
PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Why Have a Discussion Guide?

The purpose of this discussion guide is to provide managers with a tool to facilitate better, more effective communication related to work performance and its link to organizational effectiveness. The goal of the guide is to foster continuous two-way dialogue that builds trust, improves transparency, enhances accountability, and promotes among all employees a greater sense of connection to the organization. The questions are intended to establish a model of communication between manager and employee. The guide is not mandatory, comprehensive, nor appropriate for all situations. Managers and employees will have to use judgment in determining which of these questions and/or what other questions are applicable or appropriate to use in a particular situation. This guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the performance evaluation phase. The purpose of the form is to provide employees with a tool by which they can give supervisors feedback on how effective they feel their performance discussion was. The expectation is that these results would initially be provided only to the supervisor.

When to Use This Discussion Guide?

This discussion guide can be used throughout the performance cycle and in the final performance appraisal discussion. Continuous two-way dialogue is encouraged. The guide can also be used as a tool for:

- Regular one-on-one meetings with managers and employees (weekly, every other week, 15-30 minutes)
- Quarterly check-ins with employees (progress reviews and the final performance appraisal discussion)
- Peer feedback
- Group debriefs, evaluations, and recognition after completion of a project
- Feedback from customers
- Group training opportunities (during employee meetings or at other times)

Who is Responsible for Effective Performance Discussions?

Both managers and employees are accountable for effective performance discussions and should operate under the shared principal of "no surprises." Performance discussions should focus on the employee's performance standards, expectations, and commitment to making the system work for them. Additionally:

- Managers are responsible for making sure the performance reviews and final performance appraisal discussions happen and that other opportunities for feedback (like those above) are created and used. Managers are responsible for conducting the feedback in a thoughtful and respectful manner, listening actively, and being well-prepared.

Effective Feedback is:

- Direct
- Timely
- Relevant to the specific task
- Only about the performance the employee can control
- Recognizes positive performance
- Discusses need for improvement
- Not-personal and mutually respectful

Receiving feedback well requires:

- Active listening, including:
 - eye contact
 - not interrupting
- Asking questions, responding clearly
 - concentrating
 - seeking meaning
 - considering both nonverbal and
- Verbal communication
 - interpreting
 - summarizing; and
 - paraphrasing
- Remaining open-minded and positive
- Identifying problem performance
- Forming a jointly developed action plan

PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Employees are responsible for listening actively, asking questions when the feedback is unclear, and thinking about their career goals and aspirations, and articulating their goals when discussing developmental activities.

What are the Elements of Good Communication?

- Good communications – continuous communication between employees and managers – is the key to a performance evaluation that holds no surprises for anyone during progress and in the final performance appraisal discussion.
- Two-way communication provides a vehicle for continuous feedback on employees' strengths, weaknesses, and guidance on projects and responsibilities.
- Active listening is imperative in successful performance discussions and two-way dialogue.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK TECHNIQUES		
STEP	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
"When you ..."	State specific facts of behavior (non-judgmental)	When you do not attend Staff meeting like you did today and last week ...
"I'm concerned ..."	Describe how behavior affected you or the office.	I get concerned ...
"Because I... "	State why the observed behavior affected you in this way.	Because I value your contributions. You play an important role in this office accomplishing its goals.
Pause and listen for response (Ask if other person has ideas about what to do)	Give the other person an opportunity to respond.	
"I would like ... "	Describe what change you want the other person to consider.	I would like you to consider planning your schedule so that you can attend meetings, or calling in advance if there is an important reason for the meeting to be rescheduled.
"Because ...,"	State why the change is needed.	Because you are a valuable member of our team and we miss your input when you are not here.
"What do you think ... "	Listen to response. Discuss options and compromise on a solution, if necessary.	One way to ensure that both our needs are met is to.

Questions for Managers to Ask Employees

A manager's goal in starting a performance discussion is to create trust and put the employee at ease. Discretion and judgment must be used in determining which of the questions below are appropriate for a particular performance discussion as well as the most appropriate order in which to focus on career development of the employee.



Labor and Employee Relations Division

PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Past Performance	Satisfaction with Work and Work Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let me tell you some of the things I think you've done particularly well or as noted in your self-assessment (be specific), e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You take initiative, as in the XYZ project. • You identify and help solve problems. • You do a good job of keeping me and your colleagues informed. • You are willing to lead, take responsibility and be accountable. • You volunteer. • You properly credit others for their work. • Which of your accomplishments do you feel good about? Why? • What would you like to improve and why? • Here are some things I think you'll want to improve. (Be specific.) • Describe contributions to a team effort (if appropriate). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you enjoy about the team experience? • What did you dislike about the team experience and why? • What would your customers say about you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel about the quality of the assignments you have received? • Do you feel valued and respected by your supervisor and the organization? • What can I do to help you be more effective in your job? • What can we do to keep our communication effective and ongoing? • Do you feel you have been adequately recognized and rewarded for your work? • Is there anything else that you wish to discuss at this time?
	Career Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's discuss your Performance Assistance Plan (PAP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your professional areas of interest and long-term career goals? • What training opportunities/rotational or work assignments might develop those areas? • Let's discuss how your PAP reflects how you will pursue your goals? 	
Connection of Work to Mission	Goals for Next Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's talk about how your responsibilities support the organization's mission. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers should be prepared to offer examples to clarify the relationship between the individual's work and the organization's mission.) • What ideas do you have for future projects that would further the organization's mission? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to accomplish in the coming year? (Encourage employees to be specific, and cover recommended areas of improvement.) • Can you describe how your future goals will support the mission of the organization? • Can you describe how your short-term goals will further your long-term professional goals?

Questions for Employees to Ask Managers

Employees can assist in assuring they receive constructive feedback by asking questions their managers might not. Again, judgment must be exercised in determining which questions are relevant and appropriate for particular situations. These questions can be explored in less





Labor and Employee Relations Division

PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION GUIDE

formal communications throughout the year as well as during both progress reviews and final performance appraisal discussions.

Past Performance	Career Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think I have done well? Why? • Here are things I think I have done particularly well: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. • What do you think I need to improve on and why? • What do my customers say about me? • I'd like to tell you about my experience working on teams... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's discuss your Performance Assistance Plan (PAP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Here are my areas of interest and long-term career goals... - What training opportunities/rotational or work assignments do you believe have the potential to develop those areas? - What are your ideas on how I can improve my PAP goals and on how I can pursue those goals effectively?
Connection of Work to Mission	Goals for Next Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think my current responsibilities support the organization's mission? If not, how can my responsibilities better support the organization's mission? • Here are my ideas for future projects that I believe would help fulfill the organization's mission... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here's what I'd like to accomplish in the coming year... • Here's how I think these goals will help me develop and help the organization.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think of these goals?
Satisfaction with Work and Work Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to talk about the quality of the assignments I feel I've been receiving... • I'd like to discuss my sense of how I am valued and respected by my peers and this organization. • You could help me be more effective by.... 	