

Tips for Documenting and Monitoring Performance

Write documentation that is **factual, fair, legal, objective, complete, and consistent**. Avoid opinions, name-calling, editorializing and labeling.

When discussing performance, be sure to provide the employee with **a clear set of facts** regarding the behavior that is being discussed. **Include dates** of when any of the documented behavior occurred, as well as detailed descriptions of instances where the employee's behavior did or did not meet expectations.

Avoid trying to interpret the employee's behavior. (Marsha must not like this assignment. Paula appears to be in over her head.) State the employee's specific behavior and actions, not your opinion or interpretation of it.

In documentation, be sure to provide an **accurate record of the conversation**. Stick with the facts and write down just what you said and what the employee said.

Ensure the employee is clear on what the expectations are and how he or she did or did not meet them. Performance expectations must be consistent with the employee's position description.

Document and Follow-up. Document early, thoroughly and often. Performance management has little impact if there is no follow-through. Ensure there are one-on-one meetings scheduled with your employee(s) on a regular basis.

Performance concerns should not come as a surprise to the employee. A written reprimand should not be the first time the employee learns that his or her performance is lacking. **By the time you get to the discipline process with Human Resources, prior discussions with the employee (also documented) should have taken place.**

In the formal documentation, refer to those conversations, include the date they took place and what was discussed to demonstrate that the employee was previously made aware of any issue(s).

If an employee is experiencing personal problems, it is appropriate to offer assistance such as through an Employee Assistance Program. **A discussion of an employee's personal problems, however, has no place in formal documentation** and may expose the employer to additional risk.

Why is documentation so important?¹

- Documentation provides evidence that performance was discussed with the employee in a timely and concise fashion.
- Documentation offers a history of the employee's improvement or failure to improve performance over time. It is chronological and a precise description of the employee's actions, the manager's actions, and events as they occur.
- Documentation offers proof that an employee deserves an available promotion or opportunity.
- Documentation provides evidence that supports management decisions to take unfavorable action such as discipline or termination with an employee.
- Documentation provides evidence to justify salary increases, decreases, or why an employee received no raise.

¹ <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-document-employee-performance-1917911>