

PERforM

Writing Performance Objectives for Job Components: A Brief Tutorial

Under the State of Missouri's PERforM employee appraisal system, each employee must have at least one (1) performance objective for each of the five (5) "across-the-board" performance components used to evaluate all employees. Supervisors and managers have three (3) additional components.

This brief tutorial provides descriptions of the PERforM job components, and information and steps to consider when creating employee performance objectives for each component.

Employees:

State employees (regardless of job classification) will be rated on 5 specific job components.

1. Knowledge of Work
2. Quality of Work
3. Situational Responsiveness
4. Initiative
5. Dependability

Supervisors/Managers:

In addition to the 5 components listed above, individuals designated as supervisors or managers by their agency will also be evaluated on the following 3 components:

1. Performance Planning and Documentation
2. Leadership
3. Management Skills



For more information, contact:

State of Missouri
Office of Administration
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www.perform.mo.gov

Job Components for Employees

Knowledge of Work

Definition:

The employee's technical knowledge of job functions they are required to perform and the general understanding of the policies, procedures and processes as they relate to the overall mission of the organization.

This component should also address the employee's ability to obtain new skills and further develop his or her existing skills through attending and successfully completing optional or required training as well as the employee's ability and willingness to share knowledge with team members.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives:

- Successfully complete formal training sessions and fulfill prescribed continuing education requirements.
 - Train other staff on policies and procedures or use of equipment.
 - Obtain required certifications or licenses.
 - Use expertise to make a work process more efficient by reducing costs, reducing lead times and/or improving accuracy.
 - Be aware of and use available resources to find answers, solutions and ideas.
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Quality of Work

Definition:

Addresses the level of accuracy and proficiency with which the employee completes assigned work.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives

- Ensure projects are completed on time.
 - Day-to-day activities occur as scheduled.
 - Work products (e.g. reports, registrations, inspections, etc.) are complete, accurate, timely and understandable.
 - Reduce workplace injuries.
 - Reduce incidents of client/resident/inmate abuse and neglect.
 - Assessment of the consequence of errors upon operations, reports, service delivery, etc.
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Dependability

Definition:

This component addresses the employee's ability to complete assignments accurately and on-time, as well as the employee's ability to follow required procedures and guidelines. This area may also be used to assess the employee's attendance for attendance-sensitive functions.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives:

- Meet prescribed project deadlines as assigned.
- Responds to inquiries (calls, emails, etc.) in a timely manner.
- Arrives to work on time/minimizes unscheduled absences.
- Schedules sick and annual leave responsibly--does not abuse sick leave.

Employee Job Components (Continued)

Situational Responsiveness

Definition:

This component addresses the employee's skills and abilities to respond to internal and external stakeholders, develop and maintain effective relationships, respond to inquiries and circumstances as necessary, as well as the employee's ability to tolerate stressful situations, adapt to changes and remain alert and aware of his or her surroundings. This includes the employee's proficiency and accuracy of written and verbal communication, as well as the employee's ability to maintain the correct balance between tact and firmness.

Objectives for this component can vary depending on the focus of the particular position. This component encompasses the performance related accomplishments and problems typically associated with the employee's work attitude and demeanor that can often be difficult to objectively evaluate on their own.

This is the broadest component and provides an opportunity to consider the employee's ability to exhibit stability and consistency of performance under pressure, challenge, opposition, confrontation, heavy workload, criticism and changing priorities.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives:

- Responds to/tracks customer complaints/concerns.
- Maintains appointment schedules to reduce wait times.
- Effectively communicates with family members of clients/residents/inmates.
- Exhibits a willingness to work in a team.
- Communicates openly and honestly with superiors, peers and subordinates.
- Actively listens to new ideas.
- Understands and values diversity in the workplace.
- Maintains a professional attitude when receiving new assignments.
- Remains calm in tense situations.
- Delivers negative feedback in a constructive and private manner.
- Ability to shift focus based on the priorities of the organization/team
- Accepts constructive feedback.
- Contributes and listens during meetings and group discussions.
- Remains cognizant of potential security issues.
- Proactively addresses health and safety risks prior to injuries.

Initiative

Definition:

This component addresses the employee's ability and desire to actively seek out new solutions, tasks, opportunities or development that improve the organization's ability to accomplish its mission in a more effective and efficient manner as well as improve the employee's value to the organization by furthering his or her own professional development.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives:

- Seeks to assist team members and supervisors beyond the regular position requirements.
- Looks for opportunities to improve processes that lead to reduced costs, reduced lead times and/or increased accuracy.
- Acts independently without specific instruction, as appropriate.
- Remains results oriented, where applicable.
- Notices problems and develop options for potential solutions.

Additional Job Components for Supervisors

Performance Planning and Documentation

Definition:

Addresses the employee's ability to ensure adequate supervision of his or her staff, with a primary focus on the accuracy, completion and communication of the performance planning and appraisal process.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives:

- Performance appraisals of direct reports are completed on time.
 - Distribution of performance rating scores of all direct and indirect staff conforms to the guidelines indicated by policy.
 - All employee responses to performance ratings are addressed within established timeframes.
 - Performance objectives are clearly communicated to employees at the beginning of each appraisal period.
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Leadership

Definition:

Addresses the employee's ability to effectively motivate, direct and enhance the performance of staff.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives:

- Clearly communicates directions but allows staff to complete assigned work.
 - Delegates effectively.
 - Provides a motivating atmosphere that encourages direct reports, peers and other team members to perform successfully.
 - Identifies and provides professional development opportunities for staff.
 - Does not avoid necessary unpleasant discussions and actions.
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Management Skills

Definition:

Addresses the employee's ability to oversee a process or project; the ability to organize, plan and strategize; exhibit judgment and independent discretion; and use resources effectively.

Guidelines for Developing Performance Objectives:

- Clearly assigns and identifies areas of responsibility for all staff.
- Sets clear objectives and measures.
- Monitors processes, progress and results.
- Clearly sets and communicates priorities.
- Makes timely and consistent decisions that lead to favorable results.
- Probes multiple sources to obtain answers.
- Objectively evaluates data and information without allowing expected or desired outcomes to bias analysis.
- Effectively manages time of self and others.
- Avoids duplication or redundancies of work.
- Regularly seeks out opportunities to reduce operating costs without decreasing services.
- Ensures staff is able to obtain necessary supplies, equipment and training to perform effectively.

Determining Performance Objectives for Job Components

While performance components describe major areas of the employee's job, performance objectives describe the level of performance the employee is expected to achieve for each component. Establishing the correct objectives for each component is critical to the employee's success and the *PERfORM* process.

Types of Objectives

Routine Objectives

Routine objectives are based on tasks or assignments the employee is expected to do on a regular basis. These objectives are generally consistent from one appraisal period to the next and part of the employee's day-to-day work process.

Project Objectives

Project objectives may change with each appraisal period (i.e., **special projects**). These objectives are based on specific assignments to be completed or meet a specified stage of completion during the appraisal period.

Developmental Objectives

Developmental objectives are chosen to enhance the employee's performance and prepare the employee for future positions and growth within the organization.

Routine and project objectives should always be written to reflect performance at the level of a trained, experienced "**SUCCESSFUL**" employee.

Properly Written Objectives:

- Allow employees to understand what is expected of them from the beginning of the appraisal period.
- Enable the supervisor to more readily observe, document and coach.
- Provide the employee a means of self-measure.
- Provide tangible means of clarification if/when disagreements about work assignments arise.
- Allow for an accurate comparison of "what was done" to "what was expected."

Be **SMART**.

Many supervisors (raters) find it helpful to remember **SMART** criteria when writing their objectives:

Specific means that an observable action, behavior, or achievement is described. It can also mean that the work relates to a rate of performance, frequency, percentage or other number. The objective should be specific about the result – not the way it is achieved.

Diagnostic Questions:

- What exactly is the employee expected to do?
- What strategies, rules, processes, guidelines, etc. will be used?
- Is the objective well understood?
- Is it clear who is involved?
- Is it clear where this will happen?
- Is the outcome clear?
- Will this objective lead to the desired outcome?

Measurable means that a method or procedure must exist to assess and document the quality of the outcome. Some work is measured easily; in other cases, behaviors or results may need to be verified or observed.

Diagnostic Questions:

- What measurement will indicate the employee has successfully completed, or continues to meet the objective?
- Can these measurements be obtained?

Attainable means that the objective must be realistic. The best objectives require employees to stretch to obtain them - but they aren't extreme. That is, the objective is neither out of reach nor below standard performance. Objectives set too high or too low become meaningless, and employees naturally come to ignore them.

Diagnostic Questions:

- Can the employee accomplish the objective in the proposed timeframe with the resources we have?
- Do I (and the employee) understand any potential limitations or constraints that could get in the way?
- Has anyone else done this successfully?

Realistic means that you (and the employee) have the resources to get it done. The achievement of an objective requires resources such as skill, money, equipment, etc.

Diagnostic Questions:

- Do you (and the employee) have access to the resources (or skill) needed to achieve this objective?
- If not, what steps can you and/or the employee take to obtain the resources or skills?
- Is it possible to achieve this objective?

Time-bound means that there is a point in time when the work objective will start or be completed.

Diagnostic Questions:

- When will this objective be accomplished?
- Is there a stated deadline?

Writing

Performance Objectives

Step by Step...

1. Spend some time initially thinking about the organization, your team's mission and employees.
 - What processes need improvement?
 - What are the developmental needs of the people you supervise?
 - What needs to get done—and who needs to do it?
2. Think about the person (and the position) the objective/s will apply to.
 - What additional information do you need (i.e., position description, previous appraisals, notes from discussions with the employee, etc.)?
3. Think about the first component (Knowledge of Work) and draft the first objective.
 - What does the objective address (a routine job function, special project, development goal, other)?
 - How does the objective apply to the job component?
4. Now that you have something down on paper, think about why the objective is needed.
 - What results does it produce?
 - What outcomes will it have?
 - What effects will be created?
5. Why are those important? If necessary, modify the outcome to **emphasize results instead of activity**.
6. Next, think about ways of measuring the work you have begun to specify in the objective.
 - How can you tell whether or not the work or results occurred?
 - What is the measure of those results - Quality? Quantity? Speed? Accuracy? Frequency? etc.
7. Go back to your objective - does it include a measure?
8. Think about the timeframe in which the objective (work) is to be accomplished and specify deadlines, timeframes, due dates, etc. as needed.
9. If you think it will help, ask your supervisor what he or she thinks the objective means and/or ask the employee who is to be accountable for meeting the objective what he or she thinks it means.
10. If you believe there is any room for misinterpretation, rewrite the objective again.

FORMULA

for Writing Performance Objectives:

Action Verb Object

“[Do] [what] [to what standard]

Optional

“[under what conditions]”

Example:

“Develop [action verb] performance objectives for John and Susan [object] by July 1 [time standard], which follow the SMART formula [quality standard] and comply with the guidelines for the new PERforM system of employee performance appraisals [conditions].

Examples of Performance Objectives for Office Support Positions

- Transcribe monthly invoices into database with 100% accuracy within three days of receipt.
- Invoice applicable agencies for specific services, check invoice for accuracy, mail invoice to department for payment within three days after product delivery.
- Print and send records/invoices within two working days upon request from the agency and/or employee.
- Proofread documents received from your supervisor or unit staff within two days of receipt and produce final document with no errors.
- Make travel arrangements within 24 hours of receiving lodging/car request from your supervisor or staff member.
- Create Monthly Performance Measures, Goals & Outcome Report without error following unit guidelines by the 10th of each month.
- Respond to employee inquiries, complaints and concerns immediately; notify supervisor by the end of workday or sooner when issues cannot be resolved.
- Prioritize work assignments each day to ensure all deadlines are met in a timely manner.
- Conduct weekly checks of office supplies, and request purchase of items as needed.
- Assemble meetings rooms as directed before and after each meeting, according to guidelines.
- Prepare notice of agreement following established procedures for all contracted and agency specific deliverables within two days after verbal agreement.
- Distribute incoming mail by 2 pm and take outgoing mail to mailroom by 4 pm each day
- Notify your supervisor three days in advance of all anticipated absences not related to health emergencies.