

>> Don: So we've talked about IDP as an important tool.

There's another biggy we're going to bring up, so you know what it is, right?

>> Janelle: Of course I do.

It is the performance plan.

The Department requires every permanent employee, also if you have a temp employee whose appointment exceeds 120 days, must be under a performance plan.

This needs to be in place within 60 days of the beginning of the performance year or of that employee's start date.

Now in the next segment we have with you an expert who will be sharing tips on setting up a good performance plan.

>> Rebekah: Hi, I'm Rebekah Giddings with the division of human capital and I'm going to talk about the performance system within the Department of Interior.

Our system is a five-level performance management system.

Each year employees' performance is appraised on a specific set of elements and standards which align with the service's strategic goal and mission.

Within the system, an employee is rated on each element in their performance plan.

In general, the individual element ratings are combined and averaged to determine the overall rating of record for the year.

The rating of record is their official rating for the year and can be used to reward above average performance or to assist employees with less than fully successful performance raise to an acceptable level.

Each year managers develop specific elements for

employees based on their duties.

Managers of employees are encouraged to discuss expectations at the beginning of the year and to continue to communicate throughout the year.

Within our system, level 3 is considered fully successful.

This is the level where most employees should be performing.

Level 4 performance is considered superior and level 5 is exceptional.

At these levels employees are going above and beyond what is expected of them.

Employees rated at these levels are eligible to be considered for performance awards such as monetary awards, time off awards and in the case of level 5 a quality step increase.

On the other end of the scale, employees rated at a level 2, are not quite fully successful.

However, they aren't completely unsuccessful.

This level is considered minimally successful.

Employees who are failing to perform are rated at the level 1, unsatisfactory.

A manager with an employee rated at a level 1 or 2 is expected to work with their employee with the help of human resources to ensure their performance improves to the fully successful level.

Now that you know a little about the performance system, let's discuss the specifics.

All performance is assessed using the Employee Performance Appraisal Plan.

Commonly referred to as the EPAP.

We are currently using a version of the form released in September of 2009.

All other versions of the form are considered obsolete.

The form can be found on the human capital website.

The EPAP is a tool for managers to use to ensure employees understand what their specific job responsibilities are and how they support the service's missions and goals.

It documents up to five critical elements on which the employee will be rated.

It also provides employees with the, with a description of each level of performance and explains what they need to do to be rated at that level.

The form is divided into five sections, signature page, instructions for using the form, the elements and standards, the benchmark standards and the training tool titled "understanding performance management."

It is important that employees are provided a copy of this form and all sections each year.

Our performance management year runs from October 1st to September 30 each year.

However, the overall process takes about 14 months.

During the year there are a few key dates for the performance management system.

The first is October 1st.

The beginning of the performance year.

By November 30th, all current employees are required to have a performance plan in place.

As a manager, it is your responsibility to discuss the EPAP with the employee, ask for their feedback and

establish the plan.

Once the plan is written, you should meet with the employee and together you should complete part A of the form.

The employee should then receive a copy.

The next key time frame is April and May.

This is midway through the performance year.

This is the period of time when you should conduct a progress review.

You should meet with the employee, discuss their performance so far and address any concerns either of you are having.

A numeric rating is not given at this time.

It is more an opportunity to have a detailed discussion and provide feedback to the employee.

Managers and employees should then complete part B of the form.

Performance year ends on September 30th and managers are required to complete the performance appraisal process by October 30th.

To do this a manager must review the plan, rate the employee on each element using the established standards.

By following the instructions on the form and overall summary rating is established.

This is also known as the rating of record.

Managers should then meet with the employee and discuss the rating.

Employees should never be surprised by their rating.

Communication throughout the year is essential.

This meeting is also a good opportunity to discuss the employee specific strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for the next year.

At this time, the final section of the EPAP is completed, Part D.

The final date is again November 30th.

Managers are required to submit original EPAPs and associated awards to HR for processing.

As you can see there are overlapping dates in the system.

Once the performance year ends, managers need to quickly complete the EPAP and close out the year with the employee.

If you have a new employee who joined your staff during the performance year you have 60 days from their start date to establish their plan.

Employees need to be on a performance plan for 90 days before they can be rated.

Now let's discuss how to develop a plan.

It is important to understand the difference between critical elements and standards.

Critical elements tell an employee what they need to do.

Standards tell them how well they need to do it.

A critical element is an assignment or responsibility of such importance that failure to perform it requires remedial action and may result in an adverse action if the employee's performance does not improve.

Earlier we discussed that a rating of record or summary rating is generally a mathematical average of the rating of each element.

The exception to this is when an employee receives rating of minimally successful, level 2 or unsatisfactory level 1 on one or more elements.

When this happens, regardless of the average, the employee's rating cannot be higher than the lowest rating on any individual element.

This is why the critical elements are so important.

It's also why you as a manager need to be very clear and very specific with the employee on what is expected of them and how these expectations are going to be assessed.

An employee must have at least one and no more than five critical elements in their performance plan.

A minimum of one and preferably all of the elements should align with and support the mission's -- services' mission and goals.

Managers should identify specific targets that reflect goals in the service's strategic plan.

The linkage or alignment should be clear to the employee so they can see how their performance supports achievements of the service's goals.

It's not enough to include a generic statement that the employee's performance requirements support organizational goals.

The linkage must be clearly defined.

Critical elements must describe work assignments and responsibilities that are significantly influenced by the employee's work and within the employee's control.

Supervisors and managers are required to use the supervisory EPAP which is also available on the human capital website.

This version contains a special mandatory supervisory

element which cannot be modified.

Each critical element should contain an action verb.

In addition to the verb, there should be an object and a purpose.

While the purpose is optional, it is considered to be a best practice to include one in each critical element.

Employees should know the answer to the question why.

An example would be, conducts investigations in order to improve operations.

The element should be purposeful and goal oriented.

It should be a significant and recurring aspect or component of the job.

It should be based on the position, not the person.

The element should be within the authority of the position.

It should be distinguishable from other critical elements.

The element should represent objective criteria.

For example, job related behaviors, tasks and outcomes, not personality traits.

Finally, it should represent individual responsibility and be practicable to measure and specific enough to determine whether the results have been accomplished.

The critical element tells the employees what they need to accomplish.

But it doesn't provide the employee with any details on how their performance will be measured.

That's the purpose of the performance standards.

They tell us what satisfactory performance looks like as well as what performance is required to exceed the standard and what poor performance looks like.

Employees must be held accountable for achieving results appropriate to their level of responsibility.

The standard for rating the critical element must be written so they clearly indicate the results that will be measured in determining the employee's rating.

Employees' performance plans should include incredible measures of performance.

General measures of performance related to quality, quantity, timeliness and cost effectiveness have been defined in the benchmark standards.

The benchmark standards can be used but must be augmented with specific measurable criteria for the fully successful Level 3 element so employees understand how their performance will be evaluated.

Examples of augmentation include specific language that addresses quality, quantity, timeliness and cost effectiveness.

Where benchmark standards are not provided, specific standards must be developed when appropriate.

When you begin to develop your standards, ask yourself a few simple questions.

Which general measures apply?

Is quality important?

Does the stakeholder or customer care how well the work is done?

Is quantity important?

Does the stakeholder or customer care how many are produced?

Is it important to accomplish the element by a certain time or date?

Is it important to accomplish the element within a certain cost limit?

What measures are already available?

How could quality, quantity, timeliness and/or cost effectiveness be measured?

Is there some number or percentage that could be tracked?

If the element does not lend itself to being measured with a number and can only be described, ask yourself, who can judge that the element is well done?

What factors would they look for?

As I said before, if you're going to use the benchmark standards, you're required to augment the standard at the fully successful level.

This means you can use the language that is built into the system, however, at the fully successful level for each critical element where you use the benchmark you must also provide additional information to show how the employee can specifically achieve that performance level.

For instance, the benchmark standard for fully successful has as a part of it, all critical activities are generally completed in a timely manner and supervisor is kept informed of work issues, alterations and status.

The employee effectively applies technical skills or organizational knowledge to get the job done. It's up to you to explain what timely manner means.

And what does effectively applies technical skills and organizational knowledge mean to you in the employee has the right to know what your expectations are and what is required of them.

To summarize, standards should be stated concretely and specifically.

Practical to measure, meaningful, exceedable and realistic and based on sound rationale.

It is very important that the fully successful standard is not absolute.

This means that the standard does not allow room for errors.

Some questions that you might ask yourself to help determine whether you are writing an absolute standard include, how many times may the employee fail this requirement and still be fully successful?

Does the standard use such words as all, never and each?

These words don't automatically create an absolute standard but they often alert you to a problem.

If the standard allows for no errors, is that because the error would result in death or injury?

It's also important that the standard not be backwards.

A backwards standard describes what is not being done rather than what is.

Some questions you might ask to help determine whether you are writing a backwards standard include does the standard express the level of work you want to see?

Or does it describe negative performance?

An example of describing negative performance would be: requires assistance more than 50% of the time.

A better choice is, works independently more than 50% of the time.

If the employee did nothing, would he or she still meet

the standard as written?

An example would be, completes fewer than four products a year.

A better choice is, no more than three products are completed after the established deadline.

Now that you have developed the elements and the standards, it's time to begin the conversation with your employee about your expectations.

Employees should be given an opportunity to review the standards and provide any feedback to you.

You should consider the feedback but, remember, as the manager it is your responsibility to determine what work is critical and what the performance expectations are.

Once you've discussed the EPAP, it's finally time to implement it.

As we discussed before, new plans should be in place for employees by November 30th.

The manager and the employee both sign part A and then the employee should receive a copy of their plan for future reference.

Any new employee who joined your staff after the beginning of the performance year should be placed on the plan within 60 days of their arrival.

That covers our brief overview, the key dates and time frames and tips on creating elements and standards.

If you have questions regarding performance management in the service, please contact your servicing human resources office.

Thank you.

>> Don: So, folks, that's how you put the plan together.

