



SETTING CLEAR
STANDARDS IS A
PRIME RESPONSIBILITY
FOR MANAGERS.
ALTHOUGH EMPLOYEES
MAY CONTRIBUTE,
THE ULTIMATE
RESPONSIBILITY LIES
WITH MANAGERS.

WHY PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ARE THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

7 words, 7 syllables: Countless benefits

Over the last 40 to 50 years, the gurus have tried to convince us that employee management is a complex and confusing business. Managing employee performance can be demanding, but sometimes simple and effective management solutions are so close to us that we don't notice them. These seven little words can work wonders:

“WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO?”

That's all. Use them as much as you like and always use them when an employee says, “Boss, what do you want me to do about this?” And you'll reap these benefits:

- Staff will learn to stop dumping problems in your lap
- Employees will start to suggest solutions or courses of action themselves
- You won't get bogged down in minor detail and minor issues
- You'll have more time to do what you're paid to do — manage
- Over time, staff will develop better analytical and problem-solving skills
- Staff will learn to handle issues themselves rather than refer them to you
- Staff will discover that their experience and opinions are highly valued
- You'll encourage creative thinking among employees
- You'll have found the perfect cure to “managing upwards”

And you will greatly enhance your capacity to manage employee performance. There's no doubt that when employees know exactly what is expected of them, their performance will improve. Those seven words will go a long way toward clarifying expectations, both yours and theirs.

MANAGERS TALK A LOT ABOUT GOALS. But there’s a little secret most managers don’t know about managing employee performance: To most employees, performance standards are more important than goals.

When you tell your staff what you expect, clearly and unequivocally, you are setting performance standards for your people. When they know exactly what you expect, you are far more likely to get what you want from them.

Standards provide benchmarks to enable employees to decide how they’re doing. If the standards are clear and definitive enough, both employees and managers can check progress monthly, weekly, or even daily.

BENEFITS

Employee performance standards bring five broad benefits:

- 1. They tell you how well you’re progressing towards achieving goals
- 2. They guarantee that you’ll know when goals have been achieved
- 3. They significantly reduce stress for managers
- 4. They permit objective assessment of the on-job performance of employees
- 5. They are the foundation of successful on-the-job training

Setting clear standards is a prime responsibility for managers. Although employees may contribute, the ultimate responsibility lies with managers.

If you want to succeed in managing employee performance, standards are essential. When you set clear, measurable performance standards, you gain many extra benefits:

- They clarify exactly what you expect from your staff
- They tell employees precisely what you consider most important
- They let employees know how their performance will be measured
- They provide many opportunities for positive reinforcement of employees’ work
- They generate superior management information to enable managers to make better decisions
- They enable managers to take prompt action when they are not being met
- They remove the need for close supervision
- They form the foundation for successful operating systems
- They provide accurate and relevant information to use in determining rewards and incentives
- They enable formal performance appraisals to be based on accurate and relevant performance-based data, not behaviour, opinion, and hearsay
- They help in managing difficult employees

REQUIREMENTS

Sound performance standards are clearly measurable. If you already have performance standards, check their wording. If they start with “understand”, “appreciate”, “value”, “gain insight”, “hope”, or any other such imprecise words, they’re “fuzzys”, not performance standards.

If you would like your employees to achieve more, look to your performance standards. If they’re not clear, measurable, and definitive,

you can’t expect your employees to perform to their potential. Without clear standards, they won’t know exactly how they are performing.

Managers who genuinely expect their staff to perform well on a consistent basis, treat their staff as if they are successful. They do everything they can to ensure this, including providing the resources that are needed.

In the end, your job is to set the standards, provide the resources, and monitor and measure. You can have excellent standards and superb resources but only measurement will turn these into genuine expectations. If your staff knows that their performance won’t be monitored and measured against previously stated standards, they’ll also know that you’re not serious about expectations.

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