

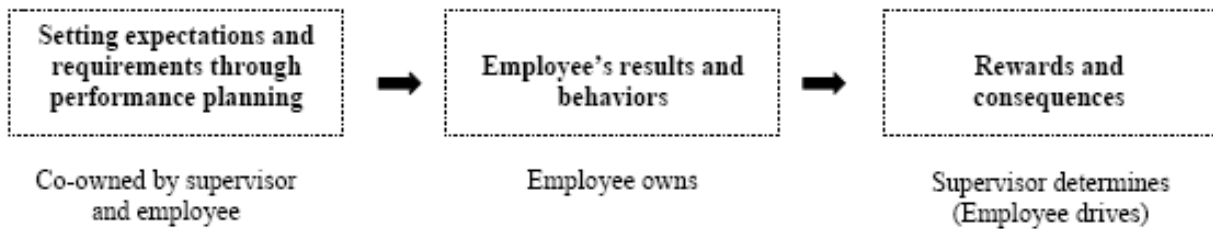


Preparing for Difficult Coaching Situations

This quick reference will help supervisors prepare for and conduct coaching sessions with employees who are not meeting performance objectives or demonstrating the correct behaviors. These are among the most challenging discussions for supervisors to have with employees so we have included several tips and tools to help you prepare for and conduct a productive coaching session.

What do I need to know?

- Time is of the essence! Quickly, get to the bottom of the issue and the best way to deal with it to maintain productivity (and in the case of a recurring issue, minimize disruption to the team).
- Help employees understand the “Performance Partnership” (describe or draw this graphic for them). This describes the supervisor’s and employee’s roles in the performance management process and in delivering the right results with the right behaviors.



How do I do it?

☆ **First:** Determine what might be contributing to the employee’s performance problems. Here are some questions to ask yourself and the employee as you work to uncover the source of the employee’s performance challenges:

- ✓ Was the employee able to properly perform job duties, meet performance expectations, demonstrate behaviors, and achieve the right results in the past?
- ✓ Has something changed recently—workload, different types of assignments, job duties, working relationships, etc.?
- ✓ Are they penalized in some way (e.g., with more work) for performing as expected?
- ✓ Is *not* performing somehow being rewarded?
- ✓ Are there policies, procedures, or others barriers to performance?

☆ **Second:** If it is a first time occurrence, ask these types of questions to explore what is going on with the employee?

- ✓ I observed or heard about _____. What’s your take on what happened?
- ✓ Why do you think I (or others) might have interpreted what happened differently than you?
- ✓ What was the impact of _____?
- ✓ How might you approach this next time?
- ✓ How can I help?



☆ **Third:** Consider using the Corrective Feedback Model illustrated below to conduct a constructive two-way discussion about what the employee can do to improve their performance.

Step	Action	Sample Phrase
Share observations about the employee's performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what is happening or not happening Be specific and focused directly on behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I've noticed that... It seems that.... Let me describe a pattern I've seen...
Engage employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for the employee's perspectives and opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you interpret this situation? How do you think things are going?
Request change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for a new effort or what should be happening Generate ideas together, letting the employees speak first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What ideas do you have for resolving this situation? What changes do you think would be helpful here?
Verify agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solidify the new course of action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So, starting this week, you will... Are we in agreement on this? When can I expect you to_?
Express confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce self-esteem. Offer support and thank the employee for ideas and future efforts to improve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I really like what we have come up with. Thank you for your ideas and efforts to make this happen.

☆ **Fourth:** For a recurring performance issue you have talked about before, think about the actions you may need to take including:

- ✓ Develop: Create a performance improvement plan to define what skills the employee should develop.
- ✓ Re-assign: This option is only for employees who are a mismatch for the current job but have other needed skills and will most likely perform better in another role.
- ✓ Progressive Discipline: if you are confident that you have tried to coach the employee to improve performance and it is not working you may want to document the issues in oral, written or final warnings per University policy.
- ✓ Terminate: This may be a tough call, but you may need to consider this as an option for employees who are not the right fit for the University of Missouri. Always involve HR and/or your supervisor in these discussions and decisions.





Tips and Tools

- Keep the conversation focused on what is within the employee’s control (i.e., *their* behaviors, *their* decisions).
- Convey the message “I want you to succeed—let’s talk about what you can do and how I can help.”
- If you receive negative feedback about your employee from others:
 - Ask the feedback provider questions to understand the issue completely
 - Try to get that person to give the employee their feedback directly
 - Give sufficient thought to clear professional ways to convey the tough messages (e.g., “You’ve given this what you could, and we’re still in a tough spot in terms of you not meeting expectations... I’ve had to make the determination that...”)

☆ Use these strategies to respond to negative employee reactions to coaching:

- ✓ Resistance—“I don’t see a problem with my performance”
 - Restate the problem
 - Discuss additional consequences (e.g. progressive discipline)
- ✓ Defensive/Deflective—“What about Jim—he’s made many mistakes and does not do as much work as I do”
 - Remind the employee that the discussion is about their performance—not anyone else’s
 - Reinforce that all employees get feedback about their performance
- ✓ Anger—“I can’t believe you’re throwing that in my face.”
 - Remain calm and composed
 - Acknowledge the employee’s frustration, if appropriate, without agreeing with or condoning it
 - Restate the issue and continue the discussion or suggest another time to meet once the employee has had a chance to cool down
- ✓ Victim—“You’re right...I’ve messed up again.”
 - Question the extreme position. “Are you saying you don’t see value in the work you do?”
- ✓ Reticent (Silent)
 - Pause and allow them to digest the information you have provided to them
 - Eventually, restate the issue (e.g., his/her behavior and the impact it is having) and ask for his/her views
 - If necessary, discuss consequences of his/her noninvolvement in reaching a solution
- ✓ Crying
 - Silence may be the best first reaction
 - Acknowledge that the discussion is difficult, if appropriate
 - Choose between suggesting another time to meet or restating the issues and continuing the discussion