

Document Employee Performance Daily

By Kathryn Claytor, Project Assistant



Simple guidelines allow supervisors to develop good employee documentation habits. Often employers are inconsistent when documenting employee performance. Although many municipalities have procedures and protocols to document employee performance, these procedures are usually loose and it is safe to extend these guidelines whenever possible.

Documentation

Documentation is holding conversations with staff, including warnings for misbehavior, and recording interactions. Continuous work performance discussions are critical to an employee's success or failure. Begin documenting as early as the first interview and continue documenting daily.

Document positive behavior as well as negative. A written record serves as a reminder of when an employee exhibited leadership, or initiative, or adopted a generous role with colleagues. Notes can be a reminder for a performance review and justification for a promotion or raise. Records assist supervisors to decide between many employees for a single raise. For documentation:

- Make specific notes. Include any verbal, non-verbal, and reactions and responses of the employee.
- Support observations with factual descriptions of incidents. Use these questions to assist with documents. What was observed? What was heard?
- Record negative and positive behavior.
- Be specific when discussing an incident and allow time for explanation.
- Make sure the employee understands what they did wrong (or right) and ways to improve.
- Review notes prior to evaluation, promotion, or termination.

Carefully hire employees to avoid problems. During the interview, ask a lot of questions and trust your instincts. Avoid hiring out of desperation, as this may result in problems later. If problems develop, discuss in detail with the employee and provide an opportunity for explanation. Inform the employee of consequences of future misbehavior. Record the interaction in the employee's file. Include whether or not the explanation for the behavior was satisfactory. If misbehavior continues, terminate the employee. Do not wait. The longer the misbehavior continues, the harder it will be to fire the employee and to support that he or she was fired for just cause.

Evaluation

Employee evaluations are a necessary and important tool of an organization. One purpose is to communicate to employees reactions about their work performance. Positive comments can inspire an employee to take initiative or develop healthy habits. However, a person who receives little or no feedback can not improve, and sometimes the quality and quantity of their work will decline. Follow these tips for an evaluation:

- Be honest. Discuss excellent performance and

that continued excellence is expected. Also, let the employee know when their job is in jeopardy.

- Inform employees of areas for improvement. Nobody is perfect.
- Include a section for the employee's comments. An employee who feels unheard or unimportant will drain the organization's morale or even threaten the safety and security of others.

Feedback

An employee's performance evaluation shouldn't come as a surprise. Convey expectations and provide feedback regularly. This ensures the review is supported by documentation based on prior conversations or disciplinary actions. When an employee must be terminated, good documentation is necessary to protect the supervisor from a wrongful dismissal lawsuit. An employee's attorney may hesitate to file suit when presented with a detailed written record of unsatisfactory work performance. If a lawsuit has been filed, they may be more willing to compromise, therefore avoiding costs and risks associated with a court trial.

Communication

Most employees want to be helpful, pleasing, and accommodating therefore communication is important. Poor attitudes may develop due to miscommunication or hurt feelings. Happy employees keep morale and productivity up. Here are ways to avoid issues with employees:

- Take responsibility to manage.
- Hold clearly focused conversations with every staff member as frequently as possible.
- Deal with performance problems immediately.
- Hold people accountable for their actions.
- Focus on what can be controlled, and ignore the rest.
- Do not dwell on the past. Rather, focus on planning for the future. ❖

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