

once and for all

resolving performance challenges

Video Development Program
Facilitator Guide



VIVID EDGE

For Preview Only

once and for all promotes managers to use a progressive discipline procedure as a proactive and positive performance management tool. However, before applying any of the information provided in this video development program, it's important for you to find out specifically how your organization suggests handling poor employee performance.

This video development program does not render any legal advice and should not be used as a substitute for professional services. If legal or professional advice is needed, please consult with an HR professional, your manager or legal counsel.

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program objectives

Upon completion of this video development program, participants should be able to:

- ❑ Recognize their role in employee performance
- ❑ Evaluate an employee performance problem
- ❑ Conduct a corrective discussion by:
 - Communicating clear expectations
 - Establishing a gap in current performance
 - Communicating specific examples of behavior
 - Getting feedback
 - Creating and agreeing on solutions
 - Getting employee commitment to improve performance
- ❑ Use progressive discipline when performance continues to decline by giving:
 - A verbal warning
 - A written warning
 - A last chance option
- ❑ Document performance
- ❑ Determine appropriate consequences

Applying these skills can enable participants to:

- ❑ Give employees every chance to succeed
- ❑ Help employees understand specifically where performance is falling short
- ❑ Gain employee commitment to improve
- ❑ Develop action plans for performance improvement
- ❑ Communicate clear performance expectations and consequences
- ❑ Fairly conclude whether or not an employee has the right skills and/or motivation to do the job

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For Preview Only

planning your video development program

1-4 WEEKS AHEAD

- Determine the date and select participants for the training session.
- Send an e-mail, memo or letter inviting your participants at least one to two weeks in advance (*Sample memo, page 6*).
- Secure a location for the training session where a video can be viewed and heard easily. It's generally best to create a relaxed, informal discussion environment. The location should have an adequate writing surface for taking notes and be accessible for participants with disabilities.
- If possible, obtain and review your organization's policies and procedures regarding progressive discipline and documenting employee performance.

1 WEEK AHEAD

- Create an agenda for the video development program. Use one of the suggested agendas provided on page 5 or customize one to fit your time, needs and participants.

1-2 DAYS AHEAD

- Test the VCR and monitor at your selected training session location. Make sure both are properly connected and that you understand how to control volume, tracking and color.
- Make copies of any materials needed for your session.

1 HOUR BEFORE

Do you have...?

- ? The videotape: once and for all? Is it rewound?
- ? The Facilitator Guide?
- ? Notepads and pencils for participants?
- ? Copies of materials needed for participants?
- ? Name tags or table tents?
- ? Optional: Soft drinks, water or coffee?

DURING THE VIEWING OF THE VIDEOTAPE

- Make sure the volume is adjusted so everyone can easily hear.
- Make sure there is enough light available for note taking.

ABOUT THIS FACILITATOR GUIDE

- Whenever you see the asterisk icon to your right, please feel free to make as many copies as you need for participants or customize the material to suit the needs of your organization.
- Whenever you see the flipchart icon to your right, the information may be appropriate for flipchart, overheads, or a PowerPoint™ presentation.



suggested agendas

Agenda one* (approximate length – 3 hours, 30 minutes)	
The arrival and settling of participants	5 minutes
Program introduction	10 minutes
Showing the videotape	21 minutes
Reviewing the videotape	5 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Progressive discipline	25 minutes
Evaluate the performance challenge	30 minutes
The corrective discussion	25 minutes
Break	10 minutes
When performance improves or doesn't...	10 minutes
A verbal warning	15 minutes
Documentation	15 minutes
A written warning	15 minutes
A last chance option	15 minutes
Conclusion	15 minutes

*To create a shorter agenda, eliminate participant discussions throughout each section.

Agenda two (approximate length – 4 hours, 40 minutes)	
The arrival and settling of participants	5 minutes
Program introduction	10 minutes
Showing the videotape	21 minutes
Reviewing the videotape	5 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Progressive discipline	25 minutes
Evaluate the performance challenge	30 minutes
Exercise A	20 minutes
Exercise B	10 minutes
Break	10 minutes
The corrective discussion with Role-play	60 minutes
Break	10 minutes
When performance improves or doesn't...	10 minutes
A verbal warning	15 minutes
Documentation	15 minutes

sample inter-office memo



This is an invitation that can be sent to participants at least one week before holding your video development program. Please modify it to meet your specific needs.

To: (participant name)

From: (your name)

Re: Resolving Performance Challenges

On (date), I will be holding a video development program designed to show you how to resolve employee performance challenges — once and for all.

As you know, the cost of poor performance is large. Not only is this cost reflected in the lost productivity for each unresolved performance challenge, but also in your time and frustration, lowered employee morale, and sub-par products and services.

When an employee's behavior or performance does not meet job expectations, it's your role to step in and help get things back on track. This can be easier said than done without a good process to determine whether or not your employee has the right skills and/or motivation for the job. That's exactly what we'll discuss in this upcoming session.

You'll learn to:

- Evaluate a performance problem
- Conduct a corrective discussion
- Use progressive discipline if performance continues to decline
- Document employee performance
- Determine appropriate consequences

Using these actions can not only help you turn around a performance problem, but give employees every chance to succeed. You'll be able to help employees understand specifically where their performance is falling short, develop an action plan, and gain their commitment to make improvements. But perhaps most importantly, you'll be able to fairly conclude whether or not an employee is the right person to do the job.

Please mark your calendar so you can attend this important program. Call (number) to confirm your participation. Thanks and see you there!

program introduction



INTRODUCTION
20 minutes

Welcome participants to the **once and for all** video development program. If appropriate, introduce yourself to the group and the participants to each other.

Consider asking each participant to share:

- Name and department
- His or her role and job responsibilities
- A brief description of a current employee performance challenge

Once everyone has been introduced, provide an overview of the video development program objectives.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Most of us, as managers, have this in common: Of all the things we do, dealing with and resolving our employee performance challenges are among our most difficult responsibilities.

How many of you have an employee whose performance is declining?

How many of you have an employee with poor work habits?

How about one who doesn't follow work policies or rules?

Anyone have an employee who doesn't seem to have the right skills?

DISCUSSION:

PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

Ask participants to offer a specific undesirable employee work habit or performance-related behavior they might be dealing with today. Write examples down for later discussion on strategies for resolving each specific performance challenge. To protect confidentiality, remind participants to not mention the names of anyone involved.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

The longer we allow performance issues like these to continue, the more we put productivity and the effectiveness of our department, team or organization at risk.

Split participants into two groups and ask each group to answer one of the following questions:

- 1) What are the most common costs of poor employee performance?
- 2) What are the most common reasons we fail to deal with performance challenges as we should?

Allow 5 minutes for small group discussion and then ask each to share their conclusions. If needed, add the following comments.

Some of the most common costs of poor employee performance are:

- Wasted time and energy on your part
- Diminished employee morale
- Lower productivity



Some of the most common reasons we fail to deal with performance challenges as we should include:

- We think that employees should know better and improve performance on their own
- We don't want to hurt employees' feelings
- We find that all employees do is get hurt and defensive
- We talk to employees over and over. Nothing seems to work



Now that we know we have a few issues to face, let's talk about how to resolve these kinds of performance challenges, once and for all. At the conclusion of today's program, you should be able to:

- Evaluate an employee performance problem by determining specific job-related behavior that needs improvement
- Conduct a corrective discussion to get performance back on track
- Use progressive discipline if performance continues to decline
- Document employee performance
- Determine appropriate consequences for both improved and declining performance
- Fairly and objectively conclude whether or not an employee has the right skills and/or motivation for the job



Let's get started by viewing a 21-minute video that will overview key points, illustrate examples and address some common concerns and objections.

show and review video



SHOW VIDEO
21 minutes



REVIEW VIDEO
5 minutes

After showing the video, **once and for all**, ask participants to share their general reaction to the key points, the illustrations and objections raised throughout the program.

Encourage participants to ask questions and raise their own concerns.

Make note of any questions or concerns raised. As a group you may choose to explore these items as appropriate in upcoming sections throughout this program.

The upcoming sections are:

- progressive discipline
- evaluate a performance challenge
- a corrective discussion
- a verbal warning
- document
- a written warning
- a last chance option
- consequences

FYI

When dealing with your employees:

-
-
-
-
-

an HR resource

progressive discipline



**PROGRESSIVE
DISCIPLINE**
25 minutes

Once you've watched the video, reviewed its content and allowed participants a chance to react to the video, provide an overview of the concept of progressive discipline and how it can be used to resolve performance challenges.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Following the informal and formal actions of progressive discipline can help you resolve most of your employee performance challenges. Using these actions also gives your employees the additional benefits of:

- Knowing that they clearly understood what was expected before a change occurred
- Haven been given every chance to succeed
- Being kept informed on where they stand in terms of performance at all times



These benefits can go a long way in building employee morale, trust and productivity. But what about you? What are the benefits to you?

Allow participants to determine some possible benefits. You can also add:

Using progressive discipline can help you to:

- Be consistent and fair
- Stop unacceptable behavior
- Correct and improve employee performance
- Increase employee productivity
- Increase your own productivity



Remind participants that if they or the organization is ever legally challenged, using progressive discipline can provide a fair and easily defensible system of dealing with performance issues.

FYI

Organizations generally establish their own unique progressive discipline policy. Please have your own procedures available during this video development program to make sure participants clearly understand specifically what your organization expects.


DISCUSSION: INFORMAL AND FORMAL ACTIONS

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Progressive discipline is really a matter of following a series of planned actions when dealing with employee performance issues or infractions of company policy. The actions intensify in seriousness if the employee continues to fail to meet job expectations and standards.

An important aspect of using progressive discipline is to ensure there is a consequence associated with each action. The consequence can be both positive and negative, of course, depending on whether job expectations are met or not. Making sure that an employee understands the consequences associated with making or not making agreed upon changes is a critical part of being able to successfully resolve performance issues.

Progressive discipline typically begins informally by assuming in some way expectations have not been clearly communicated to the employee. The informal actions of progressive discipline are:

1. **Evaluate performance** to determine the specific behavior that is contributing to the employee's poor performance and why it's a problem. 
2. **A corrective discussion** in which expectations are clearly communicated, solutions established and consequences are discussed.

A corrective discussion can solve most performance problems that are a result of unclear expectations. And, if an employee does not improve after a corrective discussion, the formal actions of progressive discipline will help you change your communications from "Did the employee know what was expected?" to "The employee did not do what he or she said she would or could do." The formal actions of progressive discipline are:

3. **A verbal warning**
4. **A written warning**
5. **A last chance option**



If after a last chance option the employee demonstrates that he or she can not meet expectations, you'll know that he or she probably doesn't have the right skills or motivation. Keep in mind that the consequences of progressive discipline do not necessarily have to be termination. They can also include a demotion, transfer or some kind of change in responsibility.



OBJECTION: THIS IS WAY TOO TIME-CONSUMING!

DISCUSSION: IS IT REALLY?

Respond to an objection of this kind by conceding that the informal and formal actions of progressive discipline can be time consuming, but participants should finally be able to objectively and fairly conclude whether or not an employee has the right skills or motivation to do the job. If these actions are not taken, an employee's behavior generally won't get better with time, and will more than likely get worse. Ask participants how time consuming failing to not effectively handle performance issues have been for them personally.

In terms of:

- ✓ Their own lost time and productivity as a result of ineffectively dealing with performance issues
- ✓ The lost productivity of the poor-performing employee
- ✓ The lost productivity of other employees dealing with or covering for the poor performing employee

Conversation starters:

- ? How much time do you spend in the average month putting out fires?
- ? How much time do you spend in the average month dealing with customer complaints as a result of poor performance?
- ? How much time do you spend listening to co-workers complain?

Summarize discussion and help participants to conclude that in the long run, using these defined actions is the least time-consuming choice with the added benefit of giving an employee every chance to succeed.

FYI

Using progressive discipline may not be appropriate when dealing with some severe performance challenges such as:

- Possessing or consuming alcohol or non-prescribed narcotics on company property
- Being intoxicated at work
- Unexcused absences
- Destruction of company property
- Theft
- Carrying a weapon or fighting on company property
- Gross insubordination

Make a point to discuss your organization's own policy for grounds for immediate termination.

1 evaluate the performance challenge



EVALUATE

Without exercises
30 minutes

With exercises
60 minutes

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

You know you have a problem with an employee. Perhaps you've even talked to him or her about it, probably on more than one occasion. Results have slipped, co-workers or team members are becoming more and more frustrated, customers are complaining, or you're experiencing some other kind of performance related problem. It's time to act!

Once you make the decision to resolve a performance challenge, generally give the employee the benefit of the doubt. Assume that the employee may not be meeting job expectations because he or she:

- Doesn't clearly understand expectations
- Hasn't received the right training
- Doesn't understand the importance of following a policy or procedure
- Doesn't understand the importance of meeting a certain expectation



DISCUSSION

DETERMINING SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

In order to effectively provide direction to the employee on how to improve, determine examples of specific observable behaviors that are contributing to poor performance.

It's important to get all the facts about where an employee's performance is falling short.

So, when evaluating performance challenges:

- Don't assume anything! Do your homework and get the all the facts you can
- Have personal knowledge of the performance issue. Don't rely on allegations, rumors or information provided to you by others
- Research until you can verify facts
- Look for and review supporting documents, reports, or files
- Be objective
- Keep good notes and save them as documentation

EXERCISE (allow 20 minutes)

Give each participant one of the examples of poor performance on the following page. Instruct each to create four fictional, yet specific, factual or observable job-related behaviors they can share with the rest of the group. You may also want to use some of the examples provided by participants earlier in this program when individual performance challenges were shared. They should include in their specific examples things like what happened, when it happened, where it happened or how it happened.

Give participants 10 minutes to create specific examples. Allow for an additional 10 minutes for sharing the revised examples.

FYI

Some organizations do not clearly define a progressive discipline policy to their employees. In the employee handbook, the organization reserves the right to take any disciplinary action they feel is appropriate. This gives the organization more flexibility in determining how to handle each individual performance challenge.

Whenever a procedure is defined for employees, they may interpret it as a guaranteed right. Employees may believe that they are entitled to every step in a progressive discipline system before a change of some kind occurs.

Understand clearly what your organization prefers.

Exercise

Specific, observable behaviors

EXAMPLE

My employee has a poor attitude.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR

On January 31, Renee was in a team meeting where I overheard her tell a co-worker that she didn't care whether or not the project was successful.

On February 2, Renee raised her voice in an unprofessional manner while communicating to a co-worker on the phone. I've had similar complaints over the last two weeks from 3 other co-workers.

Renee has been late to work three days this week: 20 minutes on Monday, 15 minutes on Tuesday and 20 minutes on Thursday.

Renee missed a February 12 deadline for submitting an IOH report by two days. Missed deadline resulted in a delay in reordering out-of-stock inventory. Three customer delays can be directly attributed to this error. She stated to me that she had more important concerns.

EXAMPLES

My employee is not meeting deadlines.

My employee is late all of the time.

My employee went over budget again.

My employee has a terrible attitude.

My employee doesn't follow through.

My employee did not follow procedure.

My employee is disorganized.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Now that we know it's important to be able to provide the employee with specific, observable examples of behavior, it's important to keep in mind that not everything an employee does that you may not like contributes to poor performance. Only deal with those behaviors that do.

DISCUSSION: PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

Ask participants to think about and share some employee behaviors that, while annoying, don't have much to do with poor performance. An example might be a messy work area. Ask participants to think of a case where it does affect performance and a case where it doesn't. Use any other examples that are specific to participants work environment. Again, remind participants to not mention any names to protect employee confidentiality.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

As we've discussed, understanding which behaviors really do effect performance or impact results, and which ones don't, is important. When it's difficult to separate the two, check to make sure that you've established clear, specific and measurable job expectations for the employee.

DISCUSSION: CLEAR JOB EXPECTATIONS

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

One of the most common reasons that employee don't do what's expected is unclear performance standards and expectations. A clearly defined performance expectation should:

- Be specific
- Be achievable
- Be stated in terms of observable and measurable actions, behaviors and results
- Be free of generalities, attitudes and personalities

EXERCISE (allow 10 minutes)

Either post the following unclear performance expectation or one that is unique to your organization. Ask participants to review and evaluate.

UNCLEAR EXPECTATION

I expect you to offer marketing support to other departments.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

In order to create a clear performance expectations, ask and answer some clarification questions like:

- What does marketing support really mean?
- Are there any budget considerations?
- All departments or specific ones?
- Does the employee offer support unconditionally?
- How does the employee prioritize support requests?

Give participants a few moments to come up with four specific and observable behaviors that would constitute offering support in terms of results. Offer them an example of a clear expectation in addition to their own work.

CLEAR EXPECTATION

I expect the employee to hold 3-4 focus groups for departments X and Z over the next six months. The employee is also expected to participate in department X and Z product planning teams and assist with marketing strategies, budget development and marketing proposals to be presented to the NAM team. Employee will be responsible for managing and implementing marketing strategies accepted by NAM.

DISCUSSION: MEASURING PERFORMANCE

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Just as important as setting clear expectations is how you measure performance. Performance measurements are tangible ways in which both you and the employee will know expectations have been achieved.

Measurements should:

- Define a result
- Be specific
- Have timelines or deadlines

What are some tangible ways we could measure the job expectations we just discussed?

Allow participants to come up with 4 or 5 possible measurements. Offer additional measurements provided below if necessary.

- 3-4 focus groups completed within three months
- Employee attended 90% of all product planning team meetings
- Employee implemented all marketing strategies accepted within established deadlines and budgets
- Feedback from other team members indicated the employee was a valuable participant
- Direct mail pieces have response rates of 2% and above

FYI

A word about setting goals and objectives...

- Goals and objectives are more likely to be achieved when they are specific
- Goals and objectives should be stretching or challenging, but attainable
- Goals and objectives should be discussed with and accepted by the employee
- Goals and objectives are most effective when used to evaluate performance
- Goals and objectives that are achieved should be connected to positive feedback and rewards

DISCUSSION:

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION?

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

With each performance challenge you probably already have a good understanding of what could be done to improve the situation. Have these ideas written down in preparation for meeting with the employee.

DISCUSSION:

CONSEQUENCES

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

With each performance challenge, determine what the consequences should be if the employee is not able to improve performance or meet your expectations. If you don't understand what could happen, the employee certainly won't. As we discussed earlier, an important part of successfully resolving performance challenges is making it clear that actions have consequences. Obviously, improvement deserves positive consequences and poor performance negative consequences.

Ask participants to discuss the positive consequences of improving behaviors. Some examples might be:

- Verbal or written recognition of improvement
- Improved evaluations
- Future advancement



Discuss other positive consequences within your organization. Then ask participants to discuss the negative consequences of not improving behavior. Remind participants that consequences can and should vary according to each unique performance challenge. Some consequences may be more drastic than others. Some consequences might be:

- Change in responsibility
- Demotion
- Transfer
- Termination
- Not a candidate for new challenges, opportunities or promotions



Discuss other possible negative consequences within your organization.

**DISCUSSION:
A SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE**

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

At times, poor performance is simply a result of an employee holding a position that is mismatched with his or her strengths or skill base. In another position, the employee may do well or even exceed expectations. So, when evaluating an employee's performance be sure to ask and answer questions like:

- Has the employee received the right training?
- Does the employee have the right skills for the position?
- Or has the employee developed the right skills?



As you proceed with the actions outlined in this program, you should be able to determine if a person simply doesn't possess the right skills, but is an employee that would likely do better in another position. Good employees are hard to come by, and you can play a role in helping each one succeed—perhaps in a different role.

EVALUATE WORKSHEET

On the following page is a worksheet designed to help participants evaluate an individual performance challenge. It reviews all the key points covered in this session. You may give a copy to each participant.

Evaluate the performance challenge
Worksheet



What is the performance challenge(s) or work habit(s) that will be discussed?

Note several specific examples of observable job-related behavior that contributes to poor performance.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Why do you think the employee is not meeting expectations?

Has the employee received the right training?

What do you think the employee could do to improve the situation?

What support, training or resources are available to the employee?

If the employee is able to improve, what is the consequence?

If the employee is not able to improve, what are possible consequences?

2

the corrective discussion

CORRECTIVE DISCUSSION



Without role-play
25 minutes

With role-play
1 hour plus

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

As we've discussed, when dealing with a performance challenge, it's generally best to assume that the employee is not purposefully performing less than expected or following policy. The employee may simply need clarification of what's expected, some additional guidance, or to understand the importance of following policy and meeting expectations. Generally, most performance challenges can be resolved during this second action, the corrective discussion.

You may choose to do the role play exercise that follows or skip to the remaining discussion points.

ROLE-PLAY PREPARATION

1. Fill out the Evaluation Worksheet on page 20 representing a fictional performance challenge common in your organization.
2. Fictionally name the employee and his or her position. Create an employee profile based on the evaluation worksheet that overviews the situation. Also include the job expectation (*it can be either clear or unclear*), specific examples of behaviors/incidents representing poor performance, and a reason why the employee is not performing. The most common is unclear expectations, but you may also choose lack of correct skills, poor attitude or lack of motivation.
3. Make blank copies of the Corrective Discussion Worksheet on page 23.

ROLE PLAY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask for two volunteers to role-play as a manager and an employee who is not meeting expectations. Once you have the two main characters, split the remaining participants into two groups—one representing the

- manager's case and one representing the employee's case. If you have more than 10 participants, consider creating additional groups of two.
2. Split into the two groups.
 3. Give the manager group the completed Evaluate Performance Worksheet. Based on established worksheet information, have the group collectively fill out the blank corrective discussion worksheet. The group may need to invent additional facts to make the situation even more realistic. Give them 15 minutes to do so.
 4. Give the employee group the employee profile you created to review. Ask the group to help the employee volunteer to create his or her character for an upcoming simulated corrective discussion. Their goal is to give the employee personality. Advise the group to think about ways that a typical employee having difficulties would react. For example, what reasons will he or she give as a reason for poor performance? Give the group 15 minutes to brainstorm.
 5. Once both groups have prepared, explain that as you overview the key actions of a corrective discussion, the volunteers will role-play each sequence. The remaining participants will observe and offer support as needed.
 6. Ask volunteers to sit where they can face each other and be seen by the rest of the group. They may use any notes created during preparation. Begin with the discussion starting at the top of page 25.

FYI

Whenever you deal with a performance challenges, ask yourself:

- Did I communicate clear expectations and define performance measurements?
- Did I provide the right training for the employee?
- Did I give the employee the right equipment, tools or support to do the job?
- Do I have the real facts, or am I acting on suspicions?

THE CORRECTIVE DISCUSSION



Employee Name:

Title:

BEFORE THE DISCUSSION:

- Evaluate the performance challenge
- Schedule discussion in a private place

Date of discussion:

Time of discussion:

Place of discussion:

BEGIN THE DISCUSSION BY:

- Stating current job expectations and importance
- Establish the gap between current performance and expected performance

What will I say about the employee's current job expectations and their importance? How will I establish the gap in the employee's current performance and the performance that I expect from him or her?

CLARIFY THE EMPLOYEE'S GAP IN PERFORMANCE:

- Give constructive feedback using specific examples of job-related behavior
- Be direct, but respectful
- Remain focused on performance issues

What specific examples will I communicate that support the gap in the employee's current performance?

ASK FOR THE EMPLOYEE'S FEEDBACK:

- Uncover any causes, concerns or rationale that may be contributing to employee performance
- Remain focused on performance issues

How might I approach and ask for the employee's feedback? How can I draw out the employee to uncover the real causes?

DISCUSS IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR CORRECTING PERFORMANCE:

- Involve the employee
- Brainstorm ideas and possible solutions
- Explore support, training or other resources available

How will I help the employee come up with actions to solve his or her performance issues?

CREATE A DETAILED ACTION PLAN FOR HOW PERFORMANCE WILL IMPROVE:

- Establish specific actions and expected results
- Determine timelines
- Agree on how follow-up will occur
- Confirm your agreements with the employee

CLOSE THE DISCUSSION ON A POSITIVE NOTE:

- State the positive outcome
- Ask the employee for help and commitment in making the agreed upon changes

How can I end the discussion on a positive note?

AFTER THE DISCUSSION

- Follow-up and tell the employee how he or she is doing. If it's going well, catch the employee doing something right and let him or her know you noticed.

DISCUSSION:
SCHEDULING THE MEETING IN A PRIVATE PLACE

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

To start, schedule your corrective discussion in a private place where there will be no interruptions. Plan for the meeting to take at least an hour, if not longer. Don't schedule a meeting like this when you're unusually busy, emotional or distracted.

NO ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION:
OPENING THE CORRECTIVE DISCUSSION

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Open the correction discussion by stating current job expectations and their importance. Explain why it's important for the employee to perform well. Describe the areas of performance that the employee must improve. Try to describe performance in terms of results that need to be achieved. It can be helpful to explain what happens to the department or the organization when he or she doesn't meet performance standards.

ROLE-PLAY

Volunteers ad lib and act out this sequence in the corrective discussion.

DISCUSSION:
GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

You may need to further clarify an employee's performance gap. Provide him or her with additional constructive feedback by offering specific examples of behavior. Always be direct, but respectful. Focus only on an employee's behavior, not their personality. If needed, describe what good performance looks like, providing specific, measurable examples of good work.

ROLE-PLAY

Volunteers ad lib and act out this sequence in the corrective discussion.

DISCUSSION:
GET FEEDBACK

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Now, ask for the employee's feedback. Does the employee believe there is a

problem? This kind of information can help you uncover any causes, concerns or rationale that may be relevant, as well as any training, support or other actions that may be needed.

ROLE-PLAY

Volunteers ad lib and act out this sequence in the corrective discussion.

**DISCUSSION:
DISCUSS SOLUTIONS**

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Discuss possible solutions for correcting performance. It's important to involve the employee in this process so he or she will more likely own agreed upon solutions. Explore support, training or other resources the employee may need. Although we won't do this today, you may need to suspend the session if the employee needs more time to develop a plan. And if the employee is unable to contribute or develop a plan, be prepared to develop one for the employee.

ROLE-PLAY

Volunteers ad lib and act out this sequence in the corrective discussion.

**DISCUSSION:
CREATE AN ACTION PLAN**

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Before you wrap-up, create a detailed action plan for how performance will improve. Results and timelines should be established and agreed upon as well as how follow-up will occur. Let the employee know that he or she will be given a copy of the agreed upon action plan. Retain a copy for your records.

ROLE-PLAY

Volunteers ad lib and act out this sequence in the corrective discussion.

**DISCUSSION:
CLOSING THE CORRECTIVE DISCUSSION**

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Close the discussion on a positive note by asking the employee for help and commitment in making the agreed upon changes. Let the employee know that you believe that he or she can make the necessary improvements.

ROLE-PLAY

Volunteers ad lib and act out this sequence in the corrective discussion.

ROLE-PLAY REVIEW

Before moving forward with additional comments about a corrective discussion, talk about the role-play experience.

Ask volunteers and/or participants questions like:

- What did the manager do best in the discussion?
- What should the manager do differently if he or she could do it over?
- Did the employee clearly understand what was expected at the conclusion of the meeting?
- Did the employee feel confident in his or her ability to improve performance?

DISCUSSION: FOLLOW UP

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Any feedback related to performance, both positive and negative, should be given on a frequent, regular basis. Make note of a time to follow-up both informally and formally. Let the employee know how he or she is doing and, if needed, offer additional suggestions for how to improve performance. If it's going well, catch the employee doing something right and tell him or her you noticed!

As you wrap-up this section, stress the importance of preparing for a corrective discussion. Only in emergency cases should a manager act without plenty of preparation time. But being timely is just as important. Feedback should occur as soon as the manager can be objective and knowledgeable about the situation.

FYI

A manager's role in a corrective discussion is to be:

- Confident in the employee's ability to improve
- Enthusiastic
- Respectful
- Supportive
- Well-informed
- A clear communicator
- A good listener



OBJECTION: BUT WHAT ABOUT A MORE AGGRESSIVE EMPLOYEE?

DISCUSSION: DEALING WITH AN AGGRESSIVE EMPLOYEE

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Dealing with angry and defensive behavior that is directed toward you is difficult, to say the least. The best strategy is to sit back and listen. Let the other person get it all out. As tough as it is, don't respond in kind. Actually, letting the employee get all their thoughts, concerns and anger out on the table may actually help them be less resistant to making change. Your goal is to listen carefully to learn something that you may not have known.

Share the following ideas with participants.

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH AGGRESSIVE EMPLOYEES

With a more aggressive employee, start your corrective discussion in the same manner. Calmly and clearly communicate job expectations and clarify the performance gap.

- If the employee vents, argues or accuses you of being the problem, remain focused on the job expectations and specific examples
- Talk only about the facts, not personalities or personal opinion
- Ask questions to get his or her feedback
- Let the employee vent. Don't take it personal simply focus on listening and learning from what is being said
- Don't get sidetracked, even if the employee does
- If the employee becomes violent, stop the discussion immediately and report the behavior immediately to an HR professional or your manager.



FYI

Whenever you discuss performance-related issues with an employee, informally or formally, create written notes regarding the discussion. It is always difficult to reconstruct these interactions at a later time when having good documentation becomes critical. Your notes during informal discussions can be quickly jotted down on a calendar, a computer file or a piece a notepaper that can be placed in the employee's file.

when performance improves or doesn't...



**WHEN
PERFORMANCE
IMPROVES
10 MINUTES**

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Once you've had a corrective discussion, the employee's performance will do one of three things:

1. Performance will improve
2. Performance will decline
3. Performance will do nothing

Let's start with the ideal: performance improves. If the improvements are what you consider significant, the next action, a verbal warning, is not necessary. What is warranted is positive consequence! Behavior is more likely to repeat itself when a positive consequence follows.

Keep in mind that, when an employee has responded well to your corrective discussion, it doesn't end there. Please take the time to hold regular performance improvement discussions with all employees all the time. In the long run, conversations like these will save you time, improve productivity and increase employee morale. As a matter of fact, the corrective discussion actions can apply to any kind of performance discussion, both positive and negative.

But what happens when an employee's performance doesn't change, or even continues to decline?

Your discussions change from "Did the employee know what to do?" to "The employee did not do what he or she said she was going to do." This is when it's appropriate to begin the formal steps of progressive discipline.

You will be giving your employee plenty of opportunities to succeed and making the decision that you can't accept poor performance. Something will change—either the employee can improve or a consequence of some kind will occur.

If performance does not improve the next action is a verbal warning.

3

a verbal warning



VERBAL WARNING

15 MINUTES

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

As we discussed, when an employee doesn't do what he or she said she could or would do, move to the first formal step of progressive discipline, a verbal warning. The verbal warning is a discussion where you let the employee know what specific behavior is unacceptable and that it has to stop. Let's review some specific guidelines.

Special Note: Cross reference the following guidelines with any that your organization may already provide. Revise and edit as needed.

VERBAL WARNING GUIDELINES

- Schedule the meeting in a private place
- Review any previous notes and action plan from corrective discussion
- Have specific examples of how the employee did not do what he or she agreed to do
- Plan to take notes during the verbal warning
- Restate job expectations
- Explain specifically where and how the employee's behavior did not meet those expectations
- State that the discussion is a verbal warning and that the behavior must stop.
- Let the employee know that if the problem is not corrected, further discipline will likely result. Review the consequences of changing or not changing the unacceptable behavior
- Get the employee's feedback about his or her performance—keep notes for your documentation
- Define how the performance issues can be solved and develop a new action plan which includes timelines and how follow-up will occur
- Offer any support and training that may be needed
- Ask for the employee's commitment in making the necessary changes
- Let the employee know you will be documenting the verbal warning meeting



READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

It's important for you to closely monitor the performance of an employee who you've given a verbal warning. Also, put the verbal warning in writing, generally in the form of a memo. You'll want to give a copy to the employee and keep one for your files. You might be asking, what all should be in the memo? That's what we'll cover next.

documentation



DOCUMENTATION
20 minutes


READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

When dealing with a performance challenge from this point forward creating written notes regarding your conversations becomes critical.

Why Document?

DISCUSSION: BENEFITS OF DOCUMENTATION

Allow 5 minutes participants to offer reasons why documenting is important. Add the follow ideas to the discussion if needed.

- It can protect you legally if you ever need to substantiate what you did and when. Your memory is much better now than later. 
- It shows that your employees understood what was expected, support and training was provided, and the consequences of not meeting expectations.
- It can protect your organization if you are unavailable down the road to substantiate events.
- And, if an employee doesn't end up working out, you can show specifically why it was necessary to terminate, transfer or demote the employee.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Good documentation includes as many facts, details or descriptions as possible. Things like:

Special note: Customize this list according to any documentation guidelines that your organization currently uses. Revise and edit as needed.

Good documentation includes elements such as:

- The details: name of the employee, job title, the dates of incidents, discussion, and when documentation was created
- A description of the performance problem and why it was an issue
- Specific examples or incidents that are indicative of the behavior that needs to be improved. Write down how the examples or incidents were described to the employee
- Include names of anyone who was involved and any other factual details you can think of, number of times late, errors made, or other incidents
- Make note of the employee's feedback or explanation, and if the employee clearly understood how his or her behavior was a problem
- Write down any disciplinary action that was taken. Was it a verbal warning, written warning, last chance option?
- Outline the objectives or expectations that the employee must meet and the consequence if he or she does not improve
- Note any actions, solutions, support or training agreed upon to correct the performance issue
- Attach any relevant items such as action plans, supporting documents (time sheets, production reports) and notes from corrective discussion



READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Typically, you'll want to organize the information in the form of a memo. Create and sign two copies, one for your files and one for the employee. Ask the employee to sign—it's an important way to show that he or she clearly understands expectations and consequences. If the employee refuses, make note of the refusal. It's the best you can do.

DISCUSSION DOCUMENTATION

Discuss any guidelines that your organization may already have in regard to this action.

FYI

More about getting an employee's signature...

- When an employee agrees to make changes, his or her signature shows an understanding of what was expected and what will happen next.
- When an employee disagrees with your discussions and expectations, you will have documentation that you gave him or her every chance to succeed.
- When an employee refuses to sign, you have documentation that the employee was unwilling to participate in the process. Always write a notation that the employee refused to sign.

4

a written warning



**WRITTEN
WARNING**
15 MINUTES

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Many times, managers give more than one verbal warning before moving on to the written warning. You'll know it's time to give a written warning when you've given at least one verbal warning, been incredibly clear about expectations, but the employee still does not make agreed upon changes.

Of course, a written warning is more serious than a verbal warning and is another step toward making a permanent change of some kind. The written warning is much like a verbal warning, except the communication is in writing.

In writing, your written warning memo or document should include:

- A description of the behavior you expected from your employee along with specific examples of how the employee is not meeting those expectations
- Specifically how and when you expect the behavior to be corrected and the details of any support or training that you believe can help the employee improve
- The consequences if the problem isn't corrected



READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Once you've constructed a written warning, schedule a time to verbally review the entire document with the employee.

DISCUSSION WRITTEN WARNING

Discuss any guidelines that your organization may already have in regard to this action.

5

a last chance option



A LAST CHANCE OPTION

15 minutes

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

You've clearly communicated expectations, delivered at least a couple of verbal warnings, and even a written warning. If the employee has not yet improved, the next action to take is a last chance option.

This could be many things; including another written warning or some kind of time away from his or her job, like suspension or time off with pay.

You can be assured that by the time an employee gets to this option, he or she clearly understands that expectations are not being met.

The employee should be asked to seriously consider his or her position and the expectations you've communicated. And whether the employee's position is the right one for him or her. The employee should also be told that if expectations are not met from this point out, he or she is subject to further discipline without any additional warnings, up to and including termination.

As with the verbal warning and written warning, document the discussion.

DISCUSSION

PREFERRED LAST CHANCE OPTIONS

Ask participants to determine what kind of last chance options work well within your organization. Discuss any guidelines that your organization may already have in regard to this action.

conclusion



CONCLUSION
15 minutes

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Once you've reached the last chance option with an employee, expectations and consequences have been clearly communicated. Now it's time to draw a conclusion. Does the employee have the right skills and/or motivation? The employee has this one last shot to turn it around. If not, you've reached the point at which a consequence of some kind should occur. Let's discuss some of those consequences.

DISCUSSION: CONSEQUENCES

Ask participants to think about and discuss all the possible consequences. You should have available the consequences most encouraged by your organization and be prepared to help participants learn how to move forward with each. Some possible consequences are:

- Demotion
- Another position
- Termination
- Change in responsibility

Special note: Are there any other options unique to your organization? If so, add to the list and be prepared to discuss.

DISCUSSION SESSION WRAP UP

Ask participants for any reactions or questions they may have. Restate any information required to clarify questions, address concerns or overcome objections.

READ OR STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

The strongest reason for using the actions we've discussed today is that they can help you help an employee succeed. That's our most important

role as managers. You get the added benefits of being able to fairly conclude if an employee is really a good fit for the position or not. You'll know that he or she clearly understood what was expected and that you did everything you could to help improve performance. With that knowledge, you can move forward and either have the right person or find the right person for the position.

Special note: Please advise participants to seek out additional guidance from his or her manager, an HR professional, or legal counsel whenever they have questions or decide to terminate or demote employee.

For Preview Only

notes

