

Oregon Institute of Technology

COMPLETING A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL Instructions for Supervisors

For Employees in Classified Information Technology Positions
Represented by the SEIU/OPEU

Introduction

The variable pay program for information technology employees is designed to support and promote organizational effectiveness through improved performance at the individual and group level, and reward employees for their contributions.

Performance appraisal is a process, not just a piece of paper. This appraisal system focuses on the future, as well as the past. It provides a way for assessing achievements, building relationships, and incorporates the principles and strategies that encourage success.

Following is a list of detailed instructions for the appraisal process. Further assistance is available from Human Resources.

Employee Information

Employee Name: First name and last name of the employee whose performance is being evaluated.

Identification Number: The employee's identification number that is used for payroll purposes.

Department: The department where the employee is assigned.

Classification Title: The classification title for the employee's position.

Classification Number: The classification number.

Competency Level: Indicate whether the employee is classified as Competency Level 1, 2, or 3.

Position Number: The position number of the employee's job.

Evaluation Period: The beginning and ending dates for the period covered by the evaluation.

Salary Eligibility Date: The date the employee is eligible for a merit increase.

Salary: Check whether the employee's salary is "at or below" the control point of the salary range, or "above" the control point.

Rating: Check whether the evaluation is for completion of trial service, annual review, or documentation for a special merit increase.

Competencies

The following categories represent the knowledge, skills, and abilities of information technology workers that are known to be critical to business success:

- Technical Knowledge
- Work Coordination
- Problem Solving/Prevention
- Communication & Service
- Accountability

Competencies provide a road map so employees understand the knowledge, skills, and abilities it takes to do their jobs well and advance their careers. They communicate the mission and values of the organization. In addition, competencies allow supervisors and employees to place emphasis not only on what gets accomplished, but how it gets accomplished. Focusing on the kind of behavior, style, and approach that supervisors desire is as important as the results.

Performance Standards

Performance standards describe the behaviors, specific skills, knowledge, or techniques (within the general competency category) that an employee needs to apply to achieve the desired job objectives. Performance standards form the framework by which performance will be evaluated.

Performance standards can either be specific skills and/or behaviors from each area of competence (See "Defining Competencies for Information Technology Classifications"), or other appropriate standard. Select standards that are relevant to the employee's work assignments. Establish what the employee is expected to achieve during the review period—both ongoing and specific skills and competencies.

At the beginning of the performance appraisal period, the supervisor and the employee should discuss the competencies and performance standards upon which the employee will be evaluated. If the employee has input in developing the standard, the supervisor can expect fewer disagreements or disappointments later.

Rating

At the end of the performance evaluation period, the supervisor shall consider the employee's performance and select the rating level that most accurately describes how well the employee typically performed in each area of responsibility. The supervisor may request input from the employee.

Rating Levels

Consistently Exceeds Standards: Consistently exceeds all performance expectations/objectives. Highly skilled in relation to technical requirements of the job. Regularly produces expected accomplishments in all areas of responsibility. Meets difficult challenges. Demonstrates sound judgment and decision-making abilities.

Meets Standards: Consistently meets all job standards and may occasionally exceed performance expectations or objectives. Demonstrates effective performance and is fully qualified to perform job duties with the appropriate amount of direction. Consistently performs in a reliable and professional manner.

Does Not Fully Meet Standards: Has not consistently met job requirements, and may occasionally demonstrate unsatisfactory performance. Has not successfully performed tasks of the job in all areas of major responsibility. May have the ability to complete most assignments, however, immediate improvement and further development must be demonstrated. If this level of performance continues, an Improvement Plan may be required.

Performance on each standard should be examined and evaluated separately. Do not attempt to determine an overall rating across all standards at this time.

Comments

The supervisor may record any remarks or explanation of the employee's performance or rating. This commentary will enable the employee to understand why the performance was rated as it was.

Performance Objectives

Performance objectives are the heart of the merit pay program. This section records reasonable outcomes or projects for the employee to accomplish during the upcoming appraisal period. There is no restriction on the number of objectives that the supervisor and the employee develop for the next evaluation period. Identify as many as you need, but make sure the workload is realistic.

Good performance objectives meet the following **SMART** criteria:

S = Specific

State clearly what is to be accomplished in concrete terms that can be easily observed and mutually understood.

M = Measurable

Objectives should be quantifiable, stating exactly what the criteria for success is, how that success will be tracked and measured, and whether the measurement tools are available.

A = Attainable

Can the result be realistically achieved? (Is the process used workable and within the employee's control? Are the needed resources available? Is the time frame reasonable? Is the objective a "reachable" stretch?)

R = Realistic

Based upon the employee's knowledge of the job, the objective should be linked vertically to the organization's goals, as well as being difficult, yet feasible.

T = Time Bound

Each objective should have a clearly defined time frame. Studies have shown that good planning gets good results. Following are several alternative methods to develop performance objectives:

- The supervisor and employee together may develop the objectives; or
- The supervisor and employee may develop the objectives separately, then meet and make modifications; or,
- The supervisor develops the objectives and reviews them with the employee.

Allow for flexibility when writing performance objectives. They will need to be adjusted when work priorities change. (Sample objectives and performance standards are offered on page 6.)

Although writing objectives will take time, if it is done jointly, it can be a worthwhile step toward improving job performance. There is little chance that an employee who is involved in a joint process will be in the dark about where the employee stands, or that the employee will forget he/she is a principal participant in his/her own development and is responsible for it.

The supervisor should monitor projects and assignments on a continual basis. This allows the supervisor to identify unacceptable performance when it occurs and provide assistance to address such performance rather than waiting until the annual review.

The supervisor should meet with the employee and review objectives at least once during the evaluation period, and preferably quarterly, to discuss performance-to-date. This interim review should include a discussion about whether the stated work assignments or priorities have changed or should change. If so, the supervisor should record those changes and provide a copy to the employee.

Performance Standard

For each objective that you have listed, indicate the target results, either as a quantity or quality. Indicate the manner in which the end result will be achieved in a satisfactory (meets standards) manner.

Standards are:

- Relevant to objectives
- Clearly defined and documented
- Appropriate considering existing realities
- Challenging but attainable
- Understood by and acceptable to constituencies
- Revised as appropriate

Weight

The supervisor indicates the relative importance of the objective—critical, major, or secondary. Following is a general guideline for defining priorities.

Critical: Must be met or exceeded in order for the unit to meet its objectives. (Planned objectives should include no more than two or three objectives that are critical in nature.)

Major: Must be met or exceeded in order for an individual to be effective.
Secondary: Should be met, but will not preclude the individual/unit

effectiveness.

Sample Objectives and Performance Standards

EXAMPLE #1

Objective: (Critical) Coordinate the technical aspects of the Alpha project and ensure the project is complete by February 1, within the \$600,000 budget, and that the resulting system meets customer specifications.

Performance Standard: "Meets Standards" performance will consist of: 1) completion by deadline, 2) costs at budget, 3) system performance meets customer requirements, and 4) customers sign off that they understand user procedures and are able to operate the system.

EXAMPLE #2

Objective: (Major) Within the next six months, the employee will define customer requirements for an Alpha System, develop a proposed system solution to meet requirements and obtain customer approval for mock-up, including input and output formats, computational processes, and quality assurance procedures.

Performance Standard: Customer evaluation of project produces ratings of Fully Satisfactory or better on 1) responsiveness to customer needs, 2) timeliness, 3) quality of work, 4) efficiency/cost control, 5) technical performance of system.

Results

Throughout the evaluation period you may find it useful to keep a record of significant events or accomplishments on the Performance Tracking Record available under Forms on the HR website.

At the end of the appraisal period, the supervisor (or, supervisor and employee) documents the outcome of the employee's efforts to achieve the objective. The supervisor may rely on factual information, as well as observation. If an employee feels the supervisor's data is incorrect, it is the employee's responsibility to produce corrected information.

The focus is on performance—on actions relative to goals—not the personality traits of the employee. The supervisor should recognize positive, negative, and incomplete results.

Rating

At the end of the performance evaluation period, the supervisor considers the employee's performance and selects the rating level that most accurately describes how well he/she accomplished that objective. Written performance evaluation is required prior to awarding a performance based salary increase. Performance on each objective should be examined and evaluated separately. Do not attempt to determine an overall rating across all objectives at this time.

Comments

The supervisor may use this space to record any remarks or explanation that supports the achievement level indicated. This commentary will enable the employee to understand why the performance was rated as it was.

This section should include a description of any extraneous factors or unanticipated events that complicated or inhibited the employee's ability to achieve the desired result(s). In addition, if revisions are made to original objectives and standards, state the reason and the adjustment here.

Discussion of How Work Was Performed

If how the employee performed the job had an impact on the work of peers, users, or the effectiveness of the unit, specify what behaviors, skills, knowledge, and techniques were involved and how they affected the effectiveness of the employee.

Unplanned Accomplishments

List other accomplishments achieved by the employee that were not included in the original list of planned objectives.

Summary Rating

The supervisor must consider all aspects of the employee's performance, including the relative importance of each of the objectives, and select the rating level that most accurately describes the overall performance during the evaluation period.

The focus is on job performance—not the personality traits of the employee. Develop a rating based on how well the employee performed in relation to the competencies and performance objectives, the relative weight given to each objective, and any other relevant accomplishments.

If the employee receives less than a satisfactory evaluation, the supervisor should meet with the employee within thirty (30) days of the evaluation to review, in detail, the alleged deficiencies.¹

If an employee is rated “Does Not Fully Meet Standards” and the supervisor recommends withholding the performance increase, the supervisor must give notification in writing, including the reasons for withholding the increase, at least fifteen (15) days prior to the employee’s eligibility date.²

When new employees are progressing satisfactorily through their initial appointment to a new or promotional position, but may not yet have had the opportunity to demonstrate all of their skills, we would not normally use the “Does Not Fully Meet Standards” category, as this would unduly penalize them for a natural and appropriate learning curve.

COMMON RATER ERRORS

Halo Effect: The tendency to rate a person who is exceptionally strong in one area high in all other areas. One factor has undue influence on the other ratings.

Horns Effect: This is the opposite of the Halo Effect—a tendency to rate a person who is especially weak in one factor low on all other factors.

Central Tendency: Tendency to avoid both high and low extremes, lumping all ratings in the middle category.

Leniency: This occurs when the rater gives all high ratings or a disproportionate amount of high ratings.

Severity: The opposite of Leniency—a tendency to give all low ratings or a disproportionate number of low ratings.

¹ Reference Article 57, Section 2, of the OUS/OPEU Collective Bargaining Agreement

² Article 57, Section 4.

Similar-to-Me: Some raters have a tendency to give persons who are similar to them higher ratings on the basis of biographical backgrounds, attitudes, etc.

Contrast Effect: The tendency of raters to evaluate persons relative to each other, rather than on the basis of individual performance evaluation criteria.

Commentary Supporting Summary Rating

This section provides an opportunity to emphasize, expand, or clarify the overall rating. This commentary will enable the employee to understand why the performance was rated as it was.

Developmental Needs/Plans

Providing employees with training and development opportunities encourage good performance. Training strengthens job-related skills and helps employees keep up with changes in technology. The supervisor and employee should reach agreement on needed development, resources needed to enable the employee to perform at the desired level, and steps to improve performance. Supervisors may wish to help employees find ways of satisfying their own professional interests and meeting the objectives of the organization at the same time.

Employee Signature: The signature of the employee does not signify agreement with the review, but only that he/she has read the evaluation.⁴

Employee Comments

This section provides an opportunity for the employee to record remarks about any aspect of the performance appraisal. All written comments provided by the employee within sixty (60) days of the evaluation shall be attached to the performance evaluation.⁵

Communicating with the Employee During the Evaluation Period

- A fundamental component of successful evaluation is regular communication between the supervisor and the employee. Building work relationships is essential to achieving desired results. Regular two-way communication between the employee and supervisor helps build this relationship.
- Brief discussions should take place whenever appropriate. Formal sessions should be scheduled at least once during the evaluation period, and preferably quarterly, to discuss what is going well and what can be improved.
- Use these sessions to describe rather than evaluate performance. Inquire about any changes in the work situation since the previous discussion. Determine if there are any obstacles blocking success. Ask about resources that the employee may need to accomplish their objectives. Acknowledge accomplishments during this period. Discuss new priorities in the department so the employee can re-focus efforts, if appropriate. Modify plans in response to changes.
- It is important for both parties (supervisor and employee) to maintain open communication in order to keep each other informed of work progress and work together to resolve problems when they occur. It is far better to resolve problems when they are small, before they become “disasters.”
⁴ Article 57, Section 2. ⁵ Article 57, Section 2.
- A key principle that encourages employees to accept constructive criticism is to be “hard on the problem, and soft on the person.” The focus should be on correcting the problem or behavior, not on punishing the employee. The performance evaluation is an assessment of performance and should not be punitive. The performance evaluation should not be the place where the employee first hears about disciplinary action.
- A useful motto for the performance appraisal should be “no surprises.” Through this approach, you can reduce the likelihood of the employee becoming emotional during the review.
- Strive to provide continual feedback concerning expectations and performance. When things are going well, discuss how and why this is so. When things are not going well, discuss what needs to be done to make them right. When an employee is not doing things properly, get together and plan what needs to be done to correct the matter. If there is a performance gap, help the employee understand the cause and the action necessary for correction. Support plans for professional development.

- By providing feedback on a continual and timely basis throughout the evaluation period, the supervisor establishes the groundwork for indicating that there is a performance problem.

Annual Review

- Schedule a meeting with the employee. (Although a self-assessment is not required, including it may provide the employee with a greater sense of participation in the process.) During the meeting, review the evaluation and facilitate an open exchange of information concerning expectations and results. Resolve any disagreements on factual matters. Determine the reasons for different views relative to subjective assessments and resolve them if at all possible. Be open and make every effort to respond in a positive manner.
- The annual review is a good time for the supervisor to review the position description with the employee and determine if the work described is current, or if the job duties have changed. The position description may need to be revised.
- Analyze the issues and attempt to view them from both sides. Listen carefully to the employee and try to understand their perspective. Give the same attention you would expect from your own supervisor.