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Writing Evidence Based Performance Evaluations

When I read the evaluation from my supervisor, I was shocked at how wonderful he made me sound...until I got to the bottom and read a part where he hadn't replaced the name of another employee. It was then that I realized the evaluation was a copy/paste, "boilerplate" document that didn't reflect the work I was doing. None of my actual work was mentioned as evidence of the evaluation I had just received. Although it made me sound like I was a great employee, I had no respect for it, and lost much of the respect I had for my supervisor.

So, how do you write a performance evaluation that is based on performance? Let's look at just one performance category and use that as our template. Remember, it is about the performance and not the person. The performance should be based on evidence of behavior expectations, not on relationship or how much you like/don't like someone.



Evidence based
evaluations
are
based on the
performance or
behavior
not
the person.

The first thing you must do is know what the expectation of performance is and what it is being rated against.

Let's look at the expected performance of a Lead Campus Safety Officer for a medium-sized community college.

Example: Performance Category:
Working Relationships/Professionalism.

Expected Performance:

Establish and maintain professional, cooperative working relationships with the educational community and public safety agencies.

What exactly is being rated and what does this behavior look like if it is rated as:

- Exceeds performance expectations
- Above performance expectations
- Meets performance expectations
- Below performance expectations
- Significant gaps in performance expectations



What is a Likert Scale and how are they used in evidence-based performance evaluations?

A Likert Scale is a survey scale that represents a set of answer options—either numeric or verbal—that cover a range of opinions on a single topic.

Likert scales (named after their creator, American social scientist Rensis Likert) are quite popular because they are one of the most reliable ways to measure opinions, perceptions, and behaviors.

The Likert scale, which falls under our definition of a survey scale, is a 5 or 7-point scale that ranges from one extreme attitude to another, like “extremely likely” to “not at all likely.” Typically, they include a moderate or neutral mid-point. For performance evaluations, the mid-point is where measurable performance meets the performance expectation.



How to write a rubric to assess performance.

If you have a rubric of what the performance should be, then you are evaluating the performance not the person.

Many companies shy away from rubrics because they are time-consuming to compose. This is true, rubrics CAN take a while to make, but rubrics will save time on the evaluation end. Many rubrics can be used again for similar assignments or performance and can serve as templates for new rubrics. Developing rubrics for performance evaluation helps focus behavior and evaluation on the most important aspects of competence and skills.

To help you write the best rubrics, here are a few tips to get you started:

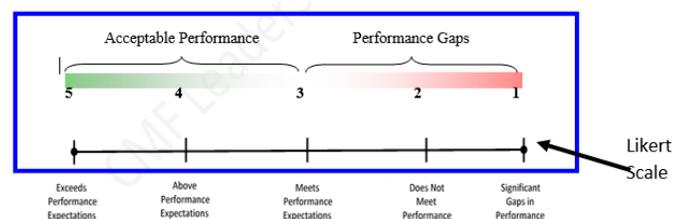
- Decide what you want to grade for this assignment or activity
- Before jumping into creating a rubric, think carefully about the performance objectives of the assignment. Keep these objectives specific and clear.
- List the most relevant objectives of the assignment.

There are likely many goals you have in mind for the performance (professional communication, openness, cooperativeness, etc.), but make sure you are using the criteria that relate to the expected performance in that rating area. Ask yourself, “What am I trying to assess with this rating criteria?” You may want the employees work to be factual, clear, concise, complete, or follow a certain protocol, but what aspects do the employees really need to be evaluated on?

Choose three to seven criteria that satisfy the objectives. More than seven criteria may create a sense of micro-management and be overwhelming for employees and raters alike.

Rating criteria need to be specific and measurable. There needs to be evidence of whether employees have achieved the expectations of the rating category. Simply saying that XX employee “understands” or “knows” is not easily measured, but by giving examples of what the employees DO to show their understanding or knowledge can be. Sometimes one criterion will satisfy multiple rating areas or standard, and sometimes there will be several criteria on a rubric that all satisfy the same standard.

How do I know if it is good or bad performance?





Gathering evidence to write the evaluation

Now it is time for you to rate the performance (not the person) based on the evidence you find of that performance expectation.

Throughout the rating period you should have been gathering examples of some of the performance expectations (data) that prove the employee performance or that demonstrate a gap in the knowledge, skills, or abilities of the employee in that rating area. Here are some suggestions:

1. Meeting with the employee to discuss their performance and “gather” evidence or gain their perspective of their performance is a valuable tool that you can use prior to writing the evaluation,
2. Ask the employee to give you dates/times of when they did “X” that maybe you weren’t aware of.
3. Use case numbers, incident numbers, work order numbers, customer numbers, or other numbers that show specific incidents for the observed behavior.
4. Get input from other supervisors, employees, customers, vendors, etc.

Once you have data showing each area that is being rated, based on the evidence, it is time to write the evaluation of that rating area, based on the evidence.

First, give the rating and explanation of the rating, as well as **evidence examples** of the performance that supports the rating.

If the performance Meets or exceeds the expectation:

Give at least three examples of the observed or reported performance consistent with the expectation.

If the performance does not meet the expectation:

If the evidence obtained is showing a performance gap, where the behavior does not meet the performance expectation, then describe the expectation vs. the performance and why the performance does not meet the expectation. This will provide some direction for goal development for improvement.

Remember it is always about the performance and behavior, NOT about the person.

There should be no “surprises”

Each subsequent rating category should be based on the evidence of that behavior.

If you have time before actually writing the evaluation to sit down with the employee and talk about each areas of performance and let them help you understand their perspective of the performance and evidence that has been gathered, then they will not get any “surprises” when they read your evaluation. It also gives them a chance to clear up any performance gap misperceptions and makes it easier for you to write the evaluation because they can help you explain the behavior.

An employee may not agree with the rating of the evaluator, but when it is evidence based, the evidence is the issue, not the subjectiveness of the rater. The evidence should speak for itself. The evidence should be specific, stand-alone, articulable and factual.

Quotes to put into practice

“Don’t lower your expectations to meet your performance. Raise your level of performance to meet your expectations.”

– Ralph Marston, Writer

“The true measure of the value of any business leader and manager is performance.”

– Brian Tracy, Author



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- Dr. Chris Fuzie

Putting it all together...

- Performance evaluations should be just that, evaluations of the performance, based on evidence of that performance, regardless of what we feel or think about the employee.
- If the evaluation is evidence based and speaks to the evidence of the performance, then the evaluation doesn't impact the relationship between the rater and the person being rated.
- An evaluation that is evidence-based gives both the rater and the employee some direction to maintain current performance or improve if performance gaps are observed.
- An evidence-based performance evaluation helps maintain the relationship between rater and employer because the issue is the performance and not the person.

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