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Creating an Effective Project Team Performance Assessment Process

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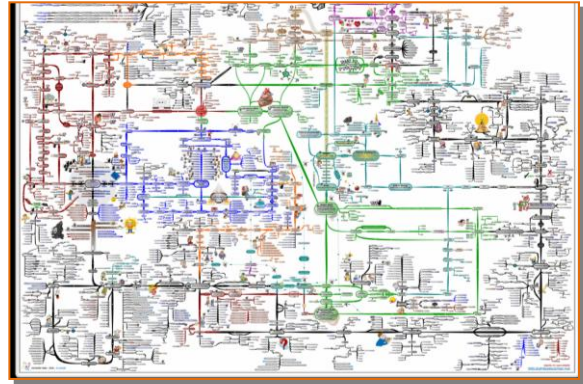
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The PM's Problem

Projects are typically matrix organizations consisting of team members temporarily brought together for the duration of the project. Although their department manager and, ultimately, the current project manager direct them locally at the project, they usually receive their annual performance assessments, wage increase, and promotion recommendations from their permanent manager back at company headquarters.



Unfortunately, the distant permanent manager has not seen them perform daily and the performance assessment is, at best, based on second hand knowledge. The accuracy of this second-hand knowledge depends on whether local management on the project has the time and inclination to collect thorough documentation to forward to the permanent manager.

If the team member feels the information is not complete nor totally objective and accurate, this situation can easily become a source of poor morale and job satisfaction. Their subsequent work product is typically a direct reflection of whether they feel valued and treated fairly by the project.

This course will show you how to create a fair, objective, and accurate performance assessment process that will:

- Allow team members to self-monitor their work performance without having to wait to hear from their supervisor whether they are performing to expectations
- Provide permanent managers a dependable means of documenting performance assessments even though they may not have personally observed the employee perform
- Make team member performance linked to project outcomes and independent of whether their supervisors change through the duration of the project
- Improve project team morale and job satisfaction because they realize their good performance and that of low-performing teammates is measured objectively, fairly, regularly, and accurately.

The Opportunity for Project Performance Improvement



A performance assessment system that project team members viewed as objective, fair, and credible would go a long way to improving morale, job satisfaction, and, ultimately, work productivity and quality.

The system should also have these features to make it valuable to everyone involved including the team member, their department manager, the PM, and their permanent functional manager back at corporate headquarters:

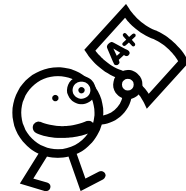
All project job functions must have an objective range of performance values. This is like the letter grades students receive in school: i.e., A, B, C, D, F

There must be ways for team members to get feedback on their performance without having to wait to hear it from their managers.

Again, this is the school example where students know how well they are doing in class by virtue of the test scores, homework, and class work grades they get back from the teacher during the semester. This allows students to self-manage their performance.

There should be periodic reviews of performance to allow team members to adjust performance accordingly to preset goals.

The report cards that students get throughout the year provide this periodic review. That way, they have time to improve performance as needed before year-end grades come out. Also, they do not have to wait until the end of the year to learn whether they passed that grade.



The system must be project-linked so if the PM or other local management changes, the scoring continues and employees can focus on existing project tasks and not have to waste time trying to adjust to new management.

In school, a substitute teacher had minimal impact on the students because the grading system was established and based on the course work, not based on personalities. This system also allows new managers just assigned to the project to know immediately who their performers really are without fear of being fooled by the false facades put up by those who do not have work standards as high as others.

These project scores go directly to the permanent functional manager for annual assessments and the team members are confident they are complete, objective, and accurate.

The students' grades, even those received while the substitute was present, still go to the "permanent" teacher for year-end scoring.

Course Learning Objectives

Course participants will learn:

1. The five components of motivation and ways to provide them to project team members
2. The typical causes of unnecessary personal stress on projects and how to reduce it
3. The four critical elements of effective employee performance goals
4. To change employee behavior from “busy” to “productive”
5. How to work with employees to establish effective performance goals
6. To discern between “hard” and “soft” project performance skills
7. To create a measurable range of “hard” and “soft” skills for use in documenting employee performance assessments
8. To create a method of collecting and reporting team member work performance objectively, consistently, and easily
9. To develop an effective performance action plan for use with project team members
10. How to plan and conduct an effective goal-setting meeting with employees
11. The two simple questions to ask an employee for the first goal setting meeting and the five simple questions to ask thereafter
12. The three elements of an effective performance assessment process
13. To consider the “ORPperson” and why you should care
14. How to apply all of this to a project environment

The Implication for Use by Other PM Practitioners

The PM can easily move this description of project tasks and their objective range of performance values (A, B, C, D, and F) to their next project ***because the major project job functions do not change.***



The Document Control people, the Safety group, the pipe fitters, welders, and discipline engineers will nearly always do the same things regardless of the nature of the project ***because their basic job functions do not change.*** (If they did change, they would be doing a new job and then we would come up with measurable descriptions of it, too!)

At the next project, a short training period with the PM's direct reports on how the system works can quickly implement it through the project as new team members join. Then the PM and department managers can expect to spend less time dealing with employee morale and job satisfaction issues and more time on project tasks.

The smart PM will try to keep the main elements of the project team together as they move from one project to the next because that will help the performance assessment process become easier and wider spread as their experience with it grows.

The Foundation of the Process

The whole performance assessment process begins with learning how to identify *specifically* the performance we expect and establishing a range within it from “the least we will accept” (like getting a “C” in school) to “the most we could hope for” (like the “A” in school).

Once we have established performance ranges for all of the project functions, we can start scheduling periodic meetings to review progress, make corrections or coach as needed. Then we can use the outcomes of the periodic meetings to create the employee’s annual performance assessment. We will use the terms “**hard skills**” and “**soft skills**” in this course as we present our examples.

The term “hard skills” refers to the activities we normally associate with a particular job function (sometimes called “vertical” job skills) while “soft skills” are equally important but more universally applied to many functions beyond a specific one. (These are sometimes called “horizontal” because they apply across many job types.)



A cabinetmaker’s “vertical hard skills” would be the obvious tasks that only cabinet maker’s would do such as measuring and cutting angles; having a familiarity with various kinds of wood; possessing ability to assemble parts of a cabinet so there are no gaps or misfits; broad knowledge in mixing and applying paint and stains.

His “horizontal soft skills”, such as customer relations, safety, and teamwork (if working with others on a remodeling project) are equally as important but not just relevant to cabinetmakers. Everyone working on this project must share these same skills.

The soft skills for each position must be defined *as they relate to the specific position* if we want to establish a meaningful performance assessment process for anyone assigned to this project. Unless we define them as they specifically relate to a unique job, we will not be able to measure their performance accurately and we risk them being poorly motivated to do the best job possible.

Ultimately, their project productivity is directly related to their motivation.

The Components of Motivation

Here are five things you'll need to include in your efforts to motivate me.

- ✓ **Tell me what you expect of me** in measurable terms (quality, quantity, time or **Q,Q,T**) that reduce the risk of my confusion.

How confident are you that your definition of “doing a great job” matches with your boss’ definition? Why would you care? What, in terms of project priority, are the top 3 things you are paid to do? How confident are you that your boss would list the same three things in the same order? Why should you ask this question?



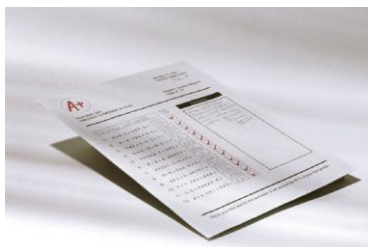
- ✓ **Give me a chance to perform** (and learn from my mistakes, too.)



How much latitude do you allow your subordinates to perform and learn from their mistakes?

When a mistake is made, is your first question, “Who did it?” or “What led to the problem?” Which is the better question for developing a strong team member? Why?

- ✓ **Let me know how I am doing as I go along.**



SURPRISE FOR YOU

Remember the report cards you got in school every 6 weeks? You did not have to wait until the end of the year to learn if you had passed or failed the grade. And you were probably prepared to dispute a grade lower than you expected, if necessary, because you had kept all your returned grades on homework, tests, and classwork. **THERE WAS NO**

- ✓ Give me help and guidance when I need it.

The key part here is “WHEN I NEED IT.” Make yourself accessible to them but don’t hover over them. You may think you’re trying to just “be there for them” but it will probably be interpreted by them as hovering over them because you don’t trust them to do it correctly.



- ✓ Reward me with pay or praise when I succeed.



Do you make a point to thank people for jobs well done or do you assume that is what they are paid to do and say nothing?

What advantages, if any, are there in thanking them? What is the budgetary impact – what does it cost - to the project of saying, “Nice job! Keep it up!”

What is the impact to the project from an employee who hears that?

Setting Effective Performance Goals

What value do you think there is in having measurable goals?

(Specific measurables – in terms of Quality, Quantity, and Time – make it easy to monitor progress toward their achievement.)

What are some sources of stress in your work life?



What are some measurable goals in your work life?

What are some sources of stress in your home life?



What are some measurable goals in your home life?

Do you think there are significant differences between **work pressure** and **work stress**? If so, how would you describe them?

Many times work stress comes from “undefined” sources or vague expectations. For example, if your boss tells you to complete a financial proposal within a week but you do not know what he expects in it or what it should look like, you will be stressed trying to meet his vague expectations.

Even after you turn it in, you still worry because you do not know whether he will like it.

If you have done many financial proposals for him in the past, you still may feel some work tension and job pressure until you finish.

However, once you turn it in, you are relieved because it is finished and you know you did a good job.

How can measurable goals reduce stress in your life?

List here some examples of WORK PRESSURE (tasks that are <u>defined clearly</u> for you and you are comfortable doing) that you encounter every day at work	List here some examples of WORK STRESS (tasks that are <u>poorly defined</u> and that you're never sure if you've satisfied the boss) that you encounter every day at work.

List some activities associated with your job that you wish were defined more clearly regarding what your leader expects you to do. (Use the tasks you listed in the table on page 13.)

How does this lack of clarification affect you and your work?

What risk does this lack of clarification mean to your employer's perception of your value to the organization?

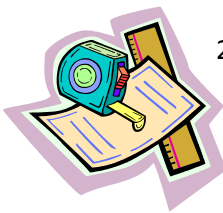


What will you do about this after you finish this course?

The Elements of Effective Performance Goals

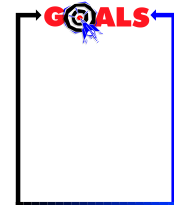
An effective goal requires at least these elements:

1. **Realistic** (*in the mind of the person doing the work*) – The person must feel they have some chance of success or they will not bother trying.



2. **Quantifiable** – It must tell the person **HOW MUCH (Quantity)**, **HOW WELL (Quality)**, and **BY WHEN (Time)**. This knowledge helps them gauge their own progress toward the ultimate goal. We will abbreviate this to “QQT” in this class.

3. **Job Related** – He/she must understand how his/her personal goals support the goals of the department, which support the goals of the project.



4. **Doable** – They must involve his/her *doing something* that they can observe and measure. A goal that calls for “Understanding how work flows through the Highway Department” is useless because you cannot measure **UNDERSTANDING**.



It only becomes useful if he/she must **do something** that demonstrates his/her understanding such as, “explain in writing the complete workflow of a request from a citizen for a safety sign on his street until it is installed”.

Practice Activity

Describe an activity associated with your job that is clearly defined and contains “quantity, quality, and time” components.

The Quality component is:	The Quantity component is:	The Time component is:

How does **this clear definition** of what your leader expects affect your personal satisfaction and your work performance?

How does your work performance and personal satisfaction regarding this clearly defined task compare with the task you identified earlier that is not defined as clearly?

How can you use this comparison of two of your tasks with your employees and some of their tasks?
(It may give you some insight why they are not working to your expectations.)

Why would you want to do this?

Section Review

Select the best answer for each question.

1. Project team performance problems associated with the typical matrix organization include:
 - a. The employee’s “permanent manager” does not see their daily performance but still completes an annual assessment on it as if they did.

- b. If PMs or project department managers change during the project, the employees may feel they have lost their performance ratings do date and have to “start all over” with another one if they want a good performance assessment.
 - c. Team members may feel frustration when their management does not share the same opinion of what a “good – better – best” job performance looks like.
 - d. All of the above
2. An advantage of a performance assessment system that allows employees to self-monitor their performance includes:
 - a. Management does not have to keep reminding them what various levels of performance looks like.
 - b. There are no more arguments about what a “poor – acceptable – outstanding” performance looks like.
 - c. Employees can self-correct (if so motivated) and reduce rework and cycle time on productivity.
 - d. All the above
3. Defined performance levels for every function on the project makes it easier for new hires to become productive quicker because expectations are clearly defined. **T or F**
4. Defined performance levels that focus on objective, measurable behavior decreases the potential for charges of “favoritism” or “personality conflicts” when tem members are told they are not meeting performance expectations. **T or F**
5. There is no real advantage from the project’s Human Resource Manager’s viewpoint of taking time to define objective performance levels. **T or F**
6. The grading system used in schools:
 - a. Is actually a performance management system that allows participants (students) to self-manage their performance
 - b. Allows participants to maintain that performance level whether their permanent or substitute teacher is present

- c. Makes it easy for teachers to measure their performance levels and document them at the end of the year
 - d. All of these
7. “Hard skills” as defined in this course refers to:
- a. Activities seen to be complex in performance
 - b. Activities seen to be difficult in performance
 - c. Activities normally associated with a specific job function
 - d. Activities normally applied to many functions beyond a specific one.
8. “Soft skills” as defined in this course refers to:
- a. Activities seen to be non-complex in performance
 - b. Activities seen to be simple in performance
 - c. Activities normally associated with a specific job function
 - d. Activities normally applied to many functions beyond a specific one.
9. From the perspective of project team members, their productivity is directly related to their:
- a. Pay grade
 - b. Seniority
 - c. Motivation
 - d. Skill level
10. The best way to reduce potential confusion regarding performance expectations is to:
- a. Speak slowly to the employee
 - b. Define them in terms of quality, quantity, and time
 - c. Assign an experienced team member to act as their mentor
 - d. Provide each team member with detailed performance manuals

Question	ANS	Question	ANS	Question	ANS	Question	ANS	Question	ANS
1	D	3	T	5	F	7	C	9	C
2	D	4	T	6	D	8	D	10	B

Goals and Tasks

Do you think a person can be very busy but not very productive?

How could this happen?

Tasks are not always productive. Sometimes people are just “busy.” When you focus a task with the three critical performance standards that define “how much,” “how well” and “by when” (**QQT**), you establish goals and become productive.



The light bulb in a lamp is physically the same as a laser beam.

However, the laser has all of its energy narrowly focused upon a particular point that gives it incredible power. How could you compare parts of your workday to the light bulb and the laser beam?



When do you feel more satisfied with your work: when you are acting like a light bulb or a laser beam?

Which condition ultimately makes your job more enjoyable and your work more productive?

How can you use the light bulb and laser beam example in a discussion with your employees?

Why would you want to do that?

Are these situations productive or busy?

Read each situation in the following example and put a checkmark under the appropriate “Productive” or “Busy” column. Remember, we define “productive” as having all three elements of **how much (quantity), how well (quality), and by when (time)** present in a situation.

The situation	Productive	Busy	If “busy,” what is missing?
Grant has been pushing the cart loaded with statements up and down the hall for the past 45 minutes.			
Logan has processed 200 documents in the past 3 hours.			
Murphy has the machine running items at a speed of 375/hour and a reject rate of .82%			
Cindy completed 3 hours of classes at night school this past quarter.			
<p>Describe a typical activity of yours that is busy but not productive because you have not been told the three components of productivity; quality, quantity, and time.</p> <p>Which of the three components is missing?</p> <p>What will you do about it?</p>			

- ✓ Grant is just busy. Nothing has been accomplished. What is the “quality” measurement?
- ✓ Logan has processed 200 documents but are they the correct ones? Where they processed accurately? There is no QUALITY component.
- ✓ Murphy has been productive. The quality component is the “reject rate”.
- ✓ Cindy completed the courses but what was her grade? If she failed, there is technically productivity because the quality score was “F”.

However, since it is below our acceptable standards, it is considered a failure. If she received an “A”, she was more productive than if she received a “C”.

Establishing Effective Performance Goals

Select one of your current employees and write two effective performance goals for them. Put the words “how much”, “how well,” and “by when” in parenthesis behind the proper element within your goal. Use this as a sample:

Sandy will complete the night school Accounting 101 class (“how much” = 1 class) within 6 months of today (“by when”) with at least a grade of ‘B’ (“how well”).

My employee is _____

Their performance goal #1 is:

Their performance goal #2:

Three possible situations can happen when **setting performance goals**:



1. You set them; your employee takes them and tries to meet them.
2. Your employee sets them; you accept them and hope they can meet them.
3. You and your employee set them together and track progress together.

Which do you think is a better situation and why?

Measuring “Hard Skills”

Defining skills must always focus on the behaviors associated with the skills. We must define *what we expect them to do at difference performance levels* as part of the measurements.

Measurements, *to be effective*, must contain references to:

- ✓ **Quality** of performance (How well they perform.)
- ✓ **Quantity** of performance (How many they must produce.)
- ✓ **Time** of performance (The deadline when the production must be completed.)

We will abbreviate these three elements in this course as **QQT**.

For example, suppose we were defining the job functions of a filing clerk. Their job deals with accurately (“**accurately**” is a quality element) filing stacks (“**stacks**” is a quantity element) of documents by a specific deadline (“**deadline**” is a time element.)



In addition to describing the three elements (QQT) of effective measurements, we must also identify a performance range that allows the employee and supervisor to monitor the work progress and determine their appropriate compensation for the work performed. This is like the grading system used in schools where A, B, C, D, F provide measurements for academic productivity.

It is easy to develop a performance range if you will start in the middle - the “least they can do to get by” performance description. This is like the grade of “C” in school.

Then you can go up and down the scale easily to cover the range of performance that can occur.

The elements of quality, quantity, and time give us great flexibility in determining the performance range. We can define the filing clerk’s duties in a variety of ways.

We will use a simple 1.0 – 5.0 scale to demonstrate this practice where 1.0 is “worst” and 5.0 is “best behavior”.

The elements of quality, quantity, and time can be manipulated to place greater emphasis on which of the three is most important for a specific job.

Table 1 – Quality is emphasized

Table #1 - Filing Clerk Performance Range	
5.0	File >30 documents per hour with no mistakes
4.0	File >20 - 30 documents per hour with no mistakes.
3.0	File at least 20 documents per hour with no mistakes.
2.0	File <20 but more than 15 documents per hour with no mistakes or any amount with 1 mistake.
1.0	File < 15 documents per hour with 1 mistake or any amount with 2 or more mistakes.

Table 1 shows that greater scores (“better work”) are directly tied to increased filing of documents as long as there are no mistakes. The 2.0 score (like a “D” grade in school) can be either fewer documents with NO mistakes or even more than 30 documents with just one mistake. The time element remains the same.

Table 2 - Productivity is emphasized

Table #2 - Filing Clerk Performance Range	
5.0	File >40 documents per hour with no mistakes.
4.0	File >40 documents per hour with <2 mistakes.
3.0	File at least 30 documents per hour with <=3 mistakes.
2.0	File at least 30 documents per hour with 3-4 mistakes or <30 with any mistakes.
1.0	File < 25 documents per hour with any amount of mistakes.

This table (#2) shows that we will tolerate a small number of mistakes as long as productivity is up.

Table 3 - Time is emphasized

Table #3 - Filing Clerk Performance Range	
5.0	File >40 documents with no mistakes in less than 1 hour.
4.0	File >40 documents with no mistakes within 60-75 minutes.
3.0	File at least 30 documents with no mistakes in 75-90 minutes.
2.0	File at least 30 documents in 75-90 minutes with <3 mistakes
1.0	File < 30 documents or take longer than 90 minutes or make 3 or more mistakes.

Some tasks do not allow much manipulation of the three elements because of the nature of the job.

Suppose government regulations required we process **all** the loan documents we received **accurately** within **72 hours**. We cannot control how many we receive: we must simply process them “all.” Every document must be accurate because people’s money and property is involved and we have a “\$1,000 error-free guarantee” in our advertising that gives us a marketing edge and drives a lot of business our way.



We will divide the inbound work into equal piles for the clerks available. Since the government requires accurate processing within 72 hours, we can use that as our grade of “C”. We know we cannot process less than all that came in nor can we drop the quality level. Therefore, the only variable we can use as an incentive for employees is **time**.

We can manipulate the time it takes to finish their share of the work as the incentive to finish early.

That also gives us a chance to have some early finishers available to help slower ones if needed (after we document the files of the early finishers –and they know we did - as a reward) so we do not break the departmental deadline to finish all the work that came in.

If they can finish their share of the work accurately sooner than 60 hours since it came in, we will give them the highest score of 5.0 (an “A” for their work). Then, as an example, we can make 60-65 hours as a 4.0 (a “B”) and 66-72 hours as the 3.0 (a “C”).

Here are examples of how more technical skills could be developed into a performance range.

This is for an on call software-programming technician.

On-call Responsiveness (based on problems being resolved within the established time frames set by the On-Call Policy, barring any obstacles encountered due to problems dialing in; the availability of the JCL Respool or other circumstances outside of the control of the person responding to the problem)

Note: Expectations should be evaluated based on the individual's job description and special considerations may need to be made for new employees or employees that are assigned applications that they do not support on a daily basis; such as groups that have combined on-call personnel for multiple applications or when an employee transfers to another application.

Able to resolve problems on your own and within the established time frame set by the *On-Call Policy*

5	Consistently (98 - 100%) able to resolve problems on your own and all problems resolved within the established time frames.
4	Most of the time (90% - 97%) able to resolve problems on your own; however some assistance is needed from other team members on difficult or complex problems. All problems are resolved within the established time frames.
3	Occasionally (80% - 89%) needs assistance to resolve problems that are unfamiliar; you are able to resolve most problems on your own; most all problems are resolved within the established time frames.
2	Needs to improve; assistance is needed from other team members to resolve problems which are not complex.
1	Needs to develop; assistance is needed from other team members to resolve most problems; problems are not resolved within the established time frames.

Client Problem Resolution

5	Consistently (98-100%) problems are fixed the first time; solutions do not cause additional or new problems; no business unit, application, or system performance impact and no customer impact.
4	Most of the time (90-97%) problems are fixed the first time; solutions do not cause additional or new problems; no business unit, application, or system performance impact and no customer impact.
3	Occasionally (80 -89%) problems are not fixed the first time; solutions did not cause additional or new problems; minor business unit, application or system performance impact occurred; no customer impact
2	Needs to improve; problems are not fixed the first time or solutions have caused additional problems; customer, an occasional business unit, application or system performance impact occurred
1	Needs to develop; problems are not fixed the first time or solutions have caused additional problems; customer, business unit, application or system performance impact occurs frequently.

Section Review

Use a 1.0 (worst) to a 5.0 (best) scale to define a performance range for any task associated with one of these technical functions. Use the previous software programming technician form as an example for yours.

Be sure to include considerations of quality, quantity, and time.

- ✓ A technician at a fast oil-change business
- ✓ A customer service representative in a phone center
- ✓ An emergency medical technician
- ✓ A hair cutter in a barber/stylist shop
- ✓ A bank teller

Measuring “Soft Skills”

Unlike the “hard skills” we discussed earlier (page 22) that are unique to a specific job function, “soft skills” are more universal and expected of all team members regardless of their specific job functions.

How can you put a measurement on these typically “soft” topics?



Quality Service



Team Work



Oral Communications

It is easy to measure if you will do this:

Work with your employees to define jointly the **behavioral traits** that demonstrate the topic. (It is critical to the success of this measurement process that you include those whose behavior you expect to measure. Their “buy in” is essential for this process.)



Written Communication

1. For example, if you wanted to measure “PRIDE IN WORK”, you first identify **behavioral traits** that indicate *they have pride in their work*. You and your employees may come up with a list like this:
 - a. There are no spelling errors.
 - b. It is always on time or before.
 - c. She always uses the proper format for the report.
 - d. There are no smudges or “white outs” on the form.
 - e. Her data is always accurate.

2. Establish a scale with a range of values for use with each trait. [This is a *Likert Scale*.]
 - a. 1 = I never see this (Do not get overly concerned with the definition of “Never”. The scale will work as long as you and the employees agree closely on what frequency it means,)
 - b. 2 = I occasionally see this (Do not get overly concerned with the definition of “occasionally” .The scale will work as long as you and the employees agree closely on what frequency it means,)
 - c. 3 = I always see this (Do not get overly concerned with the definition of “Always”. The scale will work as long as you and the employees agree closely on what frequency it means,)
 - d. X = Does not apply

CAUTION: Professionals such as engineers, surveyors, and accountants are used to working with specific data and may be uncomfortable with this concept. They should remember we are measuring impressions and attitudes that may be vague at best. Asking a customer to rank satisfaction along a scale from “Not satisfied,” “Some satisfaction”, Very Satisfied,” or “Does not apply” is more useful than asking them “are you 43% or 52% satisfied?”

3. Then create a scale that converts the average of the trait scale (#2 above) to your performance assessment system. These five “behavioral traits” from part #1 define the behavior “Pride in Work.” You can ask your work team how they want to be measured on their “teamwork” skills.

Joan Smith’s <i>Pride in Work</i> Evaluation	Scores
There are no spelling errors.	3
It is always on time or before.	2*
She always uses the proper format for the report	2*
There are no smudges or “white outs” on the form.	3
Her data is always accurate	2*
Average score for the observation period —————→	12/5= 2.4
<p>*A wise leader will have documentation of the times when the employee did anything that would result in a less than perfect score. You can expect them to ask for proof they did not earn the top score. Also, their morale is improved if you put the burden of proving they <u>did not</u> get the max score on you instead of putting the burden of proof <u>on them</u> they did earn it. This would be like a teacher in school telling you at the start of the year “Everyone has an “A” in this class until your scores show otherwise.” The result from a grade standpoint is probably the same but the attitude of the students is much more optimistic and they <u>may</u> score better!</p>	

Some “**TEAM WORK**” traits that they may suggest:

- Demonstrates willingness to help others when finished with own work without being asked.
- Demonstrates willingness to help others with less experience or confidence
- Demonstrates willingness to give credit to others when praise is given
- Demonstrates willingness to carry his/her fair share of the workload (and more at times if asked)
- They are reliable and can be counted on to carry their share of the workload

You should consider accepting any traits that satisfy them and still fall within your general bounds of what the topic should cover. They feel more bound by their community standards than your outsider standards.

This is how the XYZ Project may set up a simple, yet effective because it is easily understood by employees, performance assessment scale of 1.0-3.0.

Performance scale ranges:

1.0 – <2.0 = requires probation and a specific improvement plan

.5 gap> 2.0 – 2.5 = satisfactory performance with lowest merit increase

.3 gap> >2.5 – 2.8 = above satisfactory performance with medium merit increase

.2 gap> >2.8 – 3.0 = outstanding performance and maximum merit increase



Notice how the gap gets smaller as the performance range gets higher. In other words, the performance “target” for higher scores is harder to hit.

Section Review

Pretend that your community service organization or church is planning a fundraiser. Select one of the activities below and:

- ✓ Define the criteria for participation
- ✓ Define the parameters of the contest
- ✓ Define how you will judge contestants so there is minimal chance that the judges selections will be challenged by those who did not win

Use a 1.0 (worst) to a 5.0 (best) scale to define a performance range for one of these activities. Be sure to include as many objective observations or measurements as possible.

- ✓ Baking brownies
- ✓ An art contest
- ✓ A crafts contest
- ✓ A music contest

Employees Rating Each Other: Good or Bad Idea?

If TEAMWORK is one of the topics on your performance assessment, you may want to consider allowing the team members to assess how each other supports the goals of the team. Obviously, they are in the best position to know who actually works while the boss is not around and who only works when the boss is present.

“Employees rating each other: good or bad idea?” Ask that question among a group of supervisors and managers and you will get many reasons for and against it.



We believe that it is a good idea only when the group doing the rating has the maturity to understand the benefits it offers.

Here are some issues for consideration about the argument for those who have not attempted it before.

1. Teamwork is important to the success of our group. (No one will argue that fact.)
2. There are only two ways to evaluate individual performance contributions by members of the team: the *leader can do the evaluation* or the *fellow team members can*.
3. The leader is not always present while the team is working. Frequently there are duties unique to leadership that requires him or her to be elsewhere such as attending meetings, working in the office planning, scheduling, budgeting, reporting, etc.
4. There may be team members who work more diligently while the leader is present than they do when the leader is absent.
5. Other team members frequently have to pick up that slack to meet the group's production goals.
6. Since the leader was periodically absent and not able to observe performance at all times, there is a distinct possibility the slacker will get a performance rating that is higher than deserved when the leader does individual performance assessments on group members. This is unfair to those who had to pick up the slack to meet the group's goals.

The group's members can solve this problem by doing anonymous assessments of each other if they choose to act objectively. The leader can use these for the individual's performance scores under the "teamwork" category.

Some group members will object saying that assessments are the job of the leader. While that is true, it is also true that the frequently absent leader cannot evaluate individual performance within the group as often as other members can.

The group can choose to score itself anonymously and be very accurate or insist the leader do the scoring and admit there may be undeserved scores. *They cannot have it both ways unless the leader gives up some leadership duties.* However, if the leader stopped doing those leadership duties, he or she would not remain a leader very long.

The possibility of groups of team members giving those they do not like lower scores (or friends higher scores) than they deserve can be defeated if you will use the Olympic judge technique of discarding the highest and lowest scores. Or, you can require specific examples be included for the highest or lowest scores to count.



If a project team is willing to self-score, work production will increase because the slackers can no longer “get away” with their games: ***they know it and the team members know it.***

Performance Assessment Sample Using a Likert Scale

(A Likert Scale is one that surveys a range of opinion from one extreme to another such as ‘Agree very strongly’ to ‘Disagree very strongly’.)

Send a survey with a cover memo like this to group members.

“John Smith is due for a performance assessment of his last 12 months of work. Part of our company’s annual Performance Assessment form requires an assessment of **TEAMWORK**.

We value the Teamwork traits listed below in our group. Please rate John based on your experience with him during this past assessment period and send it to me by (date). If you want to include the highest or lowest scores, you must include specific examples for those scores to count.

Your name will be helpful if I have questions about your response BUT IT IS NOT REQUIRED. If you will feel more comfortable returning it anonymously, you may do that.”

Please rate these situations from a 1-10 using this rating:

1 = I never see that trait 3 = I rarely see it 5 = I see it occasionally 8 = I see it frequently
10 = I always see that trait X = I do not know well enough for an opinion.

The trait that we value...	Your rating
Willingness to help others when finished with own work <u>without being asked</u> .	
Willingness to help others with less experience or confidence	
Willingness to give credit to others when praise is given	
Is reliable by always being here on time and doing what they promise	
Willingness to carry his/her fair share of the workload (and more at times if asked)	

When you get the replies, average the scores and assign a value according to the system you have developed **with your employees**.

List Five Traits That You Would Want to See Displayed for

✓ **WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

✓ **ORAL COMMUNICATION**

✓ **QUALITY SERVICE**

Developing an Action Plan

Setting goals is meaningless without an *action plan* of what you will do to make them happen.

Here is an action plan that an employee would write using the night school example on page 20.

1. I will call the night school representative within 2 days of this meeting and ask for the form needed to register for class.
2. When I get the form, I fill it out, get my boss' signature, and send it back to the night school representative within 2 days of receipt.
3. Then I will call the night school representative on the fifth day after sending it to confirm she received it and ask if I need to do anything else.

How much should a leader be concerned about the perceived difficulty of achieving goals?

(Some concern but not as much as the employee who has to accomplish the goals.)

Who (leader or employee) should determine (and **WHY**) whether a goal is difficult?

(Both should be involved. If the leader thinks the employee can do it, then strong coaching skills are needed to get the employee to attempt the activity.)

Conducting The Goal-Setting Meeting

The periodic goal-setting meeting can be an excellent, **non-threatening**, opportunity for you to make sure your employee understands their job junction and how it fits into the purpose of your project. Here is an easy way to make that determination:



Give a copy of the **Worksheet for the Goal-Setting Meeting** (on the next page) to your employee about a week before your meeting.

Tell them to think about their work performance and professional development goals for the next observation period. Say something like; *“This helps me discover how well I have communicated with you about your job and my expectations of your performance. Please fill one out about what you expect of yourself and I will do one for you defining what I think you can do – plus a little stretching for professional growth. Then we’ll compare them to help me understand your view of the job and your development plans.”*

If you are not sure of what to say, try something like, *“If you were me, what would be the minimum acceptable performance and professional development that you would expect from someone with your experience, skills, and potential? Then what would be the maximum you think could be achieved?”*

Remember, the more time you spend today clarifying questions, the less time you will have to spend tomorrow fixing mistakes.

You and your employee must both be prepared for the goal-setting meeting: here is a useful guide for preparation.

Worksheet for the Goal-Setting Meeting

Employee's Name: _____ Date: _____

Employee's Position: _____

Supervisor: _____

Goal setting period from (dd/mm/yyyy) _____ to _____ (dd/mm/yyyy)

Measurable Work Performance Goals:

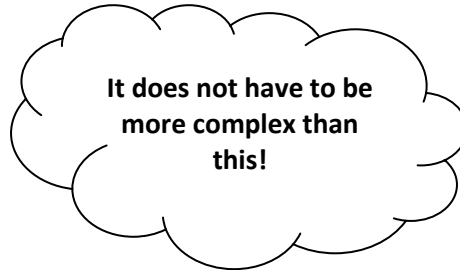
I plan to achieve these performance goals *as an average* over this period (including measurements of quality, quantity, and time).

Measurable Professional Development Goals

I plan to achieve these professional development goals over this period (including measurements of quality, quantity, and time).



- “What are your goals for this first period (1st quarter is ideal) of observation?”
- “How can I help?”



1. “**What were your goals for this past observation period?**” (A repeat from your initial meeting)
2. “How did you do?”
3. “How do you account for the gap above or below your goals?”
4. “What are your plans for the next period?”
5. “**How can I help?**” (A repeat from your initial meeting)



Performance or Activity?

Caterpillars move through trees in long lines; each one with its head snugly fitted against the rear of the one ahead.

Jean-Henri Fabre, a French naturalist, enticed a string of them once to the rim of a large flowerpot. There he succeeded in getting the first in line butted up against the last in a big, hairy circle that moved around and around continuously.



He expected them to catch on somehow that they were going nowhere but they did not. He even placed ample food and water nearby where they could see it but just outside their path.

Through sheer force of habit, they continued the march for seven days until exhaustion and ultimate starvation ended

their march.

There was plenty of activity, all were deeply engrossed in the habit, custom, tradition, or “way-we-have-always-done-it”, **but they accomplished nothing!**¹

Performance means achievement of goals, activity means staying busy!



The Performance Assessment exists to reward employees for what they accomplish, not for just showing up and staying busy. Do you think that **you**, your **leader**, and your **employees** have a clear understanding of this difference?

¹ *Think Like a Manager*, Roger Fritz, Ph.D., copyright 1994, page 97

Elements of an Effective Performance Assessment Process

#1 - Your Job Description

This tells you what tasks you are paid to do to support the mission of your employer.

QUESTION: What is the mission of your employer?

What is your department's mission in support of your employer's mission?



Why is it important to ask these questions in a module about performance assessments?

The employee and supervisor work together to define how well to do them via the different performance levels using the goal setting worksheet.

List here the top three things you are paid to do in your job using the terms of HOW WELL (quality), HOW MUCH (quantity), and HOW OFTEN (time).



If you are having difficulty doing this, what does that tell you about communications between you and your supervisor?

What is your level of confidence that you and your supervisor would list the same three items? If it is not very high, what does that tell you about your leader's possible view of your job performance?

What are you going to do about this situation?

What does job **CONFIDENCE** have to do with job **COMPETENCE**?

(The more confident we are that we are doing the right things right means we will be more competent doing them.)



What determines your sense of job **CONFIDENCE**?

How does your sense of job **CONFIDENCE** influence your job **COMPETENCE**?

How does your job **COMPETENCE** affect your job **PERFORMANCE**?

On which of those elements (confidence, competence, or performance) does your boss judge you?

How comfortable are you with your work situation?

What do you plan to do next?

#2 - Written Performance Standards

“Performance standards” are organizational minimums for specific job tasks. *“Clerks should type a minimum of 35 words (quantity) per minute (time) with no errors (quality)”* is an example of an organizational standard.

“Performance goals” are an individual’s performance improvement path to achieving organizational standards.



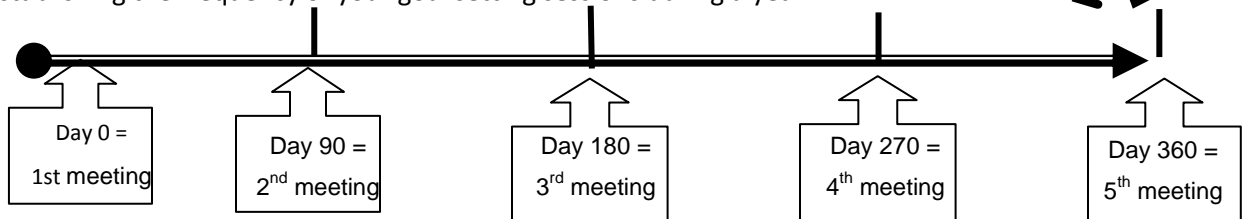
“Carl currently types at 35 wpm but makes typos. His performance goal is to achieve the company standard of 50 wpm within 2 weeks.”

List some performance standards of your project. Then list some performance goals employees would set as they work toward achieving the project standards.

ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS	INDIVIDUAL GOALS

#3 - Conducting a Goal Setting Meeting

Use the “report card model” from the *Setting Effective Performance Goals* as a guide to establishing the frequency of your goal setting sessions during a year.



Did your teachers ever have to tell you how you were doing in class or did you know?

How much stress do you think they experienced at “report card time”? (None)

Why? (Giving students feedback on class work scores allowed the students to track their own grades. Their work was already finished by report card time.)

Why would that experience from school be any different from your work place? Who controls whether you have a stressFUL or stressFREE time doing performance assessments?



QUESTION: If you ask your employees at the beginning of the year, “*How much do you want to earn this year?*” what do you think they would say?

Do you think it would be, “*I want to earn all I can?*”

Compare that question to your days in school when the teacher asked, “What kind of an average do you want to end up with this year?”, and you said, “I want to get on the Honor Roll!”

If you wanted to end the year on the Honor Roll, what part did the teacher play in your plans?

(Establishing the grading system and getting your scores back to you.)

Who carried the biggest part of the load of getting you on the Honor Roll? (*You did!*)

How does that situation in grade school compare to your department when an employee says, “*I want to earn all I can?*”

Documentation That Satisfies The “Orp”-Person



Do you know the **ORP-person?** (The Ordinary, Reasonable, and Prudent person is an individual who did not witness the event but may sit in judgment of your actions at an administrative hearing or as a member of a jury.)

Be sure to chisel this into your memory just as it is chiseled into this block of stone!

**“IF IT ISN’T DOCUMENTED,
IT DIDN’T HAPPEN”**



Suppose your employee’s desk looked like this, which is very contrary to your sense of orderliness and what a professional environment should look like.

Write a comment here as if you were putting an entry onto a disciplinary form.

(If you use words like, “messy”, “cluttered”, or “unprofessional”, you need to improve your observation and documentation skills by focusing on ‘objective behavior that would convince the ORPman’ you are being reasonable. Saying, “objects stacked on top of each other, or “no work space available” would convey clearly what you want to say because it focuses on observable and objective behavior.)

QUESTION:

What determines whether an employee's behavior requires your intervention? *(The most universally applicable answer is, "If it impacts work!")*

What impression could these sentences give the **ORP-person** about the writer and why could they give that impression?

- ✓ "She just doesn't take pride in her work!"
- ✓ "His attitude toward customers is rude and very unprofessional."
- ✓ "She is so loud and arrogant that no one wants to work with her!"

(The ORPman may think you have a grudge against them or there is something personal going on. You must always focus on observable, descriptive behavior and not opinions unless asked specifically for an opinion.)

Rewrite them so they do not give the impression you described above.

(Hint: How can you write them to focus on objective behavior and not your value system?)

- ✓ "She just doesn't take pride in her work!"
Her lack of accuracy (**quality reference**) and tardiness in submitting the report (**time reference**) are performance problems. This behavior makes me think she does not take pride in her work. (If you are compelled to refer to her 'pride', then precede it with behavioral references so the ORPman will know you have valid reasons for saying so.)

- ✓ "His attitude toward customers is rude and very unprofessional."
He keeps interrupting them, does not allow them to finish questions, and calls them "stupid" to their face. (**All specific behavioral references**) This behavior makes me think he is rude and unprofessional to customers!

- ✓ "She is so loud and arrogant that no one wants to work with her!"
You can hear her talking several cubicles away. She is always correcting people and usually she is wrong! I have had a request from every one of her co-workers at different times for a transfer to another part of our department away from her so they could concentrate on their work.

Conduct A Performance Assessment Meeting

This process uses the “Report Card” model on page 43 that presupposes you and your employee share a common understanding of performance required to achieve the various performance levels recognized by your organization. (These equate to your knowing what it took to be a “C”, “B”, or “A” student in school.)

This “common understanding” can only result from you teaching them what you have learned about objective performance measurements, motivation, and wanting them to take charge of their own careers.

Schedule the meeting. Give your employee sufficient notice *and invite them to bring documentation that supports the rating they think they should have.* (Were you not ready with your test scores and other grades to argue with your teacher at report card time in case you did not get the grade you expected?)

Conduct the meeting. Take an approach that they are going to tell you how well they did on meeting their goals by presenting supporting documentation.

In the meantime, you have prepared your view of what they have accomplished. (Remember that the teacher had her grade book, too.) Compare the documentation of performance the employee provides with the goal setting worksheet’s definitions for success. (“*Here is what you are paid to do and these are the different requirements for a 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, and a 5.0 rating. Using our organization’s scale, what scores do you think you earned this period?*”)



REMEMBER: Your teachers did not give you good or bad grades: you earned them. You showed your teacher what grade you wanted by the way you performed!

It can be the same way with your performance assessments: let your employees’ performance tell you the scores they want to see!

The biggest issue many supervisors have with getting salary recommendations accepted by Compensation is **THEIR (the supervisor's) CREDIBILITY**.

If you are known as a supervisor who avoids conflict with employees by giving high and unearned or poorly documented salary increase recommendations, you will not be very successful in having them approved.

Likewise, if your reputation is that you are fair and objective and that your documentation proves the employee's achievement, you will be much more successful in having your recommendations accepted. Your Human Resources Department will support your recommendations when you have built credibility with them over time. The more reason you give them to agree with you, the greater the likelihood they will!

QUESTION: What would be in it for Human Resources if you invited them to your department to review your revised goal setting and performance assessment scoring process?



(They could see a way to make their job easier by reducing the number of complaints they receive annually about performance assessment scores.)

What could that do for your credibility with them?

Applying This Content to a Project Environment

Now, we will look at pulling all of this theory into a practical package for use on a project where team members may spend a large part of the year working away from their normal assignments.

Broadly speaking, this is how it would work.

Project Planning Stage

1. Assign implementation of this process to a key member of the project such as HR (with assistance from the team building facilitator if available)
2. The key project member must understand the entire concept that we have outlined here and feel comfortable explaining it to other team members.
3. The key project member must be prepared to facilitate short classes on the project, if necessary, to broaden the base of understanding among team members.
4. Meet with permanent and project department managers of existing or potential team members so they understand how the process works
5. Focus on how an objective process like this will reduce a lot of administrative workload ONCE IT IS ESTABLISHED. Schoolteachers do not change their grading system every year a new group of students arrives; she simply moves them through the existing grading structure.
6. Help them also understand how defining performance ranges for all skills, 'soft' and 'hard', removes subjectivity from performance evaluation. With less subjectivity, there are fewer confrontations about performance evaluation between employees and supervisors, fewer claims of 'favoritism', and project employees can focus more on their work and less on playing politics as they try to impress people.
7. Project HR, permanent managers, project department managers begin meetings to develop and define the functional performance ranges for project jobs before employees begin arriving to fill the positions.
8. They, or their designates, must start with "Establishing Effective Performance Goals" (page 21) with each job function and gradually build the foundation of performance measurement.

9. They must understand that, although it will be time-consuming the first time they do it, they will not have to do it again because the job functions are transferable from one project to the next. They may have to 'fine-tune' them as experience with the process grows but, as long as the basic job function does not change (as long as project Accounts Payable clerks keep doing Accounts Payable functions from one project to the next), they will not have to make major changes in the process.

Project Team Performance Implementation

1. Include the project performance assessment process as an overview included in the orientation process for new project members
2. Project department managers provide detailed information for specific job functions as new team members complete orientation and are assigned to departments for the project duration
3. Implement the process with quarterly meetings between subordinate and superior for every position from entry level to project manager. The more people who practice this will make it become a part of the project's culture much faster.
4. Send a copy of the outcome of this quarterly meeting to the employee's permanent manager.
5. The permanent manager rolls these quarterly evaluations into the annual performance assessment for promotion, raise, or reassignment decisions.