POSITIVE APPROACHES TO RESOLVING PERFORMANCE AND CONDUCT PROBLEMS

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

1/2-DAY COURSE

HRDQ®

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Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

Course timing

Chapter One: Finding and Assessing Performance Problems

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Recognizing the nonperformer or problem employee	10
	Four reasons for poor performance	15
	Confront performance problems early	10
	Creating clear documentation of problem employees	20

Chapter Two: Conducting Winning Confrontation Sessions

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Identify the outcomes you want from your nonperformer	15
	Dealing with your own emotions when you confront employees	10
	Approach confrontation without intimidation	5
	Run a successful confrontation session	15

Course timing (cont.)

Chapter Three: Setting and Communicating Realistic Standards

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Developing realistic standards	25
	Communicating clear standards	10
	Assessing standards for effectiveness	10
	Determining why standards aren't being met	10

Chapter Four: Obtaining Employee Commitment to High-Quality Performance

Type of Activity	Segment	Time
	Getting employees to buy into standards	10
	Strategies to enhance quality performance	10
	Identifying demotivators	10

Course timing (cont.)

Contents

Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

Define and identify problem employees or nonperformers

Assess and confront problem behaviors before more drastic measures need to be taken

Conduct a successful confrontation session

Develop and communicate standards that will ensure high quality performance

Create a plan for employee "buy-in" and determine what helps motivate your employees

Carry out disciplinary sessions that work for both you and your employees

Chapter **One**

FINDING AND ASSESSING PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

**Finding and assessing
performance problems**

HRDQ

Introduction: Many organizations have some sort of goal-setting plan, and many managers do some sort of coaching. However, when the situation gets sticky with employees not performing up to established goals, many managers become uncertain how to handle the situation effectively. Yelling at the employee or ignoring the situation are natural responses, but not the most effective ones.

This chapter will help managers recognize performance problems and give them skills to address the problem effectively. Go through the bullets regarding recognizing the nonperformer or problem employee.

Activity to introduce: Have participants fill in the various types of performance problems they run into at work. Some examples: Poor quality, not meeting deadlines, slow, inadequate skills, doesn't get along with others, excessive absenteeism, abusing privileges, insubordination, buck-passing/blaming others, creating bottlenecks, personal issues affecting work performance.

Recognizing the nonperformer or problem employee

Recognize problems and address them appropriately (so more drastic measures don't have to be taken).

Determine why standards aren't being met.

Generate buy-in from employees to meet performance standards.

Determine the specific actions that need to be taken.

Recognize and celebrate successes.

Defining performance problems

Instructions: List the types of issues and behaviors that constitute performance problems.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Look for obvious reasons first

Unclear expectations: Make certain employees know what is expected of them; performance gaps may be due to unclear expectations.

Insufficient resources: If an employee has insufficient resources (time, money, or access to required tools/material/information), no performance plan can correct the performance.

Inadequate feedback: An employee may simply need more ongoing feedback, not a formal performance improvement plan.

Reasons for nonperformance
- Unclear expectations
- Insufficient resources
- Inadequate feedback

Before addressing performance problems, first make certain there's not a simple explanation for any performance discrepancy. This page lists several reasons for poor performance or underperformance that can be corrected without a performance plan.

Unclear expectations: It is important to have clear, written expectations of your employees. This will be discussed further in the course. Note: Be certain that as a manager, you don't have any hidden agendas that would prevent the employee from accomplishing the desired performance.

In addition, employees may have certain mindsets that lead to performance problems. Some examples: They think their way is better, they think your way won't work, they think they already are doing it, they think something else is more important. Although these mindsets seem to belong to the employee, as a manager you actually can influence them with clear expectations, frequent coaching, and appropriate measurements.

Four reasons for poor performance

Don't know
> Does the employee have adequate training for the job?

Can't do
> Does the employee have the capability to do quality work?

Isn't allowed
> Does the employee have the necessary tools, systems, processes, and support to perform the job?

Won't do
> Does the employee have an interest in doing the work?

Performance problem	Possible solution
Don't know	❑ Assess knowledge gap ❑ Provide skills training ❑ Communicate more effectively ❑ Foster development through job shadowing, mentoring, etc.
Can't do	❑ Determine appropriate career path ❑ Identify opportunities for relocating ❑ Assess necessary steps for removal
Isn't allowed	❑ Improve processes ❑ Improve work flow and integration ❑ Control aspects of the work environment that the employee can't
Won't do	❑ Clarify roles and responsibilities ❑ Communicate specific expectations ❑ Determine motivators ❑ Identify consequences for nonperformance

Isn't allowed: An employee is required to book appointments using Outlook but doesn't have access to a computer.

Won't do: An employee feels that copying and filing aren't part of her responsibilities and refuses to do those tasks.

Four reasons for poor performance
- Don't know: An employee isn't scheduling training rooms in Outlook because she hasn't had training.
- Can't do: An employee has been assigned to work in an area that requires strong technical knowledge and the employee doesn't have the capacity to learn and understand the complexities of technology.

Four reasons for poor performance
- Isn't allowed: An employee is required to book appointments using Outlook but doesn't have access to a computer.
- Won't do: An employee feels that copying and filing aren't part of her responsibilities and refuses to do those tasks.

Activity: Ask four volunteers to stand. Request that the first person say the "Pledge of Allegiance" in Spanish. Most people don't know how to do this. Ask the second volunteer to say the "Pledge" backward—most people can't do this. Ask the third volunteer to say the "Pledge," but as they do, interrupt constantly and ask them to move to another part of the room, then ask them to speak louder—in essence, not allowing them to complete the task. Ask the fourth volunteer to go to the front reception area and greet an incoming customer by saying the "Pledge." Most people are unwilling to do this. This activity demonstrates categories of performance issues.

Examples: Don't know: an employee isn't scheduling training rooms in Outlook because she hasn't had training.
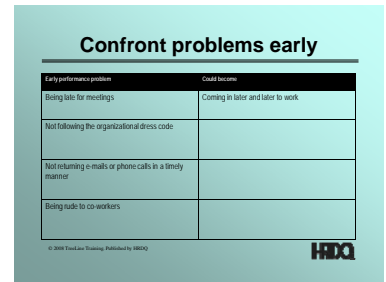
Can't do: An employee has been assigned to work in an area that requires strong technical knowledge and the employee doesn't have the capacity to learn and understand the complexities of technology.

Confront performance problems early

Early performance problem	Could become
Being late for meetings	Coming in later and later to work
Not following the organizational dress code	
Not returning e-mails or phone calls in a timely manner	
Being rude to coworkers	

Why confront problems early?

Prevent slowdown

Can focus on one behavior at a time

Prevent lower levels of performance from becoming standard

Avoid the "snowball effect" of small problems becoming major disciplinary issues

Strategies for confronting problems early

Use the intervention as an educational moment rather than a disciplinary session.

Remind the employee of the expected standards.

Be very specific in explaining one or two problem behaviors.

Use the confrontation to get to know your employee better and to create an atmosphere of openness and support.

If employers intervene when an employee's performance first becomes unacceptable, the discussions may serve as a "wake-up call" or "educational session." Unsatisfactory work performance can include the failure to complete work assignments or correct errors in a reasonable amount of time, inability or unwillingness to learn new tasks or skills, or to work well with other employees and customers.

Activity: Have participants work in groups or partners to brainstorm the effects of not addressing a simple problem early on by filling in the chart. Answers will vary, but stress the point that if problems are not confronted early on, they usually become bigger issues. Have participants volunteer some of their answers and write them in the blank chart on the PowerPoint Overhead.

Most performance problems can be resolved through early and effective communication between an employer and the employee. The employees may not even be aware of the change in their performance. Regardless, when employees' performances first start to slip, they are more likely to be open to discussing what needs to be done to improve performance. By working with poor performers earlier, employers can help employees improve without the negative consequences of threatening their jobs or taking other disciplinary action. More importantly, by addressing performance problems, employers signal to all employees that your business does not tolerate poor performance.

Creating clear documentation

Documentation needs special attention. While it is necessary to prove discipline is appropriate, it can also become damaging information in a lawsuit.

Creating clear documentation

- Does the action follow an employment agreement if one is in place?
- Has positive and negative performance been documented?
- Have all contractual procedures been met?
- Does the employee have any right to claim unequal treatment?
- Are reasons for action clearly documented and verified?
- Is the organization's position definitely defendable?
- Have all the employee's rights been taken into consideration?

Creating clear documentation of problem employees

Special considerations when documenting performance

Document the facts that show you acted fairly and properly

Do not document your feelings, speculations or concerns

Key events should be documented in every employee's file

Documentation of disciplinary action taken should be kept in the employee's personnel file in the HR office and in the manager's file and given to the employee

Language should be specific, and the tone should be corrective, not punitive

Activity: Change the vague language to specific, objective language

Vague	Specific
1. Lacks customer orientation	
2. Is chronically absent	
3. Work quality is poor	
4. Unmotivated	
5. Ignores customers	

Standards must be stated in the process of documenting and these standards must be fair and deemed necessary in the working environment. Action steps for improvement should be specifically spelled out and must be consistent. Finally, consequences must be stated and verification that the employee understood what those consequences would be must be in place.

It's critical that all managers know what is considered acceptable practice. Managers should work closely with HR at the first sign of any problem with an employee. This will ensure that the process is followed as needed.

Checklist

☐ Does the action follow an employment agreement if one is in place?

☐ Has positive and negative performance been documented?

☐ Have all contractual procedures been met?

☐ Does the employee have any right to claim unequal treatment?

☐ Are reasons for action clearly documented and verified?

☐ Is the organization's position definitely defendable?

☐ Have all the employee's rights been taken into consideration?

Activity: Determining appropriate documentation

Instructions: Decide which of the following statements would be appropriate to include as part of formal documentation. If the statement isn't appropriate, write something that would be.

1. Bob has a bad attitude. He's tough to get along with and many people find him a challenge.

    _____
    _____

2. Sue's been late five times in the past three weeks causing other department members to cover for her until she arrives.

    _____
    _____

3. Sherri's not a team player. Everyone knows she's only out for herself.

    _____
    _____

4. Randy has consistently missed deadlines and his work is sloppy.

    _____
    _____

Go through the checklist and answer any questions.

Activity: Have participants work alone or in pairs and determine if the statements listed are appropriate documentation. If not, rewrite them so they are. Possible answers:

1. Bob made negative remarks about Joe and Sue in front of a customer. He also accused Sue of not doing her job correctly.

2. Appropriate as is.

3. In a staff meeting, Sherri claimed sole credit for a report that was actually written by her and two other people.

4. Randy has missed three deadlines in the past month, and the past two reports each have had at least five typos or other mistakes.