

# Supervisor's Guide to Performance Reviews

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## **Supervisor's Guide to Performance Reviews**

### **Introduction: Performance Reviews**

The Performance Review is one element of the Performance Management process. It provides a foundation for measuring and communicating work performance, a basis for individual development, and enables employees to maximize their contributions to the organization. Its primary purposes are evaluation, communications, and development. Performance data is collected throughout the year to establish a basis upon which established goals and performance can be measured. It is also a planning tool, wherein performance criteria for the next year are set. Finally, it is a constructive process that acknowledges the performance of employees.

### **Benefits of the Performance Review Process**

Provides comprehensive review criteria

Identifies the performance elements needed for any classified or non-classified job at WLU. Note that two of these elements may be tailored to the individual employee's job.

- Identifies six key supervisory competencies
- Clarifies expectations
- Improves communication
- Makes performance feedback available
- Reviews existing goals and sets new goals
- Supplies developmental opportunities
- Is completed for all employees

Makes available a specific action plan on how to strengthen skills and how to improve

Uses SMART criteria

Emphasizes essential follow-up

### **The Performance Review Process**

#### **1. Prepare**

- Review the employee's Job Description
- Review the employee's pre-review form
- Complete the performance review form

#### **2. Discuss**

- Conduct a performance-focused discussion (See Do's and Don'ts)

#### **3. Follow-up**

- Review, update, and monitor professional development plan
- Review status of goals
- Provide regular performance feedback

## Performance Review Process

### Prepare:

1. Provide the employee with an Employee Pre-Review Form approximately two weeks prior to the performance discussion. This should be completed by the employee and will be incorporated into the review meeting.
  - a. The employee should return the pre-review form at least one week prior to the review discussion
  - b. Schedule a performance review meeting with the employee

### Discuss (during the Performance Review meeting):

2. **Discuss the Employee Pre-Review Form** with the employee.
3. The results achieved for **Goals, Objectives, Projects, and Assignments** for the Current Evaluation Period will be review (if applicable to this employee)
4. The **Performance Ratings** section addresses the following ten University-wide Core Performance Elements:

<i>Job Knowledge</i>	<i>Customer Service</i>	<i>Teamwork</i>
<i>Accountability</i>	<i>Quality of Work</i>	<i>Quantity of Work</i>
<i>Communications</i>	<i>Resourcefulness</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>

*Interpersonal Relations/Diversity*

In addition, optional job-specific performance elements may be included. The rating for each of the above elements is categorized as one of the following:

<i>Valued Performer</i>	<i>Substantially Exceeds</i>
<i>Exceeds Requirements</i>	<i>Requirements Needs Improvement</i>

Most employees' overall rating will be that of a Valued Performer.

Employees in positions with Supervisory/Managerial/Project Leadership responsibilities will be reviewed on these additional six Performance Elements:

<i>Strategic Thinking</i>	<i>Leadership</i>
<i>Planning and Organizing</i>	<i>Staff Development</i>
<i>Performance Management</i>	<i>Employee Performance Reviews</i>

5. **Goals, Objectives, Projects, and Assignments** for the Future Evaluation Period will be established. Each item should use SMART goals criteria for measurement purposes.

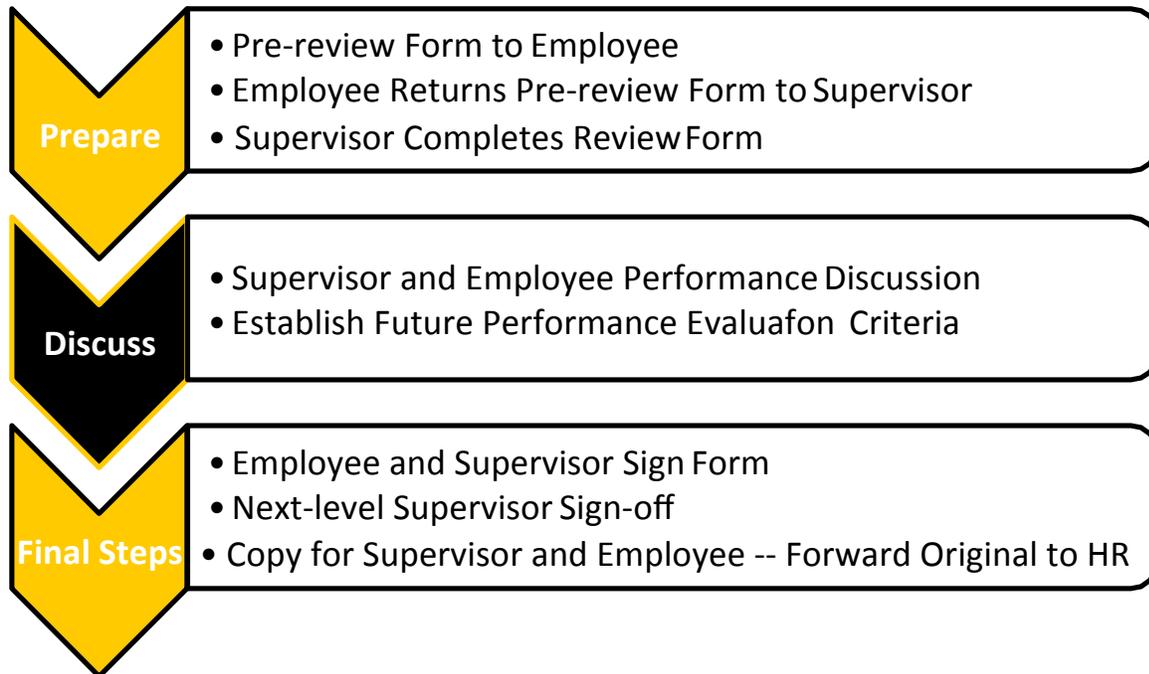
#### **Final Steps**

6. The employee will have an opportunity to review the **Performance Review Form** during the discussion and to make comments about the review. Employees have up to 10 days to offer comments they want to include on the performance review form.
7. The employee and the supervisor will sign the **Performance Review Form**.
8. The Next Level Supervisor will sign the **Performance Review Form**.
9. Copies of the finalized **Performance Review Form (with all signatures)** will be made for the employee and the supervisor (department).
10. The original Performance Review Form will be forwarded to Human Resources for recording and filing.

#### **Follow-up (Performance Management)**

11. Follow-up throughout the next year on these items:
  - Ongoing performance feedback
  - Goals (review and discuss at least on a quarterly basis; more often as needed)

## Performance Review Process: Flow Chart



### Follow-Up



## Performance Review Discussion: Do's and Don'ts

Review the list below when preparing for the performance review meeting

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain the process to employees. For Example, you may choose to introduce it during a staff meeting.</li><li>• Let the employee know well in advance when the discussion will take place.</li><li>• Ask the employee to complete the pre-review form and return it at least one week in advance.</li><li>• Plan for the meeting- prepare your evaluation and have examples of areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.</li><li>• Review the overall rating with your supervisor before meeting with the employee.</li><li>• Secure a private office to conduct the meeting.</li><li>• Review the Job Description prior to the meeting and with the employee.</li><li>• Start on a positive note. Make the employee feel that this is a supportive/coaching decision.</li><li>• Allow the employee to provide his or her feedback during the meeting.</li><li>• Focus on performance, not personality.</li><li>• Rate the employee honestly.</li><li>• Use active listening skills.</li><li>• End the discussion on a positive note.</li><li>• Ask the employee to sign the form (unless you agreed to make changes discussed during the meeting). If the employee refused to sign the document, make a note on the employee signature line that reads, "Employee refused to sign," then date and initial it.</li><li>• Follow-up on any action items (including the development plan, performance improvement plan, and SMART goals and objectives).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take phone calls during the meeting.</li><li>• Allow for interruptions during the meeting.</li><li>• Criticize the employee.</li><li>• Allow yourself to fall victim of one of the rating errors.</li><li>• Surprise the employee with information on the performance review.</li><li>• Compare one employee to another.</li><li>• Conduct the performance review discussion in an office cube or other non-confidential area.</li></ul>

## Active Listening

It is important that supervisors actively listen to their employees' comments. Six essential active listening skills are as follows:

1. **Paying attention.** A primary goal of active listening is to set a comfortable tone and allow time and opportunity for the other person to think and speak. Pay attention to your frame of mind, your body language and the other person. Be present, focused on the moment and operate from a place of respect.
2. **Withholding judgment.** Active listening requires an open mind. As a leader, you need to be open to new ideas, perspectives, and possibilities. Even when good listeners have strong views, they suspend judgment, hold criticism and avoid arguing or selling their point right away. Tell yourself, "I'm here to understand how the other person sees the world. IT is not time to judge or give my view."
3. **Reflecting.** Learn to mirror the other person's information and emotions by paraphrasing key points. You don't need to agree or disagree. Reflecting is a way to indicate that you heard and understand. Don't assume that you understand correctly or that the other person knows you've heard him.
4. **Clarifying.** Use questions to double-check on any issue that is ambiguous or unclear. Open-ended, clarifying, and probing questions are important tools.
  - Open-ended questions draw people out and encourage them to expand their ideas (i.e., "What are your thoughts on..." or "What led you to this conclusion?")
  - Clarifying questions ensure understanding and clear up confusion. Any "who, what, where, when, how or why question can be a clarifying question, but those are not the only possibilities. You might say, "I must have missed something. Could you repeat that?" or "I am not sure that I got what you were saying. Can you explain it again another way?"
  - By asking probing questions, you invite reflection and a thoughtful response instead of telling others what to do. You might ask, for example, "More specifically, what are some of the things you've tried?" or "What is your own leadership style that might be contributing to the trouble with the team?"
5. **Summarizing.** Restating key themes as the conversation proceeds confirms and solidifies your grasp of the other person's point of view. It also helps both parties to be clear on mutual responsibilities and follow-up. Briefly summarize what you have understood as you listened (i.e., "It sounds as if your main concern is..." or "These seem to be the key points you have expressed..."). You could also ask the other person to summarize.
6. **Sharing.** Active listening is first about understanding the other person, then about being understood. As you gain a clearer understanding of the other person's perspective, you can then introduce your ideas, feelings and suggestions and address any concerns. You might talk about a similar experience you had or share an idea that was triggered by a comment made previously in the conversation. This is a great list to learn and practice. As a leader, effective communication is an essential leadership practice and active listening is the foundation of effective communication.

## SMART Goal-Setting

### Specific

Goals should be straightforward and emphasize what you want to happen. Specifics help us to focus our efforts and clearly define what we are going to do.

Specifics encompass the what, why, and how of the SMART Model. Diagnostic questions include the following:

- *What* are you going to do? Use action words such as direct, organize, coordinate, lead, develop, plan, build, etc. Is the outcome clear?
- *Why* is this important to do at this time? What do you want to ultimately accomplish?
- *How* are you going to do it? (By...)

Ensure the goals you set are very **specific, clear, and easy to understand**. For example, instead of setting a goal to lose weight or be healthier (vague definitions when trying to implement action), set a specific to lose one inch off your waistline or to walk two miles in a specific number of minutes.

### Measurable

**If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.** In the broadest sense, the entire goal statement is a measure for the project; if the goal is accomplished, then it is a success. However, there are usually several short-term or small measurements that can be built into the goal.

Choose a goal with measurable progress, **so you can see the change occur**. How will you see when you reach your goal? Be specific. "I want to read three books of 100 pages or more before my birthday" shows the specific target to be measured. "I want to be a good reader" is not as measurable.

**Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress** toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to the continued effort required to reach your goals.

**SMART Goals:**  
**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**chievable  
**R**esults-Oriented  
**T**ime-based

## Achievable

You probably won't commit to achieving goals you set which are too far out of your reach. Although you may start with the best of intentions, the knowledge that it's too much for you means your subconscious will keep reminding you of this fact and will stop you from even giving it your best.

**A goal needs to stretch you slightly so you feel you can do it and it will need a real commitment from you.** For instance, if you aim to lose 20 pounds in one week, we all know that isn't achievable. But setting a goal to lose one pound the first week, and subsequently aiming to lose a second pound the next week will keep it achievable for you. It is also measurable. The feeling of success which this brings helps you to remain motivated.

## Results-Oriented

Regardless of the measures selected as the strategic targets/objectives, the organization must be focused on the results the measure represent and not just on undertaking the activities and doing. **“Doing” or “making and effort” isn't sufficient – results are required.**

An ability to instill a high level of commitment to the strategic success of the organization and all its components creates an atmosphere where there is a constructive pressure to achieve. This pressure to achieve must be accompanied by a culture that mandates “doing the right things” – operationally, financially, ethically, and at all other decision points. Achieving results at any cost, even sacrificing the future to hit today's targets, is destructive to the overall intent and long-term vision of the organization.

When an organization is able to achieve performance consistently and to reach its desired outcomes, then momentum builds within the organization and beyond. High performance begets high performance. The expectation of the organization becomes success. Each person's role and the expectation to perform provide motivation and support for moving the organization forward.

### **Examples of results-oriented objectives:**

Based on customer results, I will develop an action plan to address key areas of dissatisfaction and achieve 2% improvement in customer satisfaction, measured through our customer evaluations, by November 1, 2017.

Develop a plan and begin implementing the plan no later than 50 days after receiving the deficiency report. For example, “Develop a plan that rates our customer service and begin implementing the plan no later than 50 days after receiving a valid report about customer complaints.

## Time based

Set a timeframe for the goal: for next week, in three months, by June 30, etc. Putting an end point on your goal gives you a clear target to work toward. It also makes the goal measurable.

If you don't set a time, the commitment is too vague. It tends not to happen because you feel you can start at any time. Without a time limit, there's no urgency to start taking action now.

Time must be measurable and attainable.

### SMART Goals: "Line-of-Sight" Goal Setting

A vital component of high performance is clarity of expectations. Every employee's goals must align with the strategic goals of the University and the department. In addition, they should also be in alignment with the supervisor's goals and his or her supervisor. This is called "line-of-sight" goal-setting, in which the connection from the employee to University goals is clearly defined.

- Employees and their managers are clear about responsibilities, so misunderstanding or confusion about roles is minimized or eliminated;
- Employees understand how their work impacts and benefits the University;
- Managers can better allocate resources for projects and ongoing tasks;
- Energy and resources can be focused on the most pertinent priorities; and,
- Redundancy and, therefore, inefficiency can be minimized or eliminated.

Employees must understand their roles, what is expected of them in those roles, and how they contribute to WLU's success. Line-of-sight goals have the following benefits:

While the supervisor has final approval, every effort should be made to establish goals with employees through a collaborative process. The more the employee buys into the process, the more successful goal completion becomes.

- ✓ Establish mutually agreed-to goals that add value.
- ✓ Recommend and recognize behaviors that are aligned with organizational business plans.
- ✓ Establish milestone review dates, such as the following:
  - Phases of software installation completed by (month, date, year)
  - Number or percentage of departments or employees trained
  - Number of buildings or vehicles serviced
  - Number of new employees recruited

"Employees should understand how their work impacts and benefits the University"

## Performance Descriptors

### **Valued Performer:**

Performance meets the defined job expectations. The employee is doing the job at the level expected for employees in this position and is doing a good job. Skill level is competent. Key behaviors are acceptable. The good performance is due to the employee's own effort and skills. This rating will be used for most employees.

Valued Performer-Example: Customer Service Employee greets customers promptly and in a friendly manner. Customers are addressed by name.

### **Exceeds Requirements:**

Performance meets the defined job expectations and frequently exceeds job expectations. Results are consistently above average. The employee consistently does good work, regularly going beyond what is expected of employees in this job. The employee is generally doing a very good job. Skill level and key behaviors are above average. This rating is reserved for the exceptional performer and requires written justification.

Exceeds Requirements – Example: Customer Service Employee personally telephones customers when the repair is complete. In order to assure customer satisfaction, employee also makes a follow-up call two weeks after the customer has the repaired item.

### **Substantially Exceeds Requirements:**

Performance is far above the defined job expectation. Results are consistently excellent. The employee consistently does outstanding work, regularly going far beyond what is expected of employees in this job. Skill level and key behaviors are exemplary. This rating is reserved for those few distinguished performers and requires written justification.

Substantially Exceed Requirements – Example: Customer Service On employee's own initiative, develops a direct mail and online survey in order to analyze customer satisfaction and solicit input for additional services requested by customers.

### **Needs Improvement:**

Performance does not fully meet job expectation. Performance is below average. Skill level indicates need for improvement. Key behaviors are less than acceptable. It requires a written action plan for improvement with specific goals and timeframes.

This rating can also be used for a new employee who is still within his/her probationary period and is still learning certain aspects of the job.

Needs improvement – Example: Customer Service Employee makes follow-up phone calls on only 40 percent of customers. Job standards indicate a 90 percent rate is expected.

**Goal** (for future evaluation period) – Example: Utilizing the current hard-copy inventory as a starting point, develop an electronic inventory management system in Excel for all repair supplies. The first phase should include all hardware items, (nails, needles, tools). The third phase should include “miscellaneous.” Each phase should be completed in a two-month period. Each item in the inventory should include the item name, item number, description, extended cost, and a low level, or “time to order” indicator. A user’s manual should be included and all repair personnel should be trained prior to implementation. The system should be tested for two months prior to implementation. All of the above should be implemented before (month, date, year).

**SMART Goals:**

<b><u>S</u>pecific</b>	Each phase should be completed in a two-month period. Each item in the inventory should include the item name, item number, description, extended cost, and a low-level, or “time to order” indicator. A user’s manual should be included and all repair personnel should be trained prior to implementation. The system should be tested for two months prior to implementation.
<b><u>M</u>easurable</b>	The first phase should include all hardware items, (nails, needles, tools). The second phase should include all repair materials, (leather, cloth, rubber, fabric, glue). The third phase should include “miscellaneous.” Each phase should be completed in a two-month period. Each item in the inventory should include the item name, item number, description, extended cost, and a low-level, or “time to order” indicator.
<b><u>A</u>chievable</b>	Based on the resources available, decide if the goal is achievable within the project scope and specific time frame.
<b><u>R</u>esults-oriented</b>	Develop an electronic inventory management system in Excel for all repair supplies
<b><u>T</u>ime-based</b>	All of the above should be implemented before (month, date, year).

## University-Wide Core Performance Elements

**Job Knowledge:** Understands job procedures, policies, and responsibilities; exhibits ability to learn and apply new skills; keeps up-to-date on current developments; acts as a resource person to others.

**Customer Service:** Understand the needs of internal and external customers; responds promptly to customer needs in courteous manner; handles conflicts appropriately; maintains University good will at all times; commits to doing the best job possible.

**Teamwork:** Exhibits flexibility, adaptability, and spirit of cooperation in the work environment; balances team and individual responsibilities; shares information appropriately with others.

**Accountability:** Takes responsibility for own actions; completes assignments and projects on schedule; reviews projects and assignments, monitoring resources and budgetary matters to ensure cost savings measures are in place.

**Quality of Work:** Completes work product thoroughly, accurately and according to specifications; produces useful results; displays commitment to process improvement; applies feedback to improve performance.

**Communications:** Communicates in a clear and concise manner both verbally and in writing; exhibits good listening and comprehension skills; uses appropriate communication methods.

**Proactivity/Initiative:** Develops new ideas and can handle new situations; anticipates and appropriately handles unforeseen difficulties successfully; seeks increased responsibilities; asks for help when needed; uses resources effectively.

**Flexibility:** Maintains a high level of performance under varying conditions of managing multiple priorities or uncertainty; adapts to new situation in a positive manner.

**Interpersonal Relations:** Treats others with respect and courtesy; Works effectively and cooperatively with others; respects individual differences and perspectives.

**Performance Elements #11 and #12 for Job-Specific Measures:** This space is designed to accommodate department-specific performance elements not covered by one of the performance elements listed on the form (which may be unique to this employee's job) as well as measures related to compliance such as FERPA, HIPAA, NCAA, ethics, safety, state and federal regulations. This will reinforce accountability for these measures, which should be identified and discussed with the employee at the beginning of the performance review period.

## Supervisory/Managerial/Project Leadership Performance Elements

These performance elements are used in addition to the 12 elements listed in the previous chart, and are used to measure the performance of supervisors, managers, or those with project leadership

**Strategic Thinking:** Understands how one's job supports the University's mission, vision and values; understands and views situations from a broad perspective; understands the long-term higher organizational implications on the overall institutional system.

**Leadership:** Provides clear direction and purpose while recognizing diversity as a source of strength; models ethical workplace behavior; creates a productive, creative environment in which individuals strive for quality of service; influences the actions of individuals and groups to obtain desired results; uses analytical skills in order to assess situations and predict outcomes.

**Planning and Organizing:** Develops and manages to budget; develops and manages to strategic business plan; organizes and manages human, time, financial, physical, and other resources for unit.

**Staff Development:** Staffs unit with appropriate numbers and skills mix, identify training needs and suggest training programs to continue personal and professional growth; supports employees in contributing to their maximum potential.

**Performance Management:** Initiates regular discussions with subordinates and communicates behavioral expectations and performance standards; provides on-going feedback and coaching, recognizing high or improved performance and works with employees to correct performance issues.

**Employee Performance Reviews:** Gives prompt feedback to employees complying with performance review guidelines; completes performance reviews in a timely fashion, which will be considered an important factor in the rating of this performance element.

## Common Rating Errors

### **Leniency**

Giving everyone high ratings regardless of actual performance, in an attempt to avoid conflict or to make yourself look good.

### **Central Tendency**

Clumping or clustering employees in the middle performance categories in an attempt to avoid extremes. Usually caused by a desire not to call attention to oneself or by a misapplied sense of “democracy.”

### **Recency**

Failing to take into account the entire evaluation period and focusing on a recent performance episode, positively or negatively. Base your evaluation on representative information from the whole evaluation period to avoid this error.

### **Halo Effect**

Letting one favored or strong trait or work factor influence all other areas of performance, resulting in an unduly high overall performance rating. Making inappropriate generalizations from one aspect of an employee’s performance to other areas of that person’s performance.

### **Horns Effect**

Allowing one disfavored or weak trait or work factor to overwhelm other, or more positive performance elements, resulting in an unfairly low overall performance rating.

### **Contrast**

Evaluating an employee in relation to another. Evaluations should be based on how well the employee performed in relation to his/her duties, goals and stated performance standards-actual performance compared to expected performance.

### **Past Performance**

Rating on past performance rather than present performance.

### **Biased Rating**

Allowing personal feelings toward an employee to influence rating.

### **High Potential**

Confusing potential with performance.

### **Similar to Me**

Similar to me and therefore feeling of comfort and compatibility. Don’t rate employees who are similar to you more highly just based on the similarity.

### **Association**

Evaluation influenced by employee’s associations rather than performance.

### **Other Suggestions for the Performance Review:**

- Make objective statements
- Consider the totality of the employee's performance
- Utilize records you have kept, including specific performance examples
- Establish milestones for progress reviews
- Discuss specific performance issues and behaviors objectively
- Consider that inflated performance ratings, once recorded, cannot be changed
- Maintain clear and open communication channels
- Remember that specific comments should avoid any connotations which are connected to age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status

-Adapted from the Society for Human Resource Management

### **Guidelines for Feedback: Positive or Corrective**

Feedback is essential in Performance Management. When employees work competently, they should be praised and encouraged to surpass their current skill and performance levels. Employees who are not functioning at their expected levels should also receive feedback that helps to coach them toward better performance. Good performance should be rewarded with positive feedback that motivates them to continue in that direction, and employees who need to function at a higher level should also receive feedback that helps to prevent chronic work problems.

*"Good performance should be rewarded with positive feedback"*

In either case, positive or corrective, providing immediate feedback and documentation are keys to success in the performance management process.

## Focus on the Specific and Observable

Feelings and emotions may point supervisors in the right direction or they may not. In either case, they have no place in feedback. If it isn't observable, it did not, for the purposes of feedback, occur. The focus should be on actions and behaviors that can be seen, heard, or are otherwise tangible: the employee's performance.

When preparing to give positive or corrective feedback, look at qualitative attributes that the employee exhibits in daily performance.

### Examples of Qualitative Attributes:

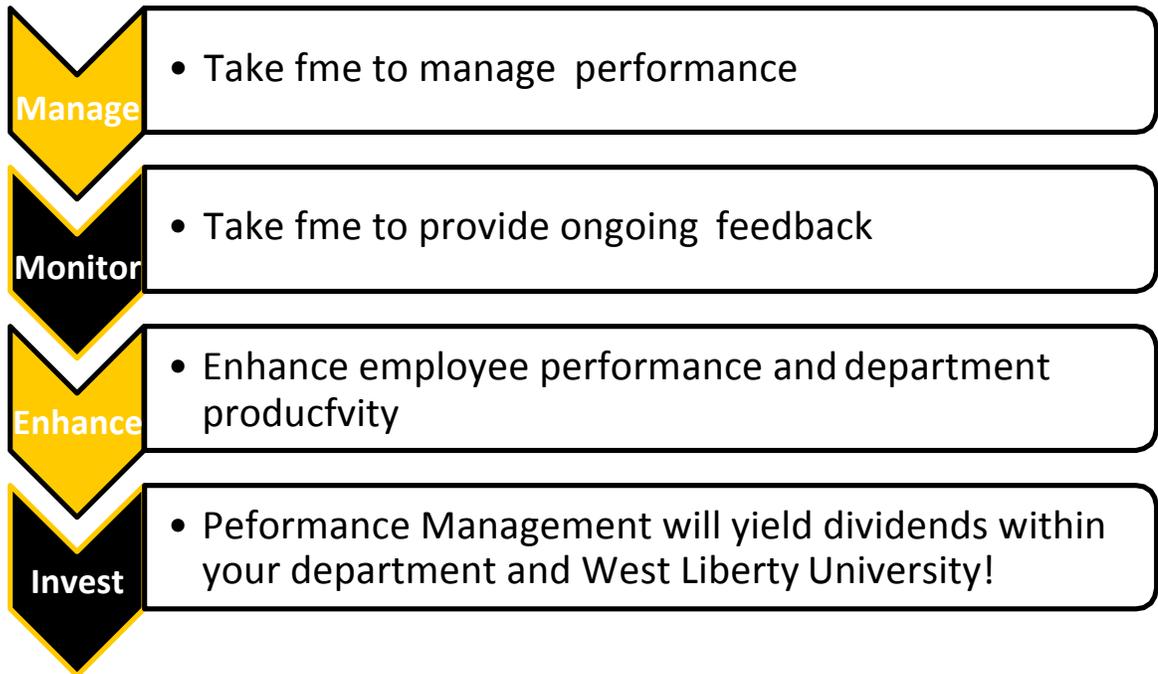
Adaptability to Change	Analytical skills	Aptitude and competence
Communication	Creativity	Decision-making
Dependability	Initiative	Judgment
Logic skills	Loyalty	Motivation to accomplish tasks & goals
Mentoring	Negotiating	Persuasive skills
Presentation	Problem-solving	Professionalism
Responsibility	Standards/ethics	Quality of work
Sales skills	Self-improvement	Writing skills

When giving feedback, remember that excellent performance is a habit, as is poor performance. The easiest way to form an employee's work patterns is to immediately provide feedback on observable behavior, document the discussion, and use the documentation in the performance review.

Adapted from Performance Appraisal Phrase Book, Sandler and Keefe

*"Remember that excellent performance is a habit..."*

## Remember...



For questions or assistance, please contact  
Brian Schamp  
Human Resources Generalist Senior  
304-336-8288  
[brian.schamp@westliberty.edu](mailto:brian.schamp@westliberty.edu)