

## Performance Evaluations Can be a Great Tool

*Submitted by Victoria Beale, Assistant LTAP Director in Ohio*

Do you dread conducting employee performance evaluations? The performance evaluation process doesn't have to be painful. Follow the rules below to make the performance evaluation a smooth process.

### **RULE # 1 - Set Your Expectations with a Work Plan.**

As the Supervisor you know what work needs to be completed each day. Do not assume employees are aware of this information. Instead, inform your employees what specific work needs to be completed today, this week, this month. By using a work plan (essentially a 'to-do list' for the performance evaluation period), you can effectively communicate your expectations for your employee's duties.

### **RULE #2 – Include Objective Tasks in Your Work Plan**

How do you know if someone completed their job? Develop work plan tasks that you will use as a guide to measure the performance of each task, at the end of the performance evaluation period. For example, write "Visit each field office a minimum of twice monthly" in your work plan instead of "Stay in contact with field staff." The former is much clearer than the latter and it can easily be measured.

### **RULE #3 – Communicate Your Work Plan and Follow-Up with Status Meetings**

Once the work plans are written, communicate them to your employees so they will have the plan you designed for them to complete their jobs. Next, set dates for periodic meetings with your employees to sit down to discuss their progress on the work plan tasks. Be sure to ask your employee if they need any additional tools or training to complete the assigned tasks. Also, discuss any challenges the employee is experiencing and agree to work plan adjustments. Take detailed notes during these meet-

ings and keep them in a file for reference when you write the annual performance evaluation.

### **RULE #4 – Use the Work Plan as the Foundation for Assessing the Employee's Performance**

When it is time for the annual performance evaluation, you will be prepared to complete the review if you follow all these steps in this article. You will have the work plan and a record of any discussions between you and your employee on the work plan. This will help you objectively assess performance on goals. Taking time to assign and monitor work is a big part of your role as a supervisor.

### **Rule#5 – Once you Start Using Work Plans, Don't Stop!**

Using work plans to aid in your evaluation of employees is a continuous process. If there are uncompleted items on the work plan, add them to the next work plan. If new initiatives are developed that the employee will have a role in (even if a small role), add them to the work plan. The new work plan should be provided at the end of the performance evaluation meeting. This will set the tone for moving right into the next year's work and, when attached to the performance evaluation, it will provide documented proof that you communicated your expectations directly to the employee.

You can make performance evaluations much easier for yourself and the employee if you use this well documented process. Remember to incorporate these five basic rules and you will revolutionize your experiences with conducting performance evaluations. They will become a tool you'll love to use instead of loving to hate!

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