

**Public Health Competency Based Employee Performance  
Management –  
A Guide Book for Managers & Employees**

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## Stage 2: Providing Ongoing Feedback

Performance management is a dynamic process. Progress on objectives must be monitored formally at specific times of the year and with informal continual, appropriate feedback, and discussion throughout the year. When providing ongoing feedback, the manager reviews employee strengths and weaknesses, and provides feedback and coaching on ways to improve performance. The manager and the employee review objectives and modify them as necessary.

Both the manager and employee need to keep track of the objectives and verify whether expectations are being met. Two-way communication ensures that there are no surprises at the formal evaluation stage and contributes to making the management of performance a positive and enriching experience.

### **Formal vs. Informal Feedback**

Throughout the year, feedback on performance can come from many sources, such as the work itself, the employee, the manager, clients, as well as other employees involved in the same work. Regular discussions on the employee's progress are vital to keeping the work on track. These discussions are a systematic way to determine whether the plans and methods to achieve objectives are working as intended. They are also required because changes may have occurred that affect the employee's ability to achieve the original objectives, possibly resulting in an adjustment to the employee's plan (e.g. budget changes, a change in organizational priorities, etc.).

A formal progress review is scheduled mid-cycle to determine:

- The status of the work in progress
- What needs revision
- What should be maintained
- What can be improved and how to improve it
- The employee's performance to date

Informal feedback is not necessarily planned, is more spontaneous, and occurs preferably right after the manager makes an observation or becomes aware of an action deserving feedback. It is meant to reinforce desirable behaviours, and to modify unwanted behaviours or to provide pointers on how to improve performance.

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## How and When to Document Performance Feedback

Throughout the year, whenever the manager gives formal or informal feedback, they are wise to take notes on the observations leading to the performance feedback, the feedback itself, and the employee's input or reactions to the feedback. This feedback will be related to the performance objectives and competency proficiencies agreed to and identified by the manager and employee in the employee's **Performance Management Planning and Evaluation Tool**. This will enhance the employee's confidence in the accuracy of the performance evaluation and will foster trust in the performance management process.

The manager should keep a log for each employee, documenting notes as soon as possible following the observation (from the manager or others) of good or poor performance. When taking performance notes, it is important to identify the date, situation, the behaviour and the consequence or result of the behaviour. The manager should avoid writing about feelings that the behaviour invoked, attributing intentions that have not been validated with the employee, or labelling, characterizing or categorizing the employee in any way. With these notes in hand, the formal process of performance review and evaluation will become much less of a guessing game and more of a review of performance information sampled throughout the year.

Although rigorous, this process need not and should not lead to an unduly onerous administrative chore. Concise sentences in bullet point format often suffice in accurately describing a situation, the behaviour and its result.

## Providing Effective Feedback

There are several keys to providing effective performance feedback. Effective feedback is immediate, specific and positive and is aimed at improving performance. Effective feedback occurs on a continual basis to ensure that the lines of communication between the manager and employee are always open.

**Immediate** – Employees receive timely recognition for work well done and suggestions for improvement for performance that does not meet expectations. Above and beyond the formal reviews and the final evaluation meeting, the manager regularly feeds back performance information.

**Positive and constructive** – Positive feedback is given for significant accomplishments and work well done. Constructive feedback is provided for performance that does not meet expectations. This feedback is delivered in a direct and non-judgmental way, suggesting ways the employee can improve their performance.

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**Specific** – Employees receive specific information about how they are or are not meeting expectations. The feedback pinpoints behaviours for commendation or needing improvement so that the employee knows exactly what to do to enhance performance.

Often, the very fact that the manager is spending time with the employee to discuss their work is encouraging in itself. Employees generally like to know how they are doing and that their manager is observing their work. Most employees will also be motivated by a sense of autonomy that comes when they feel responsible for achieving a result rather than just carrying out a task. In addition, the manager can build trust by keeping their commitments and helping the employee reach their objectives. This effort can go a long way in bolstering the reputation of the performance management process as a real and effective HR tool. While these principles hold true for most, it stands to reason that different employees have different needs.