

Most managers would agree that a conversation regarding performance with an employee is the most difficult and often avoided task when managing people or leading a team. However, there are many positive aspects of performance management.

Even if you have had plenty of experience managing people, this guide will assist you with correctly managing poor performance issues with your staff. After stepping through the questions you should think about before starting a performance discussion, see the breakdown of the six steps for leading a performance management discussion:



Which staff members need performance management?

Everyone needs performance improvement advice from time to time regardless of what stage they are at in their career. You are helping the employee's career by giving them timely feedback to improve, and it is okay to ask for improvement but still be supportive of your employee. It should be dealt with, and then you both move on.

If you have previously ignored issues because they were just too hard to deal with, you are doing the employee, not to mention your organization, a disservice to not discuss it with them.

You can have the discussion in a way that is respectful towards the employee, and that maintains or even improves your relationship with them.

As well as your employee, your team and organization as a whole will also benefit the positive impacts of effective performance management

Identify and address performance deficiencies

Before you even start to plan your discussion, the first thing you need to do is identify the particular performance issue or deficiency that needs to be addressed. You will need to sit down and ask yourself several key questions: What is the problem? Be specific. You need to include examples, measurements, and data.

- What job expectation is this team member not satisfying?
- How does this employee know your expectations?
- When did you last discuss your expectations of them? Reinforcing your expectations is important.
- Who is responsible for setting those expectations of this employee?
- What is the business impact of this expectation not being met?
- Have I spoken to this employee about this problem before?
- If so, list when the discussion took place, any witnesses- any documentation from the discussion.
- Is there a history of performance problems or disciplinary actions for this employee that differ from the current problem? Is there a pattern of poor performance?
- Are other employees also making this mistake/error, or is it just this employee?

Preparing for the performance discussion

Before you plan what you will say in the discussion, you need to establish the objectives you want to achieve as a result of the performance discussion with your employee. Those objectives should be to: *Advise them of their current performance, and how it differs from your expectations.*

- Ask them to improve their future performance to meet company expectations.
- Offer them whatever support you can in making this adjustment.
- Explain any consequences that will arise if the same performance continues.
- Answer any questions they have about the situation.
- Keep good notes of the discussion for your records.
- Keep in mind, it's vital that you don't wait too long to have this discussion with them.

Leading the performance discussion

Now that you have a thorough understanding of the issues and have established your objectives, use the following steps to design a template or script to help you stay on track. Make sure you choose a quiet and private room in which to conduct your meeting. We recommend you have a management witness to the issuance of any corrective action. Greet the employee politely and thank them for attending the meeting. As you go through the discussion, jot down brief points so that you have a record of the discussion and the agreed outcomes.

Step 1 - State the problem clearly

Advise your team member the reason for the discussion within your first two or three sentences.

State the problem clearly in the same words you would normally use when talking to the employee in the workplace. Make sure you use language that is descriptive, but not evaluative.

If there is no disciplinary action being taken, it is important to advise the employee earlier rather than later. Doing this will put the employee's mind at ease as well as make them more open to discussing the issues at hand.

Step 2 - List briefly any prior discussions (if relevant)

List briefly any prior discussions you have had with the employee about this same issue along with any records or documentation kept, provided that it's relevant.

Step 3 - Ask to hear employee's side

Invite the employee to share their side of the story and provide more information as to why they are underperforming. If the employee feels that this is a one-way attack on them, they are likely to put up their defenses and shut down.

It's also important that you fully understand the issue. Taking the time to confirm all of the facts can sometimes reveal special circumstances that gave rise to what you saw as a performance issue.

Step 4 - Highlight the business impact

Highlight to the employee how their errors or poor performance can affect more than just their personal area of work. It is essential that they understand the broader impacts of their poor performance on their team, business unit, division and organization.

Step 5 - Offer support where appropriate

Offer your support. During your discussions with the employee, you may discover that they require support either by way of coaching, extra training, resources or redistribution of workload, etc. If you deem additional support is required, then it's your job as a manager to assist and support them however possible.

Step 6 - Next steps and follow-up

Take detailed notes during the discussion so you can refer to them at a later date if required. Before finalizing the meeting, ensure that you both agree on a follow-up action plan and advise them of your desire to have a performance discussion, at a future date, to evaluate their progress.

Why is it just so hard to have these discussions?

In summary, the keys to addressing any performance issues are: ensure you have planned the discussion, be clear as to the outcome you want, and remember at the end of the discussion you need an action plan and a future date set to follow it up. Using a template to plan your script will give you confidence and help you keep the conversation on track, as you'll know that you have researched thoroughly and investigated the situation.

Members 1st FCU Corrective Action Process

We apply constructive and progressive corrective action when we address areas for improvement in your conduct or job performance. We reserve the right to administer corrective action in any manner we believe to be appropriate, considering relevant factors such as the seriousness of the misconduct or extent of the job performance problem, any extenuating circumstances, and your work record.

Coaching Sessions

Document session, always help associate understand the expectations. Identify training needed and provide adequate support. Conduct observations, assign mentors and help associate get an “A”.

Development Plan (Expectations of Performance)

This is a coaching plan that helps clarify expectations of behavior & performance and does not go into an employee’s HR file. It is an agreement between the associate & Manager that includes methods the supervisor/manager will help the employee develop needed skills. This step may or may not fit the situation and should be discussed with Manager or Regional to determine appropriateness. *See Development Plan Template on last page.*

Verbal Warning (written)

After 2/3 coaching sessions yet required changes are not visible, move to Verbal Warning. Document the issues clearly using facts, include summary of coaching session dates and objectives. Provide facts, dates & examples (*do not include personal opinion in documentation – only facts*).

Written Warning

Depending on the severity of the infraction, work with your Regional and HR to ensure you have captured the situation factually correct and submit for approval to both for review and/or changes. Then, meet with associate presenting facts. *Associate signature reflects the meeting was held and discussion of issues does not mean associate agrees but simply that discussion was held.*

Final Written Warning

This is usually accompanied by a 3-day unpaid suspension, probation, and loss of incentive. Submit to HR & Regional for approval. Also requires VP approval.

Separation of Employment

This step is for situations where the associate is not responding to quality coaching conversations and the steps above have been followed. Exceptions to the normal progression of corrective action may be made, at management’s discretion, following a detailed review of the situation, any extenuating circumstances and the associate’s record. Requires consultation with VP, Regionals and HR.

Constructive and progressive corrective action for related or unrelated incidents consists of the following steps, based on the number of incidents and when they occur:

- **Coaching Sessions:** Face to face meetings to discuss expectations and examples of non-performance. Hold 2/3 coaching sessions setting clear expectations. Spend time observing, teaching, assigning mentors to support growth & development.
- **First incident (after 2/3 coaching sessions):** Verbal warning issued, documented in personnel file
- **Subsequent incident after the verbal warning:** Written warning issued, documented in personnel file.
- **Subsequent incident after the written warning:** Final Written warning is issued. This step includes 3 day unpaid suspension, 90 day probation and loss of incentive.
- **Subsequent incident during the probationary period:** Typically, a recommendation for separation. A review of the performance/conduct during the probationary period is completed with a recommendation to retain the associate, or to separate the associate from employment.
- **Subsequent incident following successful completion of probation:** Corrective action up to and including separation from employment.

If you believe you have not received appropriate corrective action, you are encouraged to use the dispute resolution process. Employees may dispute any part of the corrective action process. If this occurs, you report dispute to HR and they will guide you through the steps needed.

It is important for all negative behaviors to follow the Coaching Process Steps and that proper documentation is present regarding coaching sessions and discussion to ensure proper behaviors are exhibited at all times.

EXAMPLE Development Plan Template (see Document Warehouse)

Development/Action Plan

Associate		Position		Level	
Dept/Branch		Supervisor		Date	



Objectives	Current Behaviors	Expected Behaviors	Resources (Who will Support, Mentor Books, Training, etc)
Meeting Deadlines, Accountability for Directives from Manager			
Communication Skills			
Leadership & Coaching			
Employee Development & Delegation			