



**Book Discussion Guide**  
***Painless Performance Evaluations:***  
***A Practical Approach for***  
***Managing Day-to-Day***  
***Employee Performance***



*Management Education Group, Inc.*

[www.managementeducationgroup.com](http://www.managementeducationgroup.com)

## About the Author

# Marnie E. Green

Marnie Green's goal, via her Management Education Group, Inc. is to guide organizational leaders through their workplace challenges. To accomplish this objective, her firm provides valuable step-by-step programs and facilitation services that create more effective leaders and team members. As a veteran human resource developer, she promises that participants will walk away from the programs she presents with practical ideas and skills.

Green is the author of ***Painless Performance Evaluations: A Practical Approach to Managing Day to Day Employee Performance***, published by Pearson Education. The book was a finalist in the Best Books USA awards in the management category and the winner of the coveted Glyph Award for Best Business Career Book.

Green's clients include dozens of corporations, start-ups, and government agencies including the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the cities of Las Vegas, NV and San Jose, CA, Wells Fargo and Troon Golf. Green speaks, consults, and trains on an international basis, with clients on four continents.

For more information about Green or the services of the Management Education Group, Inc. e-mail us at [mgreen@managementeducationgroup.com](mailto:mgreen@managementeducationgroup.com) or call 480-705-9394.

---

<http://www.managementeducationgroup.com>

---

## Resource Information

This workbook is intended to supplement ***Painless Performance Evaluations: A Practical Approach to Managing Day-to-Day Employee Performance*** by Marnie E. Green, Management Education Group, Inc.

***Painless Performance Evaluations: A Practical Approach to Managing Day-to-Day Employee Performance*** can be ordered from the publisher, Pearson Education at <http://www.pearsonhighered.com> or at <http://www.managementeducationgroup.com>.

© Management Education Group, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this document or the related files may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the author.

# Suggestions for Using this Book Discussion Guide

This guide is designed to be used by groups interested in exploring performance management and its implications on organizations and individual managers. Here are some tips for using this guide effectively:

1. Determine who will take part in the group discussions. Ideally the attendees will have management responsibility or aspirations to be managers. Additionally, human resource professionals will also benefit from participating in these discussions.
2. Use this guide as a starting point for meaningful discussions at management team meetings or training sessions. Taking one chapter at a time, the group can fully explore the tools and techniques of effective performance management in ten meetings or less.
3. Identify a moderator who will guide the discussion of the group. The moderator should ensure that every group member participates. The moderator can also pose additional questions to encourage more in-depth consideration of the material.
4. Disagreement is good! It will spark the greatest of conversations and can often lead to an understanding of more potent and complex issues.
5. Once the group has fully answered the prepared questions, allow time for open discussion. You may be surprised at the ideas and suggestions the group generates after exploring each chapter.
6. Use the book discussion to spark discussion about your organization's performance management system. These conversations may lead to suggestions for revising or changing your organization's approach to performance evaluations.

# Chapter One

---

## Introduction to Performance Management

### Chapter Notes

Chapter one provides an introduction to the concept of performance management and the reasons for its importance in organizational life. The focus of this chapter is on the variety of uses for performance management activities including the cascading of organizational objectives, enhanced supervisor/employee communication, documented human resource activities, and legal documentation.

### Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the concept of performance management to someone who had never heard the term?
2. What are the benefits of performance management to the organization?
3. What are the benefits of performance management to supervisors?
4. What are the benefits of performance management to employees?
5. What drives supervisors to avoid or put off their duties related to performance management?
6. What results has your organization experienced when performance management activities are ignored?
7. What is the relationship between performance management and employee discipline?



# Chapter Two

## Navigating the Performance Management Process

### Chapter Notes

Chapter two provides a detailed look at the steps involved in effective performance management. Through the use of the performance management cycle, each step is described. The continuous, cyclical nature of performance management is highlighted in this chapter. Also, the importance of a standardized rating form and the link between pay and performance is discussed.

### Discussion Questions

1. What variations on the performance management cycle have you experienced in your working life?
2. Which element of the performance management cycle is most important in your view and why?
3. Which element of the performance management cycle is the most challenging for you to implement and why?
4. Who plays the most critical role in the performance management process and why?
5. What can a human resources department or an organizational leader do to show support for the concept of performance management in an organization?
6. How do you feel about linking pay increases to the outcome of a performance evaluation?



# Chapter Three

## Clarifying Performance Expectations and Setting Goals

### Chapter Notes

Chapter three focuses on the need for a supervisor to make his/her expectations clear to employees. Through the use of the SMAART acronym, managers are shown how to write performance goals that are clear, specific, and measurable. The chapter also offers examples of the kinds of goals that are appropriate in an organizational setting including “essence of the job” goals, project goals, professional development goals, and performance improvement goals.

### Discussion Questions

1. What role does the formal job description play in establishing performance expectations for employees?
2. How can a supervisor be sure that an employee understands their expectations clearly?
3. What are the potential outcomes if performance expectations are not made clear?
4. How can a supervisor make performance goals more measurable?
5. How can a supervisor use the goal setting process to help employees understand the organization’s objectives and plans?
6. What are the benefits of thorough performance planning and goal setting?
7. What are the risks of not taking time to plan performance and set goals with an employee?

# Chapter Four

## Documenting Performance Fairly and Legally

### Chapter Notes

Chapter four emphasizes the need to keep complete, accurate, and factual documentation of employee performance. The reasons for effective documentation are explored and the elements of complete documentation are presented. The use of a performance log is advocated as a tool for making documentation a part of the supervisor's day to day routine. The chapter includes numerous tips and ideas for creating a system to help the supervisor document more effectively.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are the consequences if a supervisor does not keep adequate documentation about an employee's performance?
2. How can a supervisor ensure that he/she is keeping an adequate amount of documentation?
3. What are the potential consequences of keeping medical information in the supervisor's working file?
4. What methods have you used to keep effective records about employee performance?
5. How can technology be used to assist a supervisor in keeping effective documentation?



# Chapter Five

---

## Making Performance Management a Priority

### Chapter Notes

Chapter five emphasizes the need for supervisors to have a routine when it comes to performance management. The performance management routine should include regular, individual meetings with employees, frequent documentation, coaching, and support.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are the benefits to the supervisor of having a reliable performance management routine?
2. What are the benefits to the employee of having a reliable performance management routine?
3. How can technology be leveraged to help supervisors perform their performance management duties?
4. What advice would you give to a supervisor who says that he just doesn't have time to have all these meetings and to keep all these records?
5. What is the risk to the supervisor, the employee, and the organization if a supervisor does not place a high priority on performance management? What are the potential results of a lack of attention to performance management?

# Chapter Six

## Identifying and Addressing Performance Issues

### Chapter Notes

Chapter six addresses the important skill of discussing performance challenges face-to-face with an employee. The chapter explores the difference between true job-related performance issues and personal pet peeves the supervisor may have. It also differentiates between employee attitudes and employee behaviors and emphasizes the need to focus on behaviors when addressing employee performance. This chapter offers a format for conducting performance-related discussions and encourages the supervisor to involve the employee in the problem solving process.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are the potential consequences if a supervisor addresses an employee about their attitude rather than behaviors?
2. How can supervisors differentiate between legitimate performance issues and their personal pet peeves?
3. What advice would you give to a supervisor who is preparing to conduct a performance-related discussion with an employee?
4. What key principles are involved in conducting effective performance-related discussions?
5. What kinds of questions might a supervisor ask of the employee during a performance-related discussion? Give examples.
6. How can a supervisor gain the employee's buy-in to solutions developed during a performance-related discussion?



# Chapter Seven

## Rating Performance Objectively

### Chapter Notes

This chapter addresses the considerations that a supervisor must make when assigning ratings to an employee's performance. Assuming the performance evaluation form has a rating scale that has been prescribed by the organization, the supervisor is required to interpret the scale and apply it to the employee's job in order to assess the performance. This chapter presents a framework around which a supervisor can interpret the rating scales and communicate those interpretations with employees. It emphasizes the need to describe "what it will take" to earn each rating that is shown on the evaluation form.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the value of an overall performance rating to the employee? To the organization?
2. What advice would you give to supervisors who are asked by employees, "What will it take to earn this rating?"
3. What response would you give to a supervisor who says, "It's not possible to earn the highest level of rating on our performance evaluation form. No one is that good!"?
4. What legal pitfalls must be avoided when defining performance for each rating level?
5. How can a supervisor involve employees in helping to define performance that falls under each rating category?
6. What advice would you give to a supervisor who is faced with an employee who does not agree with the supervisor's overall rating of the employee?

# Chapter Eight

## Writing the Performance Evaluation Document

### Chapter Notes

This chapter focuses on the skills necessary to write an effective performance evaluation document. The use of an employee self-evaluation is suggested to gain employee buy-in and input to the evaluation process. The chapter also provides tools for writing performance-related comments, including a formula for describing behavior that needs improvement. Finally, this chapter provides examples of effectively written performance evaluation comments and explores the strengths of each example.

### Discussion Questions

1. What can supervisors do to avoid the natural procrastination that accompanies the task of writing a performance evaluation? What advice would you give?
2. What are examples of the kinds of performance documentation you have used as input when writing a performance evaluation?
3. How can customer input be used in preparing a performance evaluation?
4. What are the benefits of having an employee complete a self-evaluation prior to the official performance evaluation?
5. What are the risks of having an employee complete a self-evaluation prior to the official performance evaluation?
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of writing a performance evaluation document in the conversational, second person “you” voice?
7. This chapter recommends that references to medical conditions should not be made in the official performance evaluation document. Why?
8. How can co-worker input be used in preparing the performance evaluation document?
9. How can a supervisor ensure that the employee finds “no surprises” when they read the performance evaluation document?



# Chapter Nine

## Conducting the Evaluation Meeting

### Chapter Notes

Chapter nine prepares managers to conduct the face-to-face performance evaluation discussion with an employee. The chapter emphasizes three critical concepts: there should be no surprises, the employee should be encouraged to contribute to the discussion, and the tone of the conversation should be future-focused. In order to apply these concepts, managers are presented with a variety of open-ended, probing questions that can be used to elicit the employee's participation during the discussion. Finally, a format for conducting the performance evaluation meeting is presented and managers are encouraged to follow the format in order to guide the conversation to a fruitful conclusion.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the most challenging part of conducting performance evaluation meetings?
2. How can a supervisor involve the employee in the performance evaluation discussion?
3. How can a supervisor best prepare to conduct a performance evaluation meeting?
4. What steps can a supervisor take to ensure that performance evaluation meetings are positive and productive?
5. What advice would you give to a supervisor who says, "My employee always wants to discuss other people during the performance evaluation discussion?"
6. The formula for conducting a painless performance evaluation suggests that the employee should have the last word, even if the supervisor does not agree. Do you agree with this approach? Why or why not?
7. What steps should a supervisor take if the employee does not agree with the ratings expressed on the performance evaluation?



# Chapter Ten

## Encouraging Employees to Participate in the Performance Management Process

### Chapter Notes

This chapter focuses on the need to involve employees in the management of their own performance and provides tools and ideas for encouraging employees to participate. The chapter encourages supervisors to examine their personal attitudes about employee participation. It also provides several tools that can be given to employees to help them understand the role that they can play in the process. Employees are encouraged to keep their own performance records in a “me” file and are given guidance on how to best use the employee comments section of the performance evaluation form.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important for employees to be involved in the performance management process?
2. How can a supervisor set the tone and encourage employees to take a positive and productive approach to their own performance evaluations?
3. What steps can a supervisor take to encourage an employee who has nothing to say to provide comments on the performance evaluation form?
4. If an employee refuses to provide input to the supervisor or to write comments on the performance evaluation form, is that acceptable? Why or why not?
5. What do supervisors do to squelch employee input into the performance management process?