
ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE ISSUES EARLY

The best way for supervisors to address performance issues is to take early action to avoid problems before they occur. Such preventive actions include:

Communicate clear performance standards and expectations to employees.

Consider sharing your supervisor's performance expectations with your employees. If your employees do not understand what is expected, it will be very hard, if not impossible, for them to meet those expectations. Providing clear expectations does not necessarily require you to lay out precisely written, detailed instructions on every action. Generally, the question you should ask yourself is: "Would a reasonable person understand what was expected?"

Provide regular and frequent feedback on performance.

Such feedback, both positive and constructive, whether given in a scheduled performance discussion or in an unscheduled performance review, is crucial to ensuring that expectations are understood. Continuous two-way dialogue minimizes the likelihood that an employee will be surprised if it becomes necessary to take formal steps to resolve performance issues. Always look for opportunities to confirm that your employees understand what is expected.

Recognizing and rewarding good performance, informally and formally.

Recognizing good performance is simply another way of clarifying expectations. Supervisors can strengthen the performance culture and influence employee engagement by using recognition throughout the appraisal cycle.

Make full use of the probationary period for new employees.

The importance of the probationary or trial period is discussed in more detail under the "Special Topics" section. Performance issues often first show up during the initial period of Government employment. This period is designed to provide an opportunity for management to address such issues. Furthermore, an employee who is terminated during this period is not entitled to most of the procedures and appeal rights granted to employees who have completed probationary/trial periods. A recurring theme in successful resolution of performance issues is that taking action early is always better than waiting. This statement is definitely true when considering ways to prevent performance issues. Early communication, early feedback (positive and constructive), and, if appropriate, early termination during a probationary or trial period, are good ways to prevent future performance issues. Investing time early is always time well spent.