options may be used. However, the elements of this Standard should be included in any performance management processes the organization selects to meet its needs. Although this Standard addresses documents and plans, the process an organization selects does not need to contain these exact items as traditionally viewed.

If an organization chooses to use a more innovative approach, the elements of this Standard should still be contained in the process, such as goal setting, performance improvement, and opportunities for the employee to provide and document alternative solutions. Somewhere in the process, the organization will assess how the employee or team is achieving the organization's criteria/measure/value. It is during this assessment that these standards should be included.

5.3 APPLICABILITY OF THE STANDARD TO UNION OR WORK COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTS

In general, the performance standards outlined in this document are recommended for use in any work setting, including union or work council environments. However, different jurisdictions and different collective agreements and related legal rights and obligations may, at times, make the application of these standards difficult or impossible. The specific legal parameters of employment will necessarily supersede industry or professional workplace standards and practices. Nevertheless, the underlying elements and processes outlined herein are of constructive value to any and all work environments. Accordingly, where not yet applied, it is recommended that this Standard be strongly considered, if not incorporated, in future collective bargaining contract negotiations or policy and procedure development.

5.4 FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

At a minimum, performance management processes must be fairly and consistently administered without regard to non-work-related issues. To identify unintended or systemic bias, an analysis of the full process and the actual performance ratings by a demographic group should be conducted at least annually.

5.5 ROLES OF MANAGER AND EMPLOYEE

Regular, formal and constructive communication is the central mission of the performance review process. To facilitate this objective, both the employee and his or her manager conducting the performance review should be equally informed and aware in advance of the steps in the process, how it works, why employee performance is evaluated and what the expectations are after the review is completed.

5.5.1 MANAGER ROLE

For goal setting, the manager communicates management's expectations and goals to the employee and works collaboratively to develop individual goals in alignment with organization goals.

For the review itself, the role of the manager is to ensure that the employee's performance review is conducted fairly, objectively and in accordance with the organization's policies and procedures. As a matter of best practice, the manager conducting the review should always be aware of and manage the amount of time each participant is actively communicating during the review. In general, the most effective communication occurs when both the manager and the employee use similar amounts of time speaking or listening.

The manager is responsible for observing and documenting both successful and unsuccessful performance behaviors of the employee or team over the period of the review cycle for later review by the manager. The manager is accountable for providing continuous feedback to the employee about his or her performance. To be maximally effective, performance management is not a once-a-year activity—it is a continuous dialogue between a manager and an employee.

The manager is responsible for translating performance observations into a documented format that is accessible to the employee and for incorporating these observations into the organization's selected performance management process. The manager is expected to communicate clear examples of successful or unsuccessful behavior by the employee.

It is the manager's duty to deliver the performance message to the employee in a manner that informs, teaches, directs and/or coaches

the employee. At the conclusion of an effective performance review, the employee will know what will be expected of him or her going forward.

The manager is expected to document any disagreements with the employee regarding the review. The manager must sign and date all reviews.

For PIPs, the manager's role is to outline expectations clearly and to monitor progress and administer consequences fairly.

5.5.2 EMPLOYEE ROLE

For goal setting, it is the employee's role to participate in developing SMART goals aligned with the organization's goals and to commit to them in good faith.

For the performance review, the role of the employee is to participate in the performance review process in a constructive manner. The goals of the review are greatly enhanced when the employee contributes in an active rather than passive manner. The employee should be aware and respectful of his or her manager's authority and responsibility to conduct the performance review.

Depending on the process developed in a particular organization, the employee may or may not be responsible for completing a self-evaluation.

The employee is responsible for listening to the review of the manager. The employee is expected to take the observations, feedback and goals outlined and incorporate them into his or her future work performance.

It is the duty of the employee to ask questions and/or raise issues with the manager when the employee feels his or her performance has not been measured or documented fairly and accurately. If these questions or issues cannot be resolved in discussion, the employee is responsible for documenting these in a proper format in the performance management process.

The employee is expected to sign and date his or her review, acknowledging that he or she has received the review, not that he or she necessarily agrees with it.

For a PIP, the employee is accountable for committing to the plan steps and for dealing honestly with management.

6.0 Goal Setting Standard

6.1 SCOPE

This Standard describes the minimum effective standard for performance goal setting based on job duties, work projects and desired behaviors. It does not address competencies. The Standard is intended to apply to individual and team performance in large and small organizations within union or non-union environments.

The Standard also includes a timeline for goal setting and the goal-setting process, as well as for documentation and review and adjustment of previously set goals.

6.2 TYPES OF GOALS

6.2.1 JOB DESCRIPTION GOALS

Goals may be based on achievement of a pre-established set of job duties. These goals are expected to be accomplished continuously until the job description changes. Examples might be financial, customer-oriented, or process- or system-oriented goals.

6.2.2 PROJECT GOALS

Goals may be based on achievement of a project objective. These goals may be set for a single year and changed as projects are completed. Job description and project goals are “what” needs to be accomplished.

6.2.3 BEHAVIORAL GOALS

Goals may be based on certain behaviors. These goals are expected to be accomplished continuously. Behavioral goals are “how” things need to be accomplished.

6.2.4 STRETCH GOALS

Goals that are especially challenging to reach are sometimes referred to as stretch goals. Stretch goals are usually used to expand the knowledge, skills and abilities of high-potential employees; however, some organizations require at least one stretch goal for every employee.

6.2.5 RATING SCALE

Most performance management processes use a rating scale to indicate performance levels. Examples are Likert scales or descriptions of successive performance levels. The type of scale should be tailored to the organization; however, all effective performance management processes should incorporate some kind of measurement.

6.3 ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOALS

The development of effective goals carries a number of required elements. Although the words describing the elements may vary, the concepts remain constant.

1. Effective goals should be participative. Both manager and individual should be involved in the development of goals to ensure understanding and commitment.
2. Effective goals should be documented. Whether documented in electronic or hard copy format, goals need to be stored accurately, be available for review and be managed on a continuous basis.
3. Effective goals should be specific, providing a defined result(s).
4. Effective goals should be measurable, providing a statement of not only the current state but also the desired result.
5. Effective goals should be challenging but attainable.
6. Effective goals should be reasonable. They must be relevant to the individual's current scope of responsibilities and within the individual's means to achieve the desired outcome.
7. Effective goals should reflect a time frame by which the desired result should be achieved.
8. Effective goals should be flexible enough to account for changing conditions.
9. Effective goals should be monitored and progress acknowledged.
10. Effective goals should flow from the top down and be aligned with an organization's business philosophy, vision and mission statement.

In summary, an effective goal should clearly describe the expected outcome/result in a qualitative and/or quantitative manner and set a timeline for reaching the expected outcome/result.

Example of a poorly written goal:

Reduce turnover.

Example of an effectively written goal:

Reduce voluntary turnover of business analysts in the Marketing Department from 25% to 20% by June 30, 2014.

6.4 DOCUMENTATION

Goals should be documented in writing in the employee's personnel file, and a copy should be given to the employee. The same document and information should be used to cross-reference the previous period's goals and feedback with the development of new goals and current feedback.

6.5 REVIEWING AND ADJUSTING GOALS

Goals should be revisited as changes occur in the business. Organizations must constantly adapt to economic and competitive factors, and thus they need to align performance reviews with changing organizational missions, business objectives and marketplace demands. A process should be established to allow employees and managers to comment and update progress toward goals on a regular basis, but no less frequently than quarterly.

7.0 Performance Review Standard

7.1 SCOPE

This Standard describes the minimum effective standard for performance reviews. This Standard is not specific to any one business entity, industry, employee group or corporate policy.

The Standard also includes an overview of performance evaluation considerations, the review process and feedback, as well as performance review training, internal controls and calibration.

7.2 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Performance evaluation involves the objective and subjective consideration of how to measure and evaluate employee performance results. Objective indicators of performance can include measures such as dollar volume of sales, profitability or amount of product produced. Subjective indicators typically involve collecting information about employees' accomplishments and assessing the impact of these contributions.

Performance evaluation information is used for decision-making purposes regarding employee performance—is there a need for performance improvement; is performance satisfactory; is the employee ready for promotion to a new role? A measurement scale (for example, a five- to seven-point rating scale or a wording scale such as “does not meet, meets, or exceeds expectations”) may be used to capture employee performance results. Whether numerical or descriptive, the rating scale should provide a sufficient number of rating levels to differentiate performance among employees.

Evaluating performance includes consideration of the full array of factors associated with employee performance success. These address the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics possessed by the employee as they are related to the technical, interpersonal and leadership requirements of the role in question. Job descriptions, role profiles, competency models and other organizational documentation provide a foundation for understanding the demands of particular job positions.

The manager's ongoing assessment of employee performance throughout the review period in terms of both objective and subjective performance indicators provides information about how the employee is performing relative to his or her role. Formal and informal observation and feedback from the manager to the employee are an important part of the performance evaluation process.

7.3 PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS

The performance review process will vary in accordance with the employing organization's existing practices, strategies, objectives and organizational culture, but the elements of the review process are applicable across industry sectors and organizations. This process is distinguished from the structure and tools used by each specific organization; rather, it focuses on how the performance review process is implemented.

Minimum standards for an effective performance review process include:

- A feedback process that is continuous and timely throughout the review period so that employees know how they are doing and what is expected.
- A dialogue that includes performance feedback measured against clear and specific goals and expectations established at the outset of the performance management cycle.
- A process for acknowledging the outcomes of the performance review process that is documented between the manager and the employee.
- A two-way individual conversation between the manager and the employee (preferably face-to-face) at least once a year.

7.4 FEEDBACK

Feedback is an essential feature of all stages of the performance review process. During the performance planning process, both behavioral and results expectations should have been set. Performance in both of these areas should be discussed and feedback provided on an ongoing basis throughout the performance evaluation and rating processes. In addition to providing feedback whenever exceptional or ineffective performance is observed, providing periodic feedback about day-to-day accomplishments and contributions is recommended.

For the feedback process to work well, it should be a two-way communication process that is the joint responsibility of both managers and employees. This method requires training both managers and employees about their responsibilities in the performance feedback process. Effective feedback should be timely, constructive, specific and balanced, and should include both positive and development information based on what the employee did or did not do in terms of his or her behavior. It is critical that feedback be based on behaviors rather than on personal characteristics and that these behaviors are linked to effective versus ineffective performance.

7.5 PERFORMANCE REVIEW TRAINING

The process of training employees who participate in performance reviews is strongly recommended. To be effective, at a minimum, the employee and his or her manager should both be provided with information outlining the steps in the performance review process, the timelines, the expected outcomes at each step and the specific allocation of follow-up responsibilities. Facilitated by the human resource staff where available, role playing, whereby the reviewer is given the opportunity to experience and practice from the position of a reviewer and a reviewee, is considered a best practice.

Although performance review training is not a standard requirement, it can be beneficial in certain jurisdictions where legal considerations relating to the form and content of the performance review are of a more sensitive or risky nature. In such cases, the performance review should not be considered valid unless an appropriately qualified member of the human resource team is present during the review, acting as a participating facilitator during the process. This approach serves the dual purpose of acting as a form of on-the-job training for the supervisor conducting the review.

7.6 MEASUREMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROLS

7.6.1 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT MEASUREMENTS

Performance management measurements and key performance indicators (KPIs) provide an indication of the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's performance management processes, the level of achievement of organizational goals and objectives, and the material risks related to performance management issues.

Efficiency-related performance management measurements, such as the percentage of employees receiving their regular performance review, can be segmented into the percentage of employees in protected categories receiving scheduled performance reviews and the percentage of top performers and key employees receiving scheduled performance reviews.

Additional efficiency measurements include 1) percentage of managers that complete their performance reviews properly and timely, 2) cycle time (i.e., the duration of time spent by the organization on conducting performance reviews), and 3) total cost of the performance management system.

Effectiveness measurements include 1) percentage of performance reviews with clear goals and effectively written performance reviews, 2) percentage of managers satisfied with the performance review process, 3) percentage of employees satisfied with the performance review process, 4) percentage of top performers and key employees satisfied

with the performance review process, 5) percentage of employees who improve their performance and productivity after the performance review, 6) percentage increase in organizational performance after the performance review cycle, 7) the impact of performance reviews in helping the organization defend against charges of discrimination, compensation inequity and wrongful termination, and 8) the impact of performance reviews on the achievement of the organization's business objectives.

Risk measurements include the identification and assessment of the risks related to the organization's performance management processes, such as losses from poor customer service and lower productivity, the departure of critical talent, and increased vulnerability to discrimination.

7.6.2 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INTERNAL CONTROLS

Performance management internal controls are assessment activities that assist the organization in evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of performance management processes. They also provide information to management about the alignment of the organization's performance management processes with business and talent management objectives and about the organization's compliance with internal policies, goals, laws and regulations.

Performance management internal controls include 1) the comparison of the performance reviews completed against the roster of current employees, 2) a review of employee files to ensure the presence of properly completed and employee-acknowledged performance reviews, 3) an assessment of the level of compliance with organizational policies and laws and regulations, and 4) a survey of current supervisors and employees to determine their level of satisfaction with the integrity of performance management processes and with the decisions resulting from individual performance reviews.

7.7 CLEAR STANDARDS FOR A RATING SCALE

Regardless of the type or format of the selected method to review an employee's behavioral and work expectations, clear definitions of each level of performance must be provided. Raters should be provided with examples of behaviors, skills, measurements and other performance factors to assist them in making a decision regarding the performance level.

7.8 PERFORMANCE REVIEW CALIBRATION

In developing a calibration system for the organization's review process, the management team must ensure consistency—between raters, between different departments and between jobs.

Clear definitions of each level of performance must be provided to raters. Raters should be provided with examples of behaviors, skills, measurements and other data that will assist them in making a decision regarding the performance level. This level of detail is particularly important in numerical scales, where one person's "5" can be another's "4."

It is strongly suggested that the calibration system be designed such that a final, overall "score" can be delivered to the employee. Although this type of final score is not a requirement, it will make using performance ratings in pay-for-performance compensation systems easier and improve reporting and analysis.

8.0 Performance Improvement Plan Standard

8.1 SCOPE

This Standard describes the minimum effective standard for creating, implementing and managing performance improvement plans.

A performance improvement plan is a process used to resolve persistent performance problems in accordance with a documented procedure. It is used by management with the support of human resources or other designated professionals and includes elements such as current and expected performance, timelines, measures of performance improvement, and potential outcomes based on whether sufficient improvement was achieved. It provides a vehicle for open dialogue and consistent feedback, which can allow an employee who is not meeting expectations the opportunity to succeed or the manager to prepare for progressive disciplinary actions. A performance improvement plan includes both the feedback conversation and documentation.

The Standard includes appropriate uses and outcomes of performance improvement plans, guidelines for the feedback conversation regarding performance, and guidelines for documentation support.

8.2 APPROPRIATE USES AND OUTCOMES

The uses of a PIP may range from employees who may be new to a role or who are unclear on performance expectations to employees who are regularly not meeting performance expectations and whose performance may necessitate the beginning of a progressive discipline process.

The use of PIPs may be influenced by a labor contract, depending on a management rights clause(s) in the specific contract. If organization employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, referring to the labor agreement will be necessary to ensure that application of any performance improvement process is in compliance with the terms of the union contract.

The PIP process may lead to a number of possible outcomes, including a return to satisfactory performance, extension of the timeline for correcting the performance discrepancy, job reassignment or termination.

8.3 THE PIP FEEDBACK CONVERSATION

See Section 7.4 for guidance on delivering employee feedback.

8.4 DOCUMENTATION SUPPORT

Documentation within the organization should support the use of performance improvement plans. Documentation includes job descriptions, human resource policies and documented performance management processes such as manager guidelines.

8.5 DOCUMENT FORMAT GUIDELINES

The document used to guide the process is a critical tool as it helps facilitate performance discussions, records areas of concern and ways to correct them, and serves as legal and decision-making documentation. The format of the performance improvement plan will vary by employer and should include the following components:

- Employee information.
- Relevant dates.
- Description of performance discrepancy/gap.
- Description of expected performance.
- Description of actual performance.
- Description of consequences.
- Plan of action.
- Signatures of the manager and the employee.
- Evaluation of plan of action and overall performance improvement plan.

Two dates must be included on the performance improvement plan: the date on which the PIP is initiated and the duration of the PIP. The plan should also note the dates or frequency of progress reviews during the duration of the plan—such as once a day or once a week.

The PIP should identify the specific facts about performance results and/or behavioral issues that describe and demonstrate the performance discrepancy. The information should be specific and factual (i.e., not hearsay, opinions, generalized or vague references).

A statement regarding expectations for sustained and/or consistent performance should be included to ensure that true performance improvement has been attained. This documentation may also prove helpful in protecting the employer should performance fail to meet expectations and further disciplinary action needs to be taken.

If the PIP is part of a progressive discipline process that may eventually lead to termination of employment, language in the document should specify that termination is a possible consequence of failure to meet expectations and that it may occur with or without the employee's signature on the PIP. The employee should clearly understand the consequences of not meeting the goals outlined in the PIP.

9.0 Connections to Other Performance Management Processes

9.1 OTHER PROCESSES OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

In addition to the three processes addressed in this Standard, effective performance management systems link to the processes outlined below:

9.1.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Many long-term workforce planning models use performance management measurements to assess the “quality” of the workforce and whether or not the organization is attracting and retaining talented workers.

9.1.2 TOTAL COMPENSATION

Most organizations use performance measurements as the basis for pay-for-performance compensation processes.

9.1.3 INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT

An individual development plan (IDP, also known as a career development plan) is often used in conjunction with the performance review process as a final documented step to assist employees in goal setting and individual development that will serve to advance their career and promotional opportunities.

Development planning is conducted in parallel with performance evaluation rating since past performance, in combination with capability and career aspirations, sets the stage for next steps.

9.1.4 SUCCESSION PLANNING

Performance data over time is vital input for long-term planning for future organizational leadership.

9.1.5 HR TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

Many organizations use software applications to manage the processes associated with goal setting, performance review and performance improvement plans.

10.0 Supporting Documentation

10.1 ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The information contained in the previous standards sets out the minimum effective guidelines for performance management processes, but the most successful organizations often do much more than the minimum.

This section outlines some of the more innovative and successful approaches to performance management. Some of the information is repeated from Section 8.0; this repetition is intentional to provide context and present best practices related to various aspects of performance management.

10.1.1 BEST PRACTICES RELATED TO GOAL SETTING

Managers must have a general idea of the goals they would like their employees to set and be flexible as they receive information from their employee(s) that may be discovered through the goal-setting process.

In addition, managers/supervisors/team leaders/coaches should convey this message in advance to their employees, so they will be well prepared for the upcoming meeting.

Many organizations now use feedback from individuals other than the employee's direct manager. These approaches include 360-degree feedback (feedback from peers, subordinates and manager or managers), peer-only feedback and subordinate feedback, often called 180-degree or upward feedback.

In some cases, this feedback is incorporated into the performance review at the end of the performance cycle—either as an additional item or by selecting elements and comments from the feedback to be included in certain goal areas. This performance management standard does not require or reject this process—but it is mentioned here as an additional process that may be included in performance management. Such a practice often focuses on how goals/objectives are accomplished and, as such, allows for a broader view than just that of the direct manager.

10.1.2 BEST PRACTICES RELATED TO PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

A performance improvement plan is a process used to resolve persistent performance problems in accordance with a documented procedure. It is used by management with the support of human resources or other designated professionals and includes elements such as current and expected performance, timelines, measures of performance improvement and potential outcomes based on whether sufficient

improvement was achieved. It provides a vehicle for open dialogue and consistent feedback, which can allow an employee who is not meeting expectations the opportunity to succeed or the manager to prepare for progressive disciplinary actions. A performance improvement plan includes both the feedback conversation and documentation.

10.1.3 APPROPRIATE USES

The uses of a PIP may range from employees who may be new to a role or who are unclear on performance expectations to employees who are regularly not meeting performance expectations and whose performance may necessitate the beginning of a progressive discipline process.

Depending on the employer, progressive discipline may or may not be called for in given situations. Employers should define the performance situations necessitating a PIP and determine whether a PIP should be applied in lesser situations, such as minor policy violations and attendance issues.

The PIP process may lead to a number of possible outcomes, including a return to satisfactory performance, extension of the timeline for correcting the performance discrepancy, job reassignment or termination.

Although milestones may vary by employer, the PIP is generally used in the three-step context of an informal plan, formal plan and final warning. The term “warning” sometimes does not appear until the final warning. Because the desired goal is typically performance improvement and correction of the issue(s) necessitating the PIP, the word “plan” should be used in earlier documents.

Employers Covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement

The use of PIPs may be influenced by a labor contract, depending on a management rights clause(s) in the specific contract. If organization employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, referring to the labor agreement will be necessary to ensure that application of any performance improvement process is compliant with the terms of the union contract. In general, when any action may lead to disciplinary action, a union representative should be notified. For this reason, this Standard will qualify as a guideline when coverage by a collective bargaining agreement may influence the use of the PIP.

Employers Not Covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement

If no organization employee is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the employer should carefully follow its published performance management processes. PIPs are generally part of the performance management system and may also be referenced in policies related to disciplinary actions. Care should be taken if the organization operates in a non-unionized environment without disciplinary requirements defined in a collective bargaining agreement. Employees may still have recourse for company disciplinary actions (e.g., alleged discrimination).

First Warning to Final Warning

The language in a progressive PIP will get stronger, and the PIP may eventually contain a phrase such as “final warning,” explaining that performance below expectations will lead to a termination or transfer.

10.1.4 DOCUMENTATION

The organization should maintain documentation that supports the use of performance improvement plans. Documentation includes job descriptions, recorded performance management processes (such as manager guidelines), and human resource policies (referencing the progressive discipline process), as outlined below.

Job Descriptions

Performance standards (e.g., expectations, goals, objectives) should be established for jobs through the use of job descriptions. Performance standards may need to take into account business cycles or seasons that may affect a given performance metric. For example, the sales organization may experience peaks and valleys over an annual performance period, and standards may need to account for these fluctuations by adjusting the period of time during which performance is measured. Job descriptions help the manager and the employee identify the performance gap between what is expected for the job and what is being achieved by the employee.

Performance Management Process

Employers should provide employees with a clear description of the performance management processes, explaining the elements of employee performance evaluation (e.g., frequency, performance standards, performance reviews, link to compensation/merit increases) and the consequences of unmet performance standards (e.g., disciplinary process).

Human Resource Policies

Human resource policies may exist in different forms (e.g., employee handbook, manager's/ supervisor's guidebook), but each should include the same written descriptions of the organization's policies, including steps for the disciplinary process.

Language Regarding the Possibility of Termination

If the PIP is part of a progressive discipline process that may eventually lead to termination of employment, language in the document may specify that termination is a possible consequence of failure to meet expectations and that it may occur with or without the employee's signature on the PIP.

10.1.5 DOCUMENTATION FORMAT GUIDELINES

A performance improvement plan includes both documentation and conversation. The document used to guide the process is a critical tool as it helps facilitate performance discussions, records areas of concern and ways to correct them, and serves as legal and decision-making documentation. The format of the performance improvement plan will vary by employer and ideally should include the following components:

- Employee information.
- Relevant dates.
- Description of performance discrepancy/gap.
- Description of expected performance.
- Description of actual performance.
- Description of consequences.
- Plan of action.
- Signatures of the manager and the employee.
- Evaluation of plan of action and overall performance improvement plan.

Employee Information

This section provides the relevant information pertaining to the recipient of the PIP and to his or her location, supervisor and other relevant information deemed necessary by the organization.

Employee name: Include the first name, middle initial and last name to ensure that the correct individual is identified. Include ID number if applicable.

Job title: Include the job title to distinguish the employee and the type of role he or she plays in the organization.

Supervisor/manager: Identify the direct supervisor or manager of the employee to clarify who will be responsible for facilitating the process as well as to provide a point of contact for future inquiries.

Department/location: The department and/or location of the employee helps identify the correct individual. It may also assist human resources or other appropriate personnel involved in the PIP in understanding the area and the environment in which the individual works as well as any internal company practices or state or local laws applicable to that location.

Other relevant identifying information: Because organizations and their policies, practices and needs vary widely, additional information may be necessary or desired on the document. This data may include elements such as hire date, tenure in current position, next-level supervisor and number of people supervised.

Relevant Dates

Two dates must be included on the performance improvement plan: the date in which the PIP is initiated and the duration of the PIP.

Initiation date: The date on which the PIP is initiated is usually the date on which the discussion between the manager and the employee occurs. Often, human resources or other designated individuals will also be part of this discussion.

Duration of the PIP: The duration of the PIP is the actual time frame for which the performance improvement plan will be in effect. For example, a 30-, 60- or 90-day period may be specified to correct the performance deficiency. Longer time frames, up to or exceeding 90 days, may be considered if, in management's judgment, performance cannot be corrected in a shorter time period.

The plan should also note the dates or frequency of progress reviews during the duration of the plan—such as once a day or once a week.

Description of Performance Discrepancy/Gap

The goal of this section of the PIP is to identify or list the specific facts about performance results and/or behavioral issues that demonstrate and describe the performance discrepancy. The information in this section must be specific and factual (i.e., not hearsay, opinions, generalized or vague references).

PERFORMANCE DISCREPANCY: RESULTS AND BEHAVIORS

Performance discrepancies generally fall into two categories—performance results and behaviors. Performance results tend to be easier to measure, and their outcomes easier to observe. Behaviors

may be more challenging to describe. It is helpful to cite specific behaviors or employee actions that contribute to a performance discrepancy instead of using generic labels such as attitude.

An example of a result not achieved would be failure to meet specified goals and deadlines. Examples of behavior discrepancies include not following directions, activities that hinder successful performance of the job, or failure to adhere to defined policies and procedures.

Documenting and discussing the impact of the performance discrepancy may also be helpful. The following list provides examples of possible impacts:

- Money or profit lost.
- Time lost or wasted.
- Materials wasted or scrapped.
- Equipment damage or under- or overutilization.
- Quantity of work completed.
- Quality of work completed.
- Accidents or other safety concerns.
- Lost business opportunities.
- Need for extra supervision.
- Impact on co-workers.
- Impact on customers.

Description of Expected Performance

This section outlines the performance expectations and standards that must be met and sustained by the employee. These may include meeting expectations of organizational policies, practices and procedures and the expectations of the specific job or role the employee plays in the organization, as well as specific expectations of the employee's manager.

Performance standards or expectations exist in a variety of forms within organizations. The performance improvement plan must not only identify the discrepancy but also link that discrepancy to clear employer expectations for satisfactory performance. Resources for performance standards include:

- Job descriptions.
- Employee handbooks.
- Policy manuals.
- Collective bargaining agreements.

- Department guidelines.
- Project plans.
- Performance appraisals.

If the above resources do not address specific goals related to the performance discrepancy, additional resources will need to be consulted to clearly communicate expected and measurable performance with the written performance improvement plan. If the PIP process reveals that additional performance goals need to be formally documented, a feedback loop should exist to incorporate new goals into the appropriate medium. Whether relying on existing goals or updating organizational performance goals, all goals should be evaluated to ensure they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

A statement regarding expectations for sustained or consistent performance should be included in this section to ensure that true performance improvement has been attained. This documentation may also prove helpful in protecting the employer should performance fail to meet expectations again and further disciplinary action needs to be taken.

Description of Consequences

The employee should clearly understand the consequences of not meeting the goals outlined in the PIP. Therefore, any repercussions that may result from either meeting or not meeting the performance expectations communicated in the plan should be clearly stated. This documentation will ensure that the employee knows the seriousness of the issue and the need for it to be addressed.

CONSEQUENCES WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE NOT SATISFACTORILY ACHIEVED

Guidance should be sought from human resources or other appropriate professionals in developing, managing and making decisions based on performance improvement plans. These professionals should help create the language that will be appropriate for the particular situation. The following are sample statements that represent various scenarios and levels of seriousness in an organization:

- “If expectations are not completely met, further disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may be taken.”
- “If the individual fails to meet performance expectations, he or she will be demoted to a level, job or role commensurate with his or her current skills, abilities and behaviors.”
- “If the described expectations are not satisfactorily achieved, the individual will be given an additional 30 days to meet and

sustain expectations. If the individual fails to meet and sustain expectations, further action, which may include termination, will be taken.”

- “If the individual has more than one reoccurrence of the existing performance deficiency during the next 60 days, he or she will be terminated immediately.”

CONSEQUENCES WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE SATISFACTORILY ACHIEVED

It may be helpful to document the outcomes of satisfactorily meeting performance criteria by the evaluation date. This documentation might include closing out the PIP, adding a separate note to the file that the employee has achieved satisfactory performance, communicating and/or updating goals and expectations for the employee moving forward, modifying an existing development plan, or other action.

PLAN OF ACTION

The plan of action documents the specific actions, activities, steps and/or processes the employee will follow to reach expected performance. This section of the PIP should also include the resources available, accountabilities and a clear definition of the criteria and the timeline that will be used to measure results.

The plan of action is a collaborative effort between the employee and the manager. Whereas the manager may start with some suggested actions, the full plan of action should be created together and agreed on in the performance discussion. This collaborative process will encourage ownership of the problem by the employee and demonstrate support and commitment from the manager.

In addition, a timeline for achieving overall desired performance should be defined. This timeline includes a start date, one or more progress review dates and a final evaluation/reevaluation date. The progress review meetings ensure regular communication and allow the employee and the manager to identify any obstacles to success or any resources that were not identified during the initial development of the plan of action.

Individual timelines pertaining to specific actions may also be identified in the action plan. For example, the manager may check timecards daily for tardiness or require the employee to provide a weekly project status report; the manager may also assign a colleague to review the employee’s work before it is submitted.

SIGNATURES OF MANAGER AND EMPLOYEE

The employee may refuse to sign the PIP, in which case the manager's and witness's signatures confirm the meeting took place. In this situation, the employee should be given a copy of the PIP by the manager and in the presence of a witness to confirm that the employee did receive the PIP.

EVALUATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION AND OVERALL PIP

Evaluation of the plan takes place on an ongoing basis and ultimately at a predetermined review date. This review date may be identified as an evaluation of the performance improvement plan outlined by the PIP or a reevaluation of the individual and the accompanying performance issue(s).

The evaluation or reevaluation section documents the results of the plan and outlines next steps or outcomes. Depending on the employer, employee and results achieved, this section may include:

- A rating scale indicating whether improvement was achieved.
- A date for a subsequent evaluation/reevaluation.
- A statement regarding successful completion of the plan and expectations for future performance.
- A statement regarding unsuccessful completion of the plan and the resulting consequences.

Regardless of the results of the action plan, the documentation should be clearly communicated to the employee and documented for his or her employment file.

OUTCOMES

The PIP process may lead to a number of possible outcomes, including successful completion by meeting expectations, extension of the timeline for correcting the performance discrepancy, job reassignment or termination.



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Performance Management Programs

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