



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

Employee Services

Monday, July 17, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORS

FROM: MARK D. REINHOLD, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, EMPLOYEE SERVICES

Subject: Performance Management Guidance and Successful Practices in Support of Agency Plans for Maximizing Employee Performance

This memorandum provides information and guidance to help agencies implement performance management requirements specified by law and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum M-17-22, *Comprehensive Plan for Reforming the Federal Government and Reducing the Federal Civilian Workforce*, issued on April 12, 2017*. The information provided below and in the attached guidance will support agencies in developing, applying and implementing performance appraisal systems that help maximize employee performance through effective implementation of the following five components of the performance management process:

1. Planning work, and setting expectations and goals;
2. Monitoring progress and performance continually;
3. Developing an employee's ability to perform in their current position;
4. Rating periodically to summarize performance; and
5. Rewarding performance.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has recently reviewed a great deal of research and data demonstrating that successful performance management is dependent on continuous employee engagement between employees and supervisors throughout the performance appraisal period – meaningfully fulfilling the purpose of each procedural step of the performance management process – rather than the routine and rote implementation of procedures a few times a year. The quality of the working relationships and interactions between supervisors and employees have a direct impact on excellence in performance and to achieve a high-performance culture, agencies must empower and encourage supervisors and employees to establish and maintain higher levels of trust, communication, and productive working relationships.

Specifically, our research shows employees feel most empowered and enabled to succeed when supervisors involve them in continuous dialogue throughout the annual performance management cycle on:

- clear, shared understanding of expectations and goals;
- alignment of position responsibilities and agency mission;
- continual progress toward achieving expectations and goals;

- areas of strength or needs for improvement;
- support for employee development and success; and
- clear communication of the annual rating and understanding of how it is derived.

The attached guidance provides agencies with specific organizational and individual approaches and actions that may be taken to maximize employee performance. The guidance recognizes the initial importance of well-operated performance appraisal systems to provide a solid foundation and framework to manage performance. However, the ultimate success of these systems depends on the commitment of both supervisors and employees to maintaining positive and regular communications and relationships, including communications with a focus on effective performance management and work-life and wellness. Supervisors specifically play a critical role in providing support and reinforcing the commitment of their employees by providing:

- “light-touch check-ins” (i.e., brief but regular and meaningful communications to discuss priorities and needs);
- valid, regular, and timely data to provide feedback on performance progress, including varied perspectives from multiple stakeholders;
- coaching and development to help employees succeed and flourish; and
- support for professional and personal success and wellness.

In addition to the attached performance management guidance and reminders, OPM will soon be providing additional support to agencies through an expected Fall 2017 launch of a “Performance Management Plus – Engaging for Success” web-based training course that will be available to all Federal agencies. We will also be providing additional tools and guidance for effectively evaluating appraisal programs and developing supervisory performance plans, including holding supervisors accountable for their performance management responsibilities.

If you have any questions regarding this guidance, please address them to Stephen Shih, Deputy Associate Director, Senior Executive Services and Performance Management, or to Barbara Colchao, Manager, Executive Resources and Performance Management, by e-mail at performance-management@opm.gov or by telephone at (202) 606-8046.

Attachment (See 508-compliant PDF below)

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and Small Agency Council

* OMB Memorandum M-17-22 requires agencies to “[d]evelop a plan to maximize employee performance by June 30, 2017.” See https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/legacy_drupal_files/omb/memoranda/2017/M-17-22.pdf.