

Developing Employee Performance Plans and Conducting Employee Evaluations An Overview

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY ENGINEERS AND ROAD ADMINISTRATORS

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Does your county have a formal performance plan and evaluation process?

If yes, please raise your hand.

This presentation is an overview of the new LTP405 Developing Employee Performance Plans and Conducting Performance Evaluations course.

The course will launch on November 10, 2023, and will be instructed for the City of Arlington Public Works.

If you are interested in having this course instructed for your county, contact us at the TxLTAP Center. Contact information will be shown at the end of the presentation

Performance appraisals can help your county by:

- Evaluate how well employees are performing their job duties;
- Show where employees can improve to align with the organization's mission; goals, and objectives more closely;
- Allows for open communication about expectations and where an employee is at on their goals.
- Help determine if certain employees need more training and who can take on more responsibilities in the office.

Benefits of Performance Plans

Completing performance evaluations (based on a plan that is in place) can help organizations keep their employees engaged and motivated to work harder. Benefits of having plans in place include:

Creates career growth.

Performance evaluations help employees grow in their careers, particularly if they want to advance to a higher role within the organization.

Improves performance.

Providing feedback helps motivate employees to do well. Employees will work harder when their supervisor shares positive feedback.

Increases employee engagement.

Part of the performance evaluation process is check-ins with the employee. Check-ins involve employees in the review process, which can lead to more engagement and a desire to stay with the organization longer.

Helps determine training.

Performance appraisals allow companies to see which employees need more training and determine what areas to provide training.

Benefits continued:

Clarifies expectations.

During performance evaluations, supervisors can reiterate their expectations for employees. This helps individuals understand their responsibilities and what their supervisor expects.

Allows for conversation.

Performance evaluations create a structured time for supervisors to discuss how each employee is doing and allow for an uninterrupted flow of discussion with no distractions. During these meetings, supervisors should coach staff and offer tips for how to improve their performance.

Evaluates goals.

Employers can evaluate how well employees have accomplished their goals and provide feedback on what goals to set for the next period.

Strengthens team bonds.

Performance evaluations help supervisors and employees align their priorities by brainstorming together. Periodic meetings can build relationships and make the supervisor more approachable.

What are the differences between a plan and an evaluation?

A performance plan should be implemented either at the time of hire or at a regularly scheduled point in time for all employees, such as September 1st of each year for all employees in the organization.

A performance plan is a working tool for any supervisor. They should refer to it often to see how any employee is performing. If you are an employee, you should look at the plan occasionally and rate yourself on the expectations of the plan.

A performance evaluation is precisely that, an evaluation of the criteria that were in the plan. The review will rate the individual job activities and general factors (competencies) of how well employees completed their tasks. It will also acknowledge exceptionally well-done projects by employees, their work ethic, problem-solving skills, etc.

Reasons Why Cities and Counties Do Not Have Plans

It is common knowledge that many cities and counties in Texas public organizations do not use performance plans nor conduct performance evaluations on their employees. This business model was decided on for a variety of reasons that could have included:

- Lack of knowledge of writing and closing performance plans and evaluations.
- Didn't want to do the work associated with performance plans and evaluations.
- Could not justify why they should be done; all employees get the same cost of living raises across the board.
- If employees were not performing up to standards, they would be terminated.
- Belief it could override a supervisor's decision to discipline an employee later if the employee received an excellent evaluation earlier.
- Fear employees will discuss their evaluation ratings with others and spread discord among the team.

Secondary Benefits and Reasons Why Cities and Counties Should Have Plans

Both the employee and manager know what is expected.

No more if's, but's, or I didn't know – plans laid out in writing and acknowledged by the employee and what is expected of them on the job.

The plan allows for employee development.

All plans should have a section on the evaluation form that allows for documentation of completed development (training) activities in the current evaluation cycle and the next cycle, where a new plan is put into place.

Plans substantially reduce the risk of litigation based on employee work habits.

Plans also document the expectations of the quality, performance, and production expected of all employees and supervisors. Having a standardized evaluation process can reduce or eliminate any claims of discrimination.

Keeps the lines of communication open.

Periodic meetings (suggested every three months) between the supervisor and employee should take place using the performance plan to review where things stand. It allows for open, honest communication to take place.

Secondary Benefits and Reasons Why Cities and Counties Should Have Plans - continued

Plans and evaluations help combat unfounded unemployment claims from termination.

If you have to do a termination action on an employee due to performance, you will be asked for your termination paperwork by the Texas Workforce Commission. If you have a well-written performance plan and documentation for coaching and progressive steps of failure to perform, your organization can defend against claims without merit.

Performance plans tied to Job Descriptions.

It has been noted that some cities and counties in Texas need job descriptions for their employees or have very outdated ones. In 2021 the TxLTAP Program launched a special project funded by the Texas State Transportation Innovation Council that provided ready-to-use Job Descriptions (JDs) for Public Works/Road and Bridge operations in cities and counties.

Pay for performance.

If you use a model of giving all employees the same pay raise across the board, you are punishing your hard workers by rewarding those who do not work as hard with the same pay. Performance evaluations can provide the tool to pay those high performers.

Risks When Performance Plans and Evaluations Are Not Used

Aimless wandering without a vision, goals, or objectives.

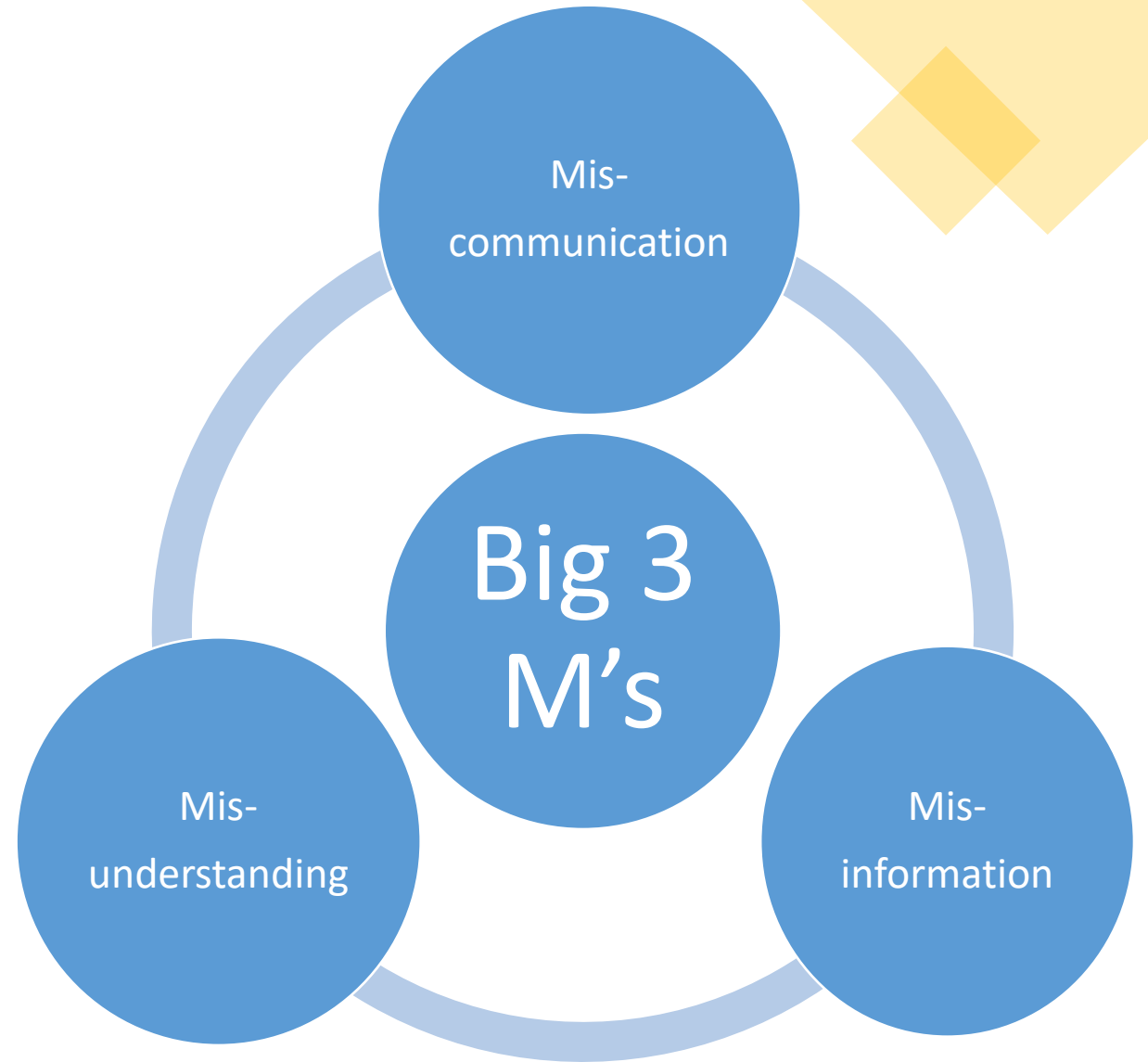
Without defined plans committed to in writing (plan and evaluation), employees and supervisors do not have firm goals or objectives in their daily work. This allows for misunderstandings of what is to be performed when directions are given in a verbal communication medium.

No objective way to distinguish who is performing and who is not.

As a supervisor, you have a good idea of who is performing and who is not based on their daily work. But the larger the crew, the more stretched the time spent with each crew member. Having a system of documenting exceptional and poor performance and then covering that performance during check-ins and evaluation time allows you to pinpoint your true performers and those needing coaching.

Miscommunication, misunderstandings,
and misinformation.

The big 3M's. Miscommunication and misunderstandings can arise from either the sender (supervisor) not being clear in their direction, the receiver (employee) not listening or understanding what is expected of them, or both parties having some fault in the miscommunication. Written plans remove some of the miscommunications and misunderstandings that can arise. Misinformation arises from the supervisor and employees having different ways of processing and retaining what was said or communicated. Without written plans, a person can interpret verbal communications any way they want. Remove the doubt and put expectations in writing in plans and evaluations.



Puts you in the loser bracket on contested terminations.

Fact – you will have to terminate employees for poor performance.

Fact – a certain percentage of terminated employees will file for unemployment compensation, even if you know they were terminated for cause.

Fact – the Texas Workforce Commission will ask for your performance evaluations on the terminated employee.

Fact – if you don't have one, more often than not, TWC will rule in favor of the terminated employee, and you will pay them.

High potential for litigation.

Fact – some terminated employees may take things to the next level and retain the services of an attorney and file either an EEOC complaint (that you will have to spend time, money, and resources on to fight) or an outright lawsuit.

Fact – without solid, defensible documentation such as job descriptions, performance plans, and performance evaluations, there is a high probability that you will lose the complaint or lawsuit.

Fact – an EEOC complaint will result in monetary compensation to the terminated employee, changes in your processes, or both. Either way, it does not look good for your organization.

Gives employees an excuse for non-performance.

“I didn’t know I was supposed to have done that.” Ever heard that phrase from an employee? When their job duties and what other attributes they are supposed to do daily are not in writing, you give the employee an immediate defense that is hard to argue with. Remove this defense by simply having job descriptions and plans.

Opens organization to public criticism.

You have citizens who will justly or unjustly criticize the performance of your employees. You are enabling this criticism for your non-performers by not holding them accountable in the eyes of the public.

Forces the model of across-the-board pay raises.

Would you not instead reward the outstanding, dependable employees and produce more consistently than those who do not? Suppose you need a discernible way (think rating from a performance evaluation plan here) to differentiate between employees. How do you objectively select who gets a pay raise and who does not? Instead, you must go to the “across the board” pay raises, which is fine, especially if a cost of living raise is the objective. But when you want to reward those who are truly outstanding as part of your retention program, you need a way to fairly evaluate each employee and use the evaluation (partially – not in whole) as a basis for that special recognition through a merit increase.

| Performance Plan / Performance Evaluation | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------|--|
| Employee Name | | | Date |
| Job Title | | | Department |
| Employee Type | Exempt [] | Non-exempt [] | |
| Employee ID | | | Last Review Date |
| New Performance Plan [] | | | Performance Evaluation [] |
| Plan/Evaluation Period | From | To | |
| Type of Review | End of Probation [] | Annual [] | Other- Describe [] |
| Rating System | | | |
| S = Superior (5) Superior performance that consistently exceeds job requirements | | | |
| E = Exceeds Expectations (4) Strong performance that consistently meets and frequently exceeds job requirements. | | | |
| M = Meets Expectations (3) Capable, satisfactory performance that consistently meets and occasionally exceeds job requirements. | | | |
| NI = Needs Improvement (2) Generally adequate performance but needs some improvement to meet job requirements consistently. | | | |
| U = Unacceptable (1) Inadequate performance that is consistently below job requirements and clearly problematic. | | | |
| Job Duties | | | |
| Job Duty #1: | | | |
| Comments | | | |
| Rating | Superior [] | Exceeds [] | Meets [] Needs Improvement [] Unacceptable [] Numeric [] |
| Job Duty #2: | | | |
| Comments | | | |
| Rating | Superior [] | Exceeds [] | Meets [] Needs Improvement [] Unacceptable [] Numeric [] |
| Job Duty #3: | | | |
| Comments | | | |
| Rating | Superior [] | Exceeds [] | Meets [] Needs Improvement [] Unacceptable [] Numeric [] |

| | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|--|
| Job Duty #5: | | | |
| Comments | | | |
| Rating | Superior [] | Exceeds [] | Meets [] Needs Improvement [] Unacceptable [] Numeric [] |
| Section 1 Rating: Add scores from the five Job Duties and divide by 5 for averaged numeric score [] | | | |
| Competencies (Based on Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, and Job Description) | | | |
| Core Competencies - all employees rated. | | | |
| Attendance is according to standards and policy. | Rating | Score | |
| Attitude towards the supervisor, others and work is acceptable. | | | |
| Communication skills are present and routinely used. | | | |
| Customer service provided is consistent and acceptable. | | | |
| Decision-making skills are present and applied. | | | |
| Dependable in all work situations. | | | |
| Flexible in approach to work and implementing new ideas. | | | |
| Initiative and innovation are routinely exercised. | | | |
| Problem-Solving skills are routinely used. | | | |
| Quality of work is acceptable. | | | |
| Teamwork is evident based on team production. | | | |
| Work Ethic is strong and promoted with others. | | | |
| | Total Score | | |
| Section 2 Rating: Add scores from Core Competencies and divide by 12 averaged numeric score [] | | | |
| Management Competencies - Exempt Employees | | | |
| Coaching/Training of employees is consistently provided. | Rating | Score | |
| Diversity and inclusiveness are routinely practiced. | | | |
| Leadership skills are effective through evident results. | | | |
| Management of resources (material and personnel) is effectively used. | | | |
| Strategic planning for future and ongoing work is routinely utilized. | | | |
| Time management skills of self and employees are effective. | | | |
| | Total Score | | |
| Section 3 Rating: Add scores from Management Competencies and divide by 6 for averaged numeric score [] | | | |
| Comments are required for any ratings of Needs Improvement or Unacceptable from Competencies. Competencies rated as Superior must be accompanied by comments to justify the rating. | | | |

| Scoring and Determining the Final Rating | |
|---|---------------|
| Add averaged scores from Sections 1, 2, and 3 (if applicable) and divide by 2 or 3, depending on the number of sections being scored. | |
| The Final Rating is determined by the scale below. | |
| Superior = 4.5 > | |
| Exceeds Expectations = 3.7 - 4.4 | |
| Meets Expectations = 2.6 - 3.6 | |
| Needs Improvement = 1.7 - 2.5 | |
| Unacceptable = 1.0 - 1.6 | |
| Final Rating | |
| FINAL RATING: | |
| Evaluator Comments: | |
| Employee Comments: | |
| Employee Signature | Today's Date: |
| Employee Printed Name | |
| Evaluator Signature | |

Attachment A: Sample Performance Plan/Performance Evaluation A, which is a combined Performance Plan/Performance Evaluation (instrument), has been developed for this class that we use. The form is editable, so you can return to your county, insert your county logo and make it your own if you choose.

General Information

This section contains the information necessary to document the employee, dates of the plan, if it is a plan or evaluation, etc. The items that will need to be filled in for this section include the following:

- Employee Name
- Date of instrument
- Job Title of employee
- Department
- Employee Type [Exempt] or [Non-exempt]
- Employee ID (if used by your organization)
- Last Review Date (date of last evaluation close out)
- New Performance Plan (check block if a new plan is being put into place)
- Performance Evaluation (check this block if it is a Performance Evaluation)
- Type of Review [End of Probation] Annual [] Other – Describe []

Rating System

The rating system that has been provided on the instrument is both a rating (Superior, Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Needs Improvement, Unacceptable) and a numeric score associated with each rating. To make the final scores or ratings in each instrument section, you will use the numeric scoring related to the rating you assign. In Module 6 – Preparing the Evaluation, we will cover in detail how to best arrive at a rating for each Job Duty or Competency.

S = Superior (5)

Superior performance that consistently exceeds job requirements.

E = Exceeds Expectations (4)

Strong performance that consistently meets and frequently exceeds job requirements.

M = Meets Expectations (3)

Capable, satisfactory performance that consistently meets and occasionally exceeds job requirements.

NI = Needs Improvement (2)

Generally adequate performance but needs some improvement to meet job requirements consistently.

U = Unacceptable (1)

Inadequate performance that is consistently below job requirements and clearly problematic.

Job Duties

There are five sections for listing Job Duties. **It is highly recommended that all five sections be used at a minimum.** We will detail why in Module 3 – Building the Performance Plan. Using the downloadable instrument template from the TxLTAP website, you can add additional sections for Job Duties if needed. We will also cover why additional Job Duty sections should be added in Module 3.

Rating

A rating needs to be selected from the options listed above. Again how to assign ratings will be covered in Module 6.

Comments (narrative)

It is **highly recommended** that comments accompany each Job Duty section. Comments should be listed to provide a defense against employees contesting a rating of Needs Improvement or Unacceptable. It is also recommended that comments for all other ratings be provided to send the message to the evaluated employee that thought was put into the rating and was not arbitrarily selected. It is highly recommended that comments are made for ratings of Superior as only a small percentage of your employees should fall into this category.

Competencies (also known as General Factors)

Competencies (also known as General Factors) are based on criteria from a Job Description referred to as Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities plus other criteria contained in a Job Description.

It is not recommended that competencies be repeated in the Job Duties section of the instrument. Competencies are designed to reflect what an employee should do daily. Job Duties may be performed in cycles or periodically. An example would be setting up and maintaining a work zone traffic control area as a job duty, but the employee does not do this function every day since they are engaged in other tasks.

All employees and supervisors, foremen, crew leaders, managers, etc., should be rated on the Core Competencies. The competencies that are listed on our sample instrument are:

Competencies continued

Core

- Attendance is according to standards and policy.
- Attitude towards the supervisor, others, and work is acceptable.
- Communication skills are present and routinely used.
- Customer service provided is consistent and acceptable.
- Decision-making skills are present and applied.
- Dependable in all work situations.
- Flexible in approach to work and implementing ideas.
- Initiative and Innovation are routinely exercised.
- Problem-Solving skills are routinely used.
- Quality of work is acceptable.
- Teamwork is evident based on team production.
- Work Ethic is strong and promoted with others.

Competencies continued

The Managerial competencies are designed for supervisors, foremen, crew leaders, managers, etc. You should never rate an employee who is non-exempt in their employment status, as they are not supposed to be performing managerial duties.

Managerial

- Coaching/Training of employees is consistently provided.
- Diversity and Inclusiveness are routinely practiced.
- Leadership skills are effective through evident results.
- Management of resources (material and personnel) is effectively used.
- Strategic planning for future and ongoing work is routinely utilized.
- Time management skills of self and employees are effective.

Competencies continued

Rating

The same rating system is used for Core and Managerial competencies as for Job Duties.

Comments (narrative)

Just like in Job Duties, comments should be made for Superior, Needs Improvement, and Unacceptable to justify your ratings.

Training and Development Activities

Setting training and development goals are also important for employees and their managers. Putting down what either the supervisor is committing to sending the employee to or what the employee is expressing their desire to attend in the coming year is a critical step in setting up a Performance Plan that will be in place for the probationary period or annual cycle.

When the evaluation time comes around, list training and development activities completed in the cycle, and training and development activities are not scored. Any training or development activities that still need to be completed should be included in the next Performance Plan cycle.

Scoring and Determining the Final Rating

Determining the final score and rating for the employee is critical as it is set for an entire year (unless another evaluation is completed) that follows the employee regarding promotions, training and development needs, consideration for merit increases, etc.

To determine the final score/rating, add averaged scores from Sections 1, 2, and 3 (remember, section 3 is used for exempt employees only) and divide by 2 or 3, depending on the number of sections being scored. The Final Rating is determined by the suggested scale below. If you find this scale to be too lenient, change it. If you find it to be too hard, change it. You get to determine the scale you use. However, the same scale needs to be applied to every employee (in the same department) to ensure that evaluations are fair and balanced across the workforce.

Superior = 4.5 >

Exceeds Expectations = 3.7 - 4.4

Meets Expectations = 2.6 - 3.6

Needs Improvement = 1.7 - 2.5

Unacceptable = 1.0 - 1.6

Evaluator Comments

Comments that are thoughtful, accurate, and fact-based should be made about the overall rating and the employee in general. Suggestions will be offered in Module 6 on how to accomplish this task.

Employee Comments

Some employees opt to make comments, while others do not. All employees should be encouraged to make comments about themselves. If they do not want to, don't push the issue.

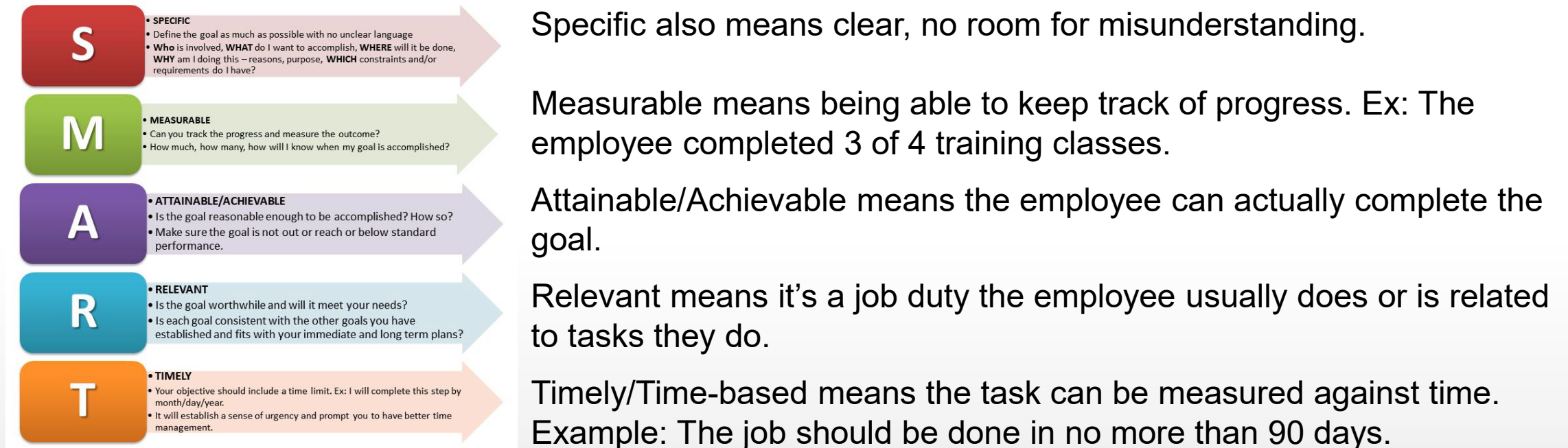
Signatures

Occasionally you will have an employee who refuses to sign their Performance Plan or when it is closed out as an evaluation. That is OK; it's an option they can exercise.

The absence of their signature does not mean the plan, or the evaluation is invalid; it just means they didn't sign the document. Get another supervisor to observe the employee refusing to sign and note on the instrument that the employee refused to sign and have the witness date, print and sign their name.

Making the Job Duties S.M.A.R.T

Use the SMART system to develop and establish your Job Duties (JDs). The chart below details how each of the conditions (Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Achievable, Relevant, and Timely/Time-Based) can make a JD become SMART by putting some thought into them. To understand each SMART system component first, let's cover them.



Now that we understand the SMART system, let's look at how we use it to make the JDs SMART-based, which my employees and I have agreed on.

Let's take a look at Attachment B – Job Duty Phrases at the back of your participant manual. A series of recommended JD Phrases have been provided to you for guidance derived from TxLTAP published Job Descriptions for Public Works/Road and Bridge personnel.

Resource Introduction – Attachment B

Job Duty Phrases

Let's turn to Attachment B in your Participant Manual and look at the Job Duty Phrases that have been developed for your use.

Your Work is Not Over

Some supervisors are disillusioned that now that they have put a Performance Plan in place for their employees, everything will be OK. After all, the employee knows what is expected of them day-to-day, so what could go wrong? Nothing! I'll rely on the plan to handle what is expected.

If your thinking is along these lines, you are in for a rude awakening. Performance Planning (putting the plan into place) is Stage 1, that we covered in Module 3.

Stage 2 is the Development of the employee. Note the task for this Stage:

“Continuous actions to promote effectiveness and self.”

Development
Continuous actions to promote
effectiveness and self

Promoting effectiveness means continual contact with the employee through monitoring their progress, coaching, providing training, and having conversations when performance is not up to par.

Why is Performance Monitoring so Important?

Employees are the resource that gets the work done and moves your organization towards accomplishing its goals. It is no surprise that workforce performance hugely influences the success or failure of an organization. It is the main reason why employee performance monitoring is necessary for your success. Measuring how well your team is doing their job is more than just eye-opening; it's vital to the success of your business.

Employees are essential for your organization's success, which will only happen with good employee performance. But just acknowledging employee performance is a need for your organization; you need to have an effective performance management process and know how to improve employee performance.

So How Do I Measure My Employee's Performance?

Quality of Work

The quality of work done by employees is a key indicator of performance. Are employees ensuring high-quality results? Are they meeting the performance objectives? Quality of work provides the foundation to examine all other elements of their performance.

Some action words derived from Attachments B and C that are associated with the Quality of Work measurement include:

- Commits... Without waste...
- Ensures adherence to...
- Inspects in accordance with...
- Completes tasks without supervision/oversight/rework...

Speed and Efficiency

Keeping a tab on how much work employees do makes them more efficient with their tasks. Check it daily, weekly, or monthly to see if they are meeting goals. Are they completing the tasks within the given time frame? Is there something being overlooked to do the work quickly? Efficiency and accuracy are important factors for the success of your operation.

What Are the Benefits of Performance Monitoring?

Improves Workforce Management

Employee performance monitoring is a part of the overall performance management process. It helps with the management of your workforce and resources.

Increases Employee Retention

Organizations that regularly solicit and implement employee feedback have turnover rates 15%- 20% lower than organizations that receive no feedback.

Improves Accountability

Accountability plays a crucial role in the success of an organization, but ensuring effective accountability isn't easy. Often, people see accountability as a culture of blame, which is 100% wrong in many senses.

Boosts Morale

Appreciating your employees and saying they are doing a good job boosts their morale. Every manager should recognize individuals from their team when they do exceptional work.

Assists in Identifying the Right Employees for Promotion

Performance monitoring is the best way to identify employees suitable for promotion. All employees will be going through the same performance evaluation process. The process gives a better perspective on employees to evaluate them for promotion.

Best Practices for Employee Performance Monitoring

Communicate Clear Expectations

Your expectations of your employees should be clear. Your employees should have an idea of the time frame that they need to complete their work. Credible, constructive feedback includes timely, specific references to predefined targets and goals.

Measure Both Short-Term and Long-Term

The most effective performance measurements include both short-term task completion and long-term performance.

Individualize Every Approach

There are different approaches for different situations and different employees. You need to understand the behavior of each of your employees. How you coach and guide them will differ from employee to employee.

Provide the Tools They Need to Succeed

Provide employee access to the necessary tools, resources, and an environment that supports them to enhance their performance. Ask your employees what they need; new technology tools or software, literature or training on the topic; or other materials and practices that facilitate successful performance.

Match Tasks to Skills

You need to understand your employee's skill sets to help you streamline work processes and assign tasks more efficiently. Instead of assigning tasks randomly, assign them according to the skill sets of individual employees.

You Need to Have a System to Track Performance

It's not enough to track progress on goals and expectations; you also need to document. This documentation provides the basis for ongoing coaching and the final evaluation. Documentation should be objective and include examples of performance strengths and areas needing improvement. You should not only look at job duties, but the competencies that are also on each employee's performance plan.

You will need help to remember the excellent work your employee has done over the life cycle of the performance plan and areas where improvement was needed. The larger your team is, making the step even more important as you cannot remember or keep up with all the actions that have taken place. A simple chart such as shown below will help you track the employee's activities. It can be done in Word, Excel, or captured on a sheet of paper. The main point here is that:

1. It provides supporting documentation for your coaching efforts.
2. It documents when the employee corrected undesirable actions.
3. It provides documentation when your employee has performed well.
4. It provides supporting documentation to the evaluation ratings for job duty and competency ratings.

| | |
|--|--|
| Employee Name: Joe Jones | Review Period: 01/02/23 - 12/30/23 |
| Positive Activities | Needs Improvement Activities |
| 3/20 Observed work in the field, efficient in equipment operation, commended employee for outstanding skill. | 2/7 20 minutes late, no call in |
| 6/10 Following directions of Crewleader and taking the initiative on solutions | 4/10 Received complaint from Crewleader not following directions |
| 8/15 Served as lead on a special project | 6/27 45 minutes late, no call in |
| 12/15 No late arrivals in the past five months; commended employee for effort. | |

Suggested items you may want to consider capturing on your activity chart include:

- Coaching sessions.
- Employee suggestions.
- Formal discipline discussions based on other formal documented counseling statements or Performance Improvement Plans.
- Displaying teamwork, such as training new employees or assisting coworkers.
- Completion of special projects.
- Volunteering for extra work or special projects.
- Notes from observation of performance.
- Customer compliments or complaints.
- Training programs attended.
- Goals and results achieved.

Performance Feedback During the Check-In Meeting

Performance feedback should have been taking place all along before getting to the mid-point of the performance cycle. If feedback has yet to occur, that failure is on you as the supervisor. Again, the objective is not to “surprise” the employee with a list of areas they need to improve; but to coach and correct along the way.

Performance Feedback is Stage 3 in the four-stage Development and Evaluation cycle we covered in Module 3. Feedback begins starting day one after the performance plan has been presented and signed by you and the employee. Again, use a method to track the performance of the employee as time passes.

Stage 3

Performance Feedback
Continuous activity from start of the
plan to evaluation

Conducting the Mid-Point Check-In

Conducting the check-in is the easiest part of this task if, and only if, you have taken the steps suggested:

- Setting a scheduled meeting.
- Providing a copy of the performance plan to the employee in advance.
- Asked the employee to do a scaled-down self-analysis of their performance.
- You have a document you can refer to with critical activities.
- You have put your thoughts down on what needs to be covered during the check-in.

If you have prepared yourself and the employee in advance, your check-in meeting will probably take 10 to 15 minutes. If you have not prepared and try to “wing it,” you will not have a productive meeting; the employee will feel like the meeting was a waste of time and that you just “checked another box” in the process.

Be sure to cover all job duties, core and managerial competencies (if applicable), and where the employee is at on training and development activities. If they have yet to attend any training, be sure they will complete training in the second half of the cycle.

Both you and your employee forgot this was one of the five Job Duties on their plan. Now is the time to update the plan by removing this job duty and substituting it with a new one. The two of you should look at what other primary job duties they are performing and select one that is the best fit for their plan.

Documenting the Mid-Point Check-In

The example we just covered above is a prime example of why documentation is critical. The change of one job duty out of five is a 20% overall change in the employee's evaluation at the end of the performance cycle. Not being able to rate an employee on 20% of their job duties if you do not make the change from the example is unfair to the employee.

At a minimum, you need to make an entry on the tracking instrument you are using for your employee to note that a mid-point check-in took place with the date, discussion points, and agreements on any changes.

Steps in Preparing the Performance Evaluation

The following steps are provided to help you prepare for the performance evaluation. We will cover each step in detail in this module.

It is *highly recommended* that you **complete all** the steps, as it could result in having to go back and research or correct the evaluation as you finalize it.

1. Review the original performance plan.
2. Review the mid-point check-in.
3. Review and update (if needed) your activity tracking instrument.
4. Pull the employee's training and development history.
5. Schedule a short meeting with your employee.
6. Begin your evaluation of the employee.
7. Review and consider the employee's self-evaluation information.
8. Make sure Common Rating Problems have not influenced your ratings.
9. Fitting the Curve. Where does your final rating fall on the 10/70/20 Performance Curve?
10. Merge the information provided by your employee and your notes.
11. Get a reality check.
12. Final ratings and comments.

9 Fitting the Performance Curve

Let's face it; not all employees are rockstars regarding on-the-job performance. Not all of them are bottom performers, either. Most of them fall in the middle.

If you take a large sample of employees (100 or more) in a Public Works or Road and Bridge organization and rate that selection objectively and impartially, they will typically fall into three categories; top performers, middle performers, and non (bottom) performers.

Statistics gathered from Human Resources surveys, polls, and research will yield that these performer categories have associated percentages, as shown in the chart.



Top Performers – make up about 20% of your workforce and can be identified by:

- Perform well in almost everything they take on.
- Learn fast and can apply new knowledge and skills rapidly.
- Transfer learning from one area to another.
- Get things done under tight deadlines and resources.
- Demonstrate the ability to take on stretch assignments.
- Often help team members.
- Are highly interested in personal development.

Performance ratings associated with top performers are your Superior and Exceeds Expectations.

Middle Performers – make up about 70% of your workforce and can be identified by:

- Meet the expectations of the job or position.
- Understand and know the current job well.
- Assume new jobs and roles comfortably and perform well over time.
- They are probably promotable (one level vertically or able to move laterally) with continued development and training.

Performance ratings associated with your middle performers are the occasional Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, and the occasional Needs Improvement.

Non (Bottom Performers) – make up about 10% of your workforce and are identified by:

- Failure to meet job description standards.
- Deliver low-quality work.
- Deliver low volume of work.
- They tend to have a higher absenteeism rate.
- They demonstrate disruptive or argumentative behavior.
- Subject of constituent/citizen complaints.

Performance ratings associated with your non or bottom performers are Meets Expectations, Needs Improvement, and the occasional Unacceptable.

Use the 20/70/10 curve to ask yourself – are my ratings that I’m assigning to this employee:

- Realistic?
- Based on SMART criteria?
- Objective and impartial?
- Not biased?
- Being too soft so as not to offend the employee?
- Being too soft to not prevent them from receiving a promotion or pay raise?
- Being too hard based on the exceptional performance of another employee?

You can address these potential issues by being cognizant of common rating problems we will cover in the next section.

In the meantime, look at your employees' collective final ratings and see where they fit on the 10/70/20 curve. If your results come out 0/60/40, which is a significant skew towards most of your employees being Superior or Middle performers, you are being too lenient. If your results come out 30/40/30, you have a central tendency in your evaluations. If your results come out 40/50/10, then you are being overly critical.

It is not suggested that you always have to hit the 10/70/20 target; some skewing will sometimes occur. The main questions again are:

Are you being objective and impartial in your ratings?

Don't let yourself fall into the central tendency or make the scores for the individual components hit a predetermined final rating you may have in mind. Each job duty and competency needs to be rated on its own merits and independent of one another.



Keywords to focus on for each rating are underlined here to draw your attention and help you decide what rating to apply.

S = Superior (5)

Superior performance that consistently exceeds job requirements.

E = Exceeds Expectations (4)

Strong performance that consistently meets and frequently exceeds job requirements.

M = Meets Expectations (3)

Capable, satisfactory performance that consistently meets and occasionally exceeds job requirements.

NI = Needs Improvement (2)

Generally adequate performance but needs some improvement to meet job requirements consistently.

U = Unacceptable (1)

Inadequate performance that is consistently below job requirements and clearly problematic.

Here are a few tips for choosing effective performance evaluation phrases:

- Use specific language.
- Use measurement-oriented language.
- Use powerful action words.
- Stay positive and constructive.
- Focus on solving problems.
- Focus on growth opportunities.
- Focus on the individual and avoid bias.

When employees see meaningful comments that are personalized and address the job duty or competency, and are not vague or general, they take that to heart, whether it be complimentary or stating a need for improvement.

Many supervisors face a challenge in coming up with original comments that fit the employee and the way the supervisor speaks. Just copying a phrase verbatim from a source shows the employee that the words are “canned” and that the supervisor has not put much effort into his comments.

However, some of these phrases can be used just as they are presented by inserting the employee’s name at the beginning of the phrase. Using the employee’s first name in comments is recommended to make a comment more friendly and less formal, and it brings the tone down from an authoritative to a modest one.

However, this course has provided a series of Performance Evaluation Phrases (found in Attachment E) that can be used as starting point to form your comments. Some phrases reflect positive attributes, and the following section provides examples of negative or improvement-needed attributes.

Taken from Attachment E, examples of Attendance:

Positive Attribute

Bob excels at reporting on time, rarely leaves early, and adheres to all established break times.

Negative Attribute

Bob has frequently returned late from lunch breaks and is often late reporting to work.

Now let's take this same comment regarding Bob, our fictitious employee, and write the comment according to the rating:

Performance Phrases Not to Use

Developing effective, accurate, and meaningful comments are not easy. What is easy is to write down comments you would not want to see placed on social media or in a lawsuit against the organization and you for creating a toxic workplace and many other human resource policy violations.

The following are offered as humorous phrases that appeared on evaluations. **Please don't use these or something like it!**

- Some drink from the fountain of knowledge; they only gargled.”
- “When they open their mouth, it’s only to swap whichever foot was previously inserted.”
- “A gross ignoramus... 144 times worse than an ordinary ignoramus.”
- “If brains were taxed, they would get a rebate.”
- “They are so dense; light bends around them.”
- “This employee is depriving a village somewhere of its idiot.”
- “Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom.....and has started to d
- “Works well under constant supervision when cornered like a rat in a trap.”

Conducting the evaluation is the capstone of all of the preparations, thought, time, and employee the engagement you have put into coming up with a final product you are going to present to your employee.

Just calling the employee in, putting down the evaluation, telling them to read it and sign it is certainly not the way to finalize a process in which you and your employees have an investment.

You need to follow a logically structured process in conducting the final evaluation and a strategy for handling objections and holding difficult conversations on performance if there is a performance issue with the employee.



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What not to discuss during a performance review.

What not to discuss is just as important as what you do discuss during a performance review. The meeting concerns the employee and their performance during the session, not specific other issues.

Topics that should be “off limits” during the performance review should include:

- Potential pay raises.
- Promises of potential promotions.
- Allowing the meeting to turn into a gripe session about anything.
- Allowing the employee to compare their performance to others.

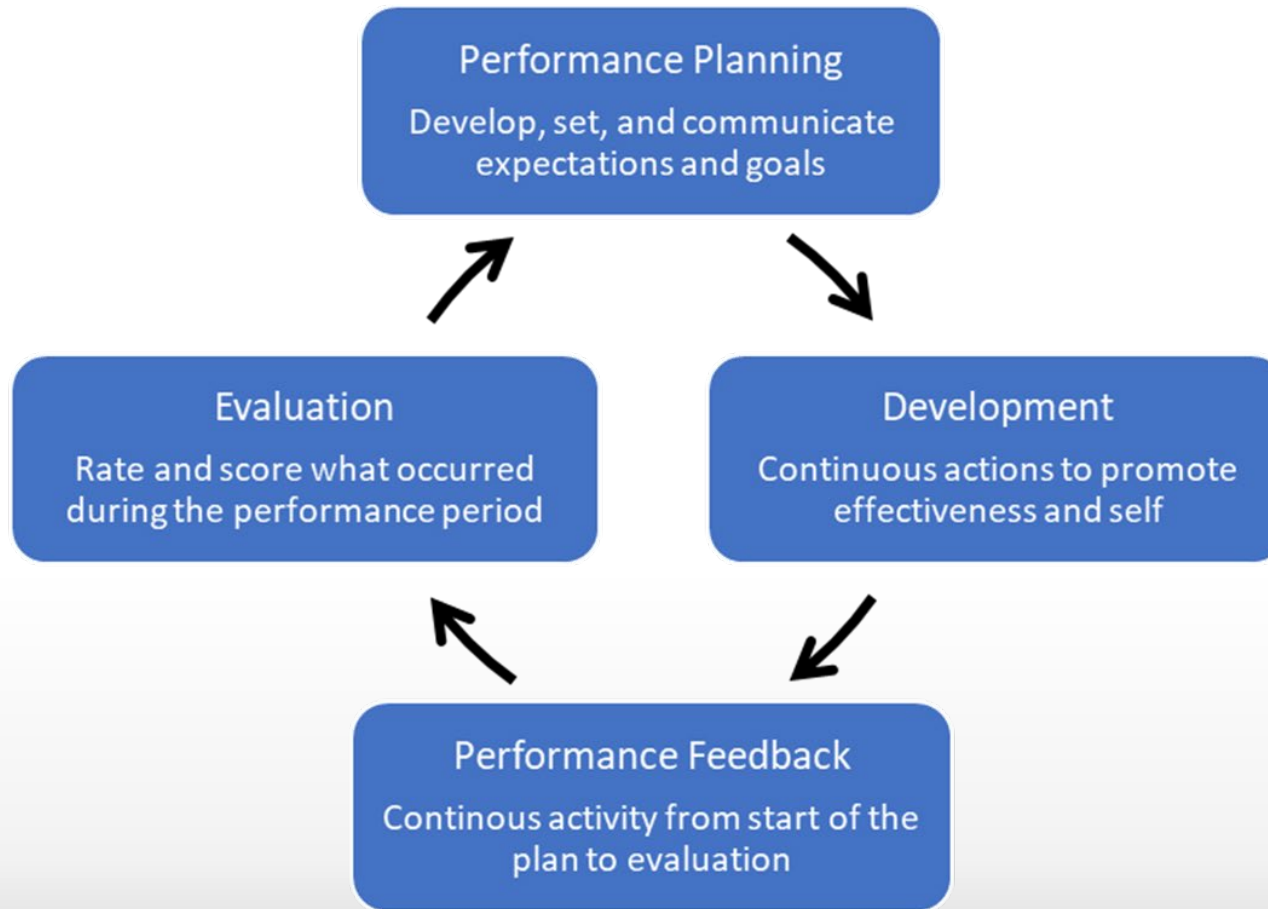
Prepare your employee in advance.

Employees should know their role in preparing for the meeting once it has been scheduled. You should already have an agenda ready for the meeting. Please give it to the employee, so they know what to expect. A sample agenda can be something as simple as the following.

**SAMPLE AGENDA
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

1. Time allocated to process – no less than 30 minutes is recommended.
2. Review the Job Description applicable to the employee.
3. Review the current Performance Plan without any ratings.
4. Review employees' self-evaluation with them.
5. Discuss the ratings the employee submitted on the self-evaluation.
6. Supervisors' evaluation. The ratings and score for each job duty and competency by the Supervisor.
7. Employee response to the supervisor's evaluation.
8. Discuss any concerns or disconnects in ratings or comments.
9. Summarize key discussion points.
10. Signatures and employee comments they wish to write on the evaluation.
11. Discuss future goals and how performance can be continuously improved.
12. Discuss any changes needed on the next cycle performance plan.
13. Final comments.

REPEAT THE CYCLE CONTINUOUSLY AND IMPROVE EACH TIME!





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