

Position Descriptions

There are two key elements which are essential to ensuring effective communication of expectations. These are: accurate and current position descriptions and ongoing two-way communication between the supervisor and the staff member.

~~Position descriptions~~ form the foundation for several important areas of human resource management.

Descriptions should be reviewed, by the staff member and supervisor, and revised as necessary prior to the start of the performance evaluation cycle. The supervisor should encourage staff member input in the process to help build staff member commitment to the job and performance level. The performance expectations (standards) for each of the functions/areas of responsibility should be realistic and measurable.

Developing Goals/Objectives

Clear performance goals make the performance appraisal process much easier for both managers and staff members. They enable supervisors to focus directly on job performance rather than personality. Staff members and supervisors routinely develop informal performance expectations in answering the questions, "How do we know the job has been done right?" or "How do we measure success?" Clarifying and communicating these standards by putting them in writing fosters mutual understanding and acceptance.

- Pre-Planning
 - Identify the purpose(s) of the position. This (these) become(s) the performance goal.
 - Examine benefits to be gained, both by the organization and by the staff member.
 - Present the goal to the staff member, and then mutually write the development plan to attain the goal.
- Writing the Development Plan
 - Write the goal statement to indicate what is to be attained and any skills to be developed by the staff member.
 - List the action plans to accomplish the goal.
 - Main steps to follow.
 - Target dates for each step as appropriate.
 - Indicate checkpoints for review as needed.
- Define how you will measure progress.

The method for measuring progress will vary depending on the type of assignment given. Assignments given to management or professional staff members usually require more general

results-oriented measurements, while support staff may be more appropriately measured using factors that are concerned with both process and end product.

Follow these Steps for Management and Professional Staff:

- Describe assignment to be done
- Purpose and objectives
- Results expected
- As needed, overview of what's involved
- Make sure individual clearly understands what you want.
- Define Parameters
- Budget
- Timeliness
- Kind of feedback or information you need
- Establish checkpoints for review of progress
- Provide resources for support
- Budget
- Materials
- Access
- Staff
- Training as needed
- ALSO, inform others who need to know
- Provide feedback and positive reinforcement for what was done well.

NOTE: Stress results to be accomplished rather than how to do assignment

Follow these steps for Program Implementers and Clerical Staff:

- Describe assignment to be done
 - Method - How to do assignment
 - Purpose of assignment - How it fits into the larger goal
 - Verify person understands assignment
 - Define Parameters
 - Quality
 - Quantity
 - When due (reasonable)
 - Provide resources for support
 - Materials
 - Equipment
 - Training

- Help if needed
- ALSO, inform others who need to know
- Provide feedback and positive reinforcement for what was done well.

Definitions of Performance Expectations:

They should be clear, brief, attainable, and measurable, and can be expressed in terms of:

Quality: how well work must be done in terms of accuracy, appearance completeness, thoroughness, precision, and compliance with professional standards which may have been established for an occupation

Quantity: how much work must be completed within a given time period.

Timeliness: when, how soon, within what time period work must be done

Effective use of Resources: assess the cost/benefits or use of resources such as money, equipment personnel, time.

Manner of Performance: describes specific behaviors that have an impact on outcomes such as cooperation and courtesy (sometimes inappropriately referred to as "attitude")

Method of Performing Work: used if there are rules regarding the methods and procedures which must be used to accomplish assignments

Avoid unrealistic goals. The following guidelines should be considered when writing performance goals with the staff member:

- Use specific examples of behaviors and of the desired results.
- Avoid using evaluative terms which do not describe behaviors and/or outcomes, such as "good work" and "bad attitude."
- Be wary of using terms such as "always" and "never." It may not be realistic to expect that a staff member will always perform perfectly and will never make a mistake.
- Avoid using numbers in goals unless you actually intend to count the behavior (e.g. attendance, production quantities)
- Consider the cost/benefit of gathering information about performance. As with any other type of information - it costs time and money to gather and maintain.
- Build performance goals which can identify performance above the base line of expected performance. Staff members want to know how to receive a performance rating which is better than "meets expectations."

Methods of verifying performance should be determined at the start of the evaluation period and discussed with the staff member. These may include:

- Direct observation
- Reports of others' observations
- Written records such as attendance, financial, assignment logs, and status reports
- Results in the form of tangible products

Record performance: To develop a reliable record of events, it is recommended that the supervisor keep informal notes regarding specific performance events throughout the evaluation period. The staff member should be informed in advance that samples of performance will be recorded. Listed below are some guidelines to follow:

- Record objective facts concerning actual performance as they occur
- Record only job-related performance, rather than making evaluative statements describing an individual
- Do not try to record every event; rather, select a representative sample of performance in key areas of responsibility
- Cross validate reports from others
- Record both positive and negative performance
- Maintain records on all staff members - not just those that fall in the extremes