

Subject: The importance of Performance Management

Why should we bother with performance management? Well, here are some of the key benefits of a good performance management system:

§ Working towards common goals

We often get so caught up in our daily work routine that we forget about our purpose in an organization. Individual performance drives organizational performance. It is important to ensure everyone understands this agency's vision and goals, how their work fits in to the organization, and how they contribute to our mission accomplishment. Doing this increases engagement and improves our program delivery.

§ A clear understanding of job expectations

When employees and supervisors have a clear understanding of their specific job duties, any ambiguities in the workplace are eliminated. Each individual is held accountable for their own duties and responsibilities. Performance Management empowers you to think about and clarify your role in the organization. Setting clear goals and expectations helps with this. Employee performance plans must provide for balanced, credible measures. Balance, so that in addition to measuring expected results, the performance plans include appropriate measures, such as quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness. To be credible, performance expectations must be: based on job analysis; clear, specific, and understandable; reasonable and attainable; measurable, observable or verifiable, and results oriented; communicated in a timely fashion; and foster continual improvement in productivity.

§ Regular feedback about performance

Regular feedback facilitates better communication in the workplace. Performance Management helps you to identify your strengths and weaknesses. It also allows for opportunities to hear and exchange views and opinions away from the normal pressures of work. Most importantly it gives you a better understanding of how your performance is being assessed and monitored. This builds employee confidence and adds to your contribution in the workplace. Performance management can be a motivational tool, fostering you to not only feel more satisfied, but to go beyond the expected. If supervisors and employees aren't talking throughout the year, the system won't work, so we must ensure we have a performance feedback process that facilitates a dialogue between supervisors, managers, and employees throughout the year. Performance management is not something that's looked at only at the beginning and end of the rating cycle, with just one mid-cycle review - it's a continuous, ever changing process, reflecting and measuring the work employees are performing for the agency.

§ Advice and steps for improving performance

Performance Management can help you to identify ways in which to improve your performance and provides the opportunity to discuss career direction and prospects. It presents the opportunity to plan for and set objectives to further develop your career. Performance Management will help you to gain any additional training or mentoring which can act as a basis for developing future succession plans.

§ Rewards for good performance

Outstanding efforts do not go unnoticed. Performance Management offers a variety of awards that show gratitude for a job well done, such as time off and bonuses. The prospect of a better than Fully Successful Performance Appraisal gives you the incentive to perform well and may open the door to career advancements in the future.

Performance management is about increasing performance. As you know, we have been steadily improving our performance management system for several years now, but there is more to be done. Successful use of our performance management system will enable us to improve our program delivery, increase our employee engagement and productivity, and make us better stewards of the taxpayer's dollars - things that should be important to all of us.

Handbook 5-PM, "Performance Management and Awards Program", has been updated and is now available at: ftp://ftp.fsa.usda.gov/manuals/5-pm_r11_a01.pdf. This handbook contains complete, up-to-date details on all aspects of the performance management and awards program. Additional information is available on the HR website at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=erpm&topic=prm>.