

# EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

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## Special Thanks

A Special thanks goes out to Dr. Ricardo Goenaga from the ARS, South Atlantic Area, Tropical Agriculture Research Station, in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Dr. Goenaga shared with us some guidance he provides to the supervisors on his staff to help them in deciding how to rate their employees for their annual performance reviews. We thought that Dr. Goenaga's guidance was great and we wanted to share it with you, in a condensed form, in this issue of Employee Relations.

We appreciate Dr. Goenaga's input and we would like to welcome you to share any guidance, tips, or advice that you have for dealing with issues of employee conduct or performance, working with a labor union, or dealing with ethics concerns. Your perspective as a supervisor will be helpful to us in our effort to target our articles to meet the needs of REE supervisors.

If you have information that you would like to share with us, or if there is a topic of concern that you would especially like to see addressed in an upcoming issue of Employee Relations, please contact your servicing Employee Relations Specialist.

Molly Hamilton  
Editor, Employee Relations

## Performance Ratings, Getting to the Bottom of it

By and large, most REE employees are competent, hard-working employees. REE supervisors are fortunate to have such top-rate employees, but it does lead to a difficult question - how do I distinguish

The employee's work planning is realistic and deadlines are met. Priorities are duly considered in planning and performing assigned responsibilities. The

between who's done a good job, who's done a superior job, and who has done a truly outstanding job?

To start with, make sure the employee has performance standards that are objective, reasonable, measurable, and specific to the position. The earlier in the rating season that the employee is placed on standards, the better. When it comes time to rate performance, consider each element individually to determine overall performance. So, the question is, "Does the employee meet or exceed the standard described for each element?" The step by step process may seem tedious and unnecessary, but it will help you to make a fair and objective assessment of the employee's overall performance. Only after you consider each element individually will you be able to establish whether the employee is Outstanding, Superior, or Fully Successful.

## The Difference Between "Meets" and "Exceeds"

There is often a fine line between whether an employee "Meets" or "Exceeds" the defined standard for each element. We hope to make your job a little easier by explaining what is meant by "meets" and "exceeds."

The "Meets Fully Successful" level of performance is solid and effective performance. The quality and quantity of work products are those of a fully competent employee. Accomplishments at this level are what is expected of the majority of employees.

Work products fully meet the requirements of the element. Major revisions are rarely necessary; most work requires only minor revision. Tasks are completed in an accurate, thorough, and timely way. Technical skills and knowledge are applied effectively to specific job tasks. Established procedures, format requirements and instructions from supervisors are followed.

employee's interpersonal behavior toward supervisors, coworkers, and customers promotes attainment of work objectives and poses no significant problems. The

employee speaks and writes clearly and effectively. Special assignments are completed so their form and content are acceptable and regular duties are not disrupted. The employee performs additional work as his/her workload permits. Supervisory assistance is sometimes necessary to handle routine problems associated with assignments.

To "Exceed Fully Successful" the employee must demonstrate unusually good performance. The quantity and quality of work are consistently outstanding. Work products are thorough, accurate, and require minimal guidance from the supervisor. The knowledge and skill applied to the element are clearly above average, demonstrating problem-solving skill and insight into work methods and techniques. The employee follows required procedures and supervisory guidance so as to take full advantage of existing systems for accomplishing the organization's objectives.

Work is planned so as to proceed in an efficient orderly sequence that rarely requires backtracking and consistently leads to completion of the work by established deadlines. The employee uses contingency planning to anticipate and prevent problems and delays. Exceptions occur when delays have causes outside the employee's control. Cost savings are considered in the employee's work planning.

The employee works effectively on this element with coworkers, clients, and his or her supervisor, creating a highly successful cooperative effort. Oral and written expression applied to this element are noteworthy for their clarity and effectiveness, leading to improved understanding of the work by other employees and clients of the organization. Work products are generally given sympathetic consideration because they are well-prepared.

The employee seeks out additional work or special assignments that enhance accomplishment of this element and pursues them to successful conclusion without disrupting regular work. Problems that surface are dealt with; supervisory intervention to correct problems rarely occurs.

time to demonstrate Fully Successful performance, and offer reasonable assistance. But, how do you know if an employee's performance is really unacceptable?

When an employee's performance is below fully successful, the quantity and quality of the employee's work under the element are not adequate for the position. Work products arrive late or often require major revision because they are incomplete or inaccurate in content. The employee fails to apply adequate technical knowledge to complete the work. Either the knowledge applied cannot produce the needed products, or it produces technically inadequate products or results. Lack of adherence to required procedures, instructions, and formats contributes to inadequate work products. Planning is inadequate, critical work remains incomplete or is unacceptably late. Lack of attention to priorities causes delays or inadequacies in essential work or the employee concentrated on incidental matters.

The employee's behavior obstructs the successful completion of the work by lack of cooperation with clients, supervisor, and/or coworkers, or by loss of credibility due to irresponsible speech or work activity. Communication failures interfere with completion of work.

In dealing with special projects, the employee either sacrifices essential regular work or fails to complete the projects. The employee fails to adapt to changes in priorities, procedures, or program direction and, therefore, cannot operate adequately in relation to changing requirements.

## **Performance Problem?**

Having to decide between an Outstanding, a Superior, or a Fully Successful rating sometimes isn't the difficulty. When one of your employees seems to have a problem with performance, it can be much more unpleasant. When you determine that an employee's performance is at an unacceptable level in one or more critical elements, you are required to inform the employee in writing, provide the employee a reasonable