



PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ISSUANCE # 4

**By: Stephen Crisp
Employee Programs Branch
Washington, DC**

Introduction: Human Resources Division is in the start-up phase of developing a central location for issuing communication to our customer base. This is the second issuance in a series of information that will be issued from this central location. The format will change to that of a HRD Newsletter, but the process has begun. This information is addressed to Managers and Supervisors to assist them in their on-going development in Performance Management.

* * * * *

This is the fourth of a series of weekly communications which you will be receiving from now until mid November on performance management. The goal of these messages is to remind and inform you of key aspects of performance management: the rules, the process, your responsibilities, etc. – and to let you know where you can get further information.

This fourth communication touches on some ratings and awards “Do’s” and “Don’ts” for supervisors and managers.

Ratings

The Rating of Record is the performance appraisal that is issued at the end of the appraisal period and becomes part of the employee’s performance file. Rating officials and reviewing officials must:

- (1) Take the lead in establishing a rating philosophy across their area of responsibility. Do not allow or encourage a different rating philosophy for different areas.
- (2) Rate appropriately against the standards in the employee’s performance plan.
- (3) Ensure the rating is based only on actual employee accomplishments. Presumptive ratings (that is, ratings that are not based on actual accomplishments) are prohibited. Avoid any artificial targets, such as quotas.
- (4) Make distinctions in levels of performance. Do not rate everyone or virtually everyone the same – be that Fully Successful or Superior or Outstanding.
- (5) Not rely on EmpowHR to do their job. EmpowHR is just a recording tool. It should never take the place of interaction between supervisor and employee. This interaction should be face-to-face where possible.

Rating officials and reviewing officials will be held accountable for rating appropriately against the standards in the employee's performance plan and making distinctions in levels of performance.

If everyone applies these principles, we will come much closer to our goal of greater ratings consistency both within and between organizations.

Awards

The policy provides supervisors with the tools to recognize the workforce fairly and equitably for the level of performance being delivered. For Rating Based awards, there is a direct correlation between an employee's performance and awards, and a standardized method for granting and distributing the awards.

Further, by making the entire awards system transparent, employees can have an insight into the rewarding process for their higher standard of performance. This transparency is just as important with the Superior Accomplishment awards allocation as it is with the Rating Based awards allocation. Employees understand that Rating Based awards are based on employee ratings, but the basis for and decision making behind approval of Superior Accomplishment awards is often unclear.

Part of transparency is closing the loop. By this, we mean individuals making recommendations for awards must be informed of the outcome of their recommendation whether it was successful or not. Even if their recommendation is disapproved, the recommending individual should be told this in writing and given the reason why. Do not leave recommending individuals in the dark when their award nomination is disapproved.

By all working together, we can make a success of our performance management program.

Stephen Crisp
Employee Programs Branch
Phone: 202-401-0679
Fax: 202-205-9140

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>.