



Xavier Development Reference Guide

Manager Toolkit

Pitfalls to avoid when appraising an employee

- Do not base solely from memory or focus on one specific incident - base the review on accurate and factual data. Maintain a manager's file to document specific successes and shortcomings throughout the entire review period
- Avoid the "halo" and "horns" effects. Just because the employee performs outstanding in one area does not make his overall performance outstanding. The same goes for bad performance.
- Length of service or job grade does not necessarily mean better performance. Look carefully at the individual's performance within the job.
- Avoid bias about an employee based on your personal feelings for that individual.
- Do not overrate a poor performer as a motivational tool.
- Not all individuals are the same. Analyze each employee carefully and understand their strengths and weaknesses; establish your performance expectations accordingly.
- Do not rush through the review. Invest time with the employee.
- Do not be afraid to provide truthful information.

“SMART” Criteria

When you translate organization or department outcomes into objectives, or when you write specific objectives with an individual, you can use the “SMART” criteria described below.

The “SMART” criteria:

- **S**pecific: Clearly stated RESULT (not an activity) and should not be several results “bundled” together
- **M**easurable: Quantifiable OR subjective indicator, must be an identifiable Success Metric
- **A**chievable: Can be a stretch or challenge, but the employee has to believe it is possible for him or her to achieve
- **R**elevant: Communicate the relationship of the objective to corporate direction, BU/function goals, team goals
- **T**imed: Schedules and milestone clear for projects; timeliness of delivery of on-going performance responsibilities is defined

Developing Standards

The criteria used to assess the performance of the individual should be stated in measurable, observable and/or behavioral terms. The appraisal instrument should address each of the essential job functions and the desired outcomes desired.

Measurable—end result can be identified in terms of quantity, quality, time line, acceptable standards, organizational or professional procedures, etc.

Observable—Witnessing and/or gathering of descriptions of the work performance and comparing it with defined expectations. Actions, words, gestures, procedures with which the person being appraised can identify should be used so the individual can take the appropriate action to maintain or improve the work behaviors in question.

Behavioral—Actions that are observed, described and can be changed or corrected with instruction or self-discipline.

When the initial review is completed, both you and the employee should be able to describe orally and in writing desirable outcomes in terms of measurable results and/or specific observable behaviors.

Example: Selecting a task or duty and developing measurable standards and outputs:

TASKS/DUTIES	PROCESS ACTIVITIES & INPUTS	STANDARDS & OUTPUTS
Records daily time worked in KRONOS.	Employee enters daily time worked and lunch period in KRONOS.	Time is accurately recorded in KRONOS prior to the end of the pay period.
	Employee submits paid time off requests to timekeeper for review.	Timekeeper will determine if employee has accrued time for sick or vacation leave prior to the end of the pay period.
	Approver will approve or deny requests for paid time off.	Approved paid time off will be recorded in KRONOS for bi-weekly employees by noon on Monday prior to the processing of payroll. Approved paid time off will be recorded in KRONOS for monthly employees by the published payroll processing dates.
		Paycheck is generated in BANNER for bi-weekly employees by Wednesday of the payroll week.

	Paycheck is generated in BANNER for monthly employees by the published payroll date.
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Formalizing Impressions into Behaviors

Managers have mental impressions of all of their employees. Identify all the positive and negative fuzzies that you can. These fuzzies are then either grouped together or further broken down into as many areas as necessary to completely describe the major categories of the performance. If a fuzzy is really big (e.g. he is a good worker), try to break it down into several different points if possible.

For example, "He is a good worker" might become "He is very safety conscious"; "He has initiative" and/or "He has a sense of responsibility".

Some fuzzies are too specific and it is often the case that these are actually elements of a more general category.

For example, "She is always cheerful" may be a smaller component of, "She gets on well with others."

Think back to the general things the employee does that cause them to form these fuzzy conclusions. Each of these areas has to be supported by at least one example of a specific instance to illustrate the behavior or result in question. The final list consists of everything the employee is doing well, and the areas where the employee could improve. Typically, this list would consist of about eight to 10 fuzzies and would cover technical, behavioral and social aspects of performance.

Column 1 contains the general behaviors /results, while column 2 provides the examples of the specific instances that illustrate each of these. Note the expectations of good performance for each fuzzy are included in the descriptions and examples. In effect, they become standards for future performance.

Example 1: She has a sense of responsibility.

The general things the employee does that cause me to form this fuzzy conclusion - by this I mean:	Examples of specific instances of behavior or results that caused me to identify these general things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She takes the right amount of time to do the tasks that are assigned. • She makes sure that whatever needs to be done to get a good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Tregé's report took one week and the preparation for the client meeting with Dr. Francis took only two days. • When researching the Financial Aid issue, she went to Baton Rouge in January for the conference.

<p>outcome is done regardless of what this entails.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She never compromises quality by taking shortcuts. • If she is having a problem she lets me know right away to reduce the impact of something not working out as planned. • She seeks out solutions to problems and brings me alternatives to discuss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would have been quicker and easier to not include the data on XTZ, but she did it anyway. • Let me know about employees badmouthing the focus groups on how to improve safety. She suggested that we have a employee meeting to explain the reasons behind the study.
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Some examples of negative fuzzies clarified in this way are shown below. These examples deliberately concentrate on "trickier" situations because these are usually more difficult to handle than straightforward quantitative ones such as, "You made three errors when inputting the data into the computer." They represent the types of situations that managers generally have the most trouble bringing up and handling well.

Example 2: He has no confidence (too scared to make a decision/employees don't respect him because of it).

The general things the employee does that cause me to form this fuzzy conclusion – by this I mean:	Examples of specific instances of behavior or results that caused me to identify these general things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He comes to me for the answer to every little routine problem and issue that needs a decision - things that he should be dealing with himself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two weeks ago he stops me in the hall and tells me he is short two workers on the shift. He then asks me what he should do. • He passed on an employee issue e-mailed to him asking me how he should respond (as if I know the situation). • He came to my office yesterday saying that a piece of equipment was broken. He wanted to know whether he should send it out for repairs, which would take more time to get it fixed, or bring in someone to fix it, which would be more expensive.

Example 3: She complains all the time (and drives me crazy.)

The general things the employee does that cause me to form this fuzzy conclusion – by this I mean:	Examples of specific instances of behavior or results that caused me to identify these general things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When she spots a problem she simply whines to me about it rather than offering any concrete suggestions as to how it might be solved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complained to me recently that the new inventory system implementation was doomed to failure because employees weren't being trained properly. "They" should have done something else instead. • Complained that we should keep better track of employee absenteeism because it was hard to talk to employees about absenteeism when we don't keep good records.

Note that any individual could look at any of the examples above and determine they would not have defined them in the same way. For example, one person might think, "Seeks out solutions to problems" has nothing to do with responsibility, but more to do with initiative. And he or she would be right. The beauty of the method is such differences do not matter. What managers call their fuzzies and how they break down the behaviors and results that caused them to formulate them in the first place is irrelevant. As long as you can define, explain and justify what you intuitively *know* so it is crystal clear to both yourself and the employee. You do not have to worry about force-fitting a thought process into any preconceived notions or competency definitions.

Working areas for improvement

This part of the process is based on the importance of using words properly. How managers communicate the problem and what they do to help the employee figure out how to resolve it are instrumental in determining the quality of the outcome. We all have a difficult time hearing any form of criticism of our results, actions and behaviors. Many of us can remember receiving feedback which wounded or hurt us out of proportion to what the actual problem was, especially if it came as a shock.

The majority of good employees feel inwardly uncomfortable when they know they are going to find out about something they are not doing right. As a result, it is counter-productive to bring up a list of their problems. On the other hand, most employees do realize they are not perfect and can accept there must logically be at least one area they can work on improving. It is even easier to accept this if they know going into the discussion that the manager will *only* bring up

one area if possible. Such an approach ties in with what this method is all about; namely, the whole idea of feedback is to *build* employee confidence and self-esteem.

If there is more than one area to improve, managers are encouraged to save it/them for another time, preferably once the employee has already succeeded in improving in the first area. With one success under the belt, it is easier to tackle another area. Rome wasn't built in a day and average or below-average employees also need time to reach their full potential.

Transform performance

1. Flip the original negative fuzzy to describe its exact opposite. Word it so it asks for more of something rather than less of something. (Sometimes if the opposite of the fuzzy is just to stop doing it, it is more effective to simply state what you wish the employee would do instead.)

Describe what you mean by this statement (i.e. state what successful performance would look like) by describing what you wish the employee would do instead of the performance you described.

Example: Instead of, **he has no confidence** (he comes to me for the answer to every routine little problem and issue that needs a decision - things that he should be dealing with himself), think **he needs to develop more confidence in his ability to make routine decisions**. What I mean by this is: **when he is faced with a routine decision about what to do, I'd like to see him decide what to do about it on his own.**

Example: Instead of, **she complains all the time** (when she spots a problem, she simply whines to me about it, rather than offering any concrete suggestions as to how it might be solved), think **she should bring up her concerns in a positive, structured way**. * What I mean by this is: **when she spots a problem I wish she would think through its ramifications and try to come up with a plan concerning how she thinks we might go about solving it.**

** In this case the opposite of complaining is to stop complaining, so a description is more appropriate.*

In all these examples it is important to note that:

- The words themselves are neutral and descriptive. This lessens the chance they will invoke the kind of gut reactions that cause negative emotions and fears.
- What the person is actually doing wrong is never mentioned. It is only implied as a consequence of the description of successful performance. You can focus on the positive while avoiding assigning blame or criticizing the employee. This increases the chance that it will be easier for the employee to hear and understand.

- The original examples of specific instances of the poor behavior are not brought up. There is no need to throw these in the employee's face unless you are challenged to do so.

2. To complete the transformation from the original negative fuzzy, you are asked to:

- Avoid the words, "You need to improve." To maintain self-esteem the phrase, "An area for development," which is more descriptive is suggested instead.
- Have some ideas concerning how the employee can achieve the desired performance if he has no ideas of his own.
- Reinforce "What's in it for the employee?". Do this by flipping the original negative consequences into the opposite positive ones. Add any additional positive ones you can think of.

The following completed transformations from the previous improvement examples illustrate how the process works.

Complains all the time (and drives me crazy)

"One area for development would be to bring up any concerns about problems that you spot in a positive and structured way. What I mean by this is: when you spot a problem, try to think through its ramifications and try to outline a plan concerning how you think we might go about solving it."

Sample questions

- What do you think?
(Back up with the examples only if the employee challenges you to do so)
- What do you think would be involved in doing that?
- What could I do to help you achieve that?
- Can we agree on a plan to accomplish this?

Ideas/suggestions to have up your sleeve if employee doesn't have any ideas for how to reach desired performance

- I could help you by reviewing your recommendations and giving you feedback on what I think.
- I could give you a structure to follow based on what I use to make a simplified business case. It would help you to outline the idea, the pros and cons, and state what would be involved in getting it done.
- When the ideas you have are outside of either your or my control, I could pass

them on to the appropriate people.

Consequences you can use to reinforce the benefits of doing this

You have a talent for spotting potential problems and I'm sure other people would appreciate your concrete ideas to tackle them, it would certainly improve life for everyone if we could resolve a few. In addition, I like to see an employee who shows initiative. It is one of the things that really make the difference between average and outstanding performance.

Has no confidence (too scared to make a decision and employees do not respect him because of it).

"One area for development is to have more confidence in your ability to make routine decisions. What I mean by this is: when you are faced with a decision about what to do, I'd like to see you decide what to do about it on your own."

Sample questions

- What do you think?
- What do you think you need to do to be able to do that?
- What could I do to help you achieve that?
- Can we agree on a plan to accomplish this?

Ideas/suggestions to have up your sleeve

- When you are unsure of what to do when faced with a problem or issue, make the decision anyway, just run it by me first. If I see a potential difficulty, I'll let you know and we can discuss an alternative course of action. If you feel you cannot make the decision alone, ask me what to do but outline the pros and cons of the various options you are considering and we can discuss them together.
- Take a course in decision-making.
- Watch how more experienced supervisors make decisions.

Consequences you can use to reinforce the benefits of doing this

As you feel more confident in your ability to make decisions, you will improve your job performance immeasurably and your employees will come to respect your knowledge and authority.