

How To Develop A Performance Improvement Plan

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The truth about performance improvement plans is that managers usually give these to employees that they want to get rid of. If it was a case of improving an employee's performance then they will have to sit down with that employee and discuss with them what it is that is getting in the way of their work. Whenever an employee receives, they usually just know that it is the first step towards being fired instead of improving their performance. Generally, most management in organisations is fear-based such that all one has to do is to question their manager's authority or have a better idea than what they have.

Even though performance improvement plans sometimes do send the message, "I control your livelihood, so don't cross me." (Ryan, 2020). If you ask your network what the three scariest terms are during a performance appraisal season, there is a fair chance you will hear from more than a few people about the *performance improvement plan*. If you have failed to achieve your goals, a strategy for performance enhancement is intended to provide you with tangible ways to turn your results around. For others, actually understanding just what they can do to progress is enough to make their way out of a slump (meaning success on one is certainly possible!). But how are these performance improvement plans developed?

What is a performance improvement plan?

A *performance improvement plan*, which is also known as a performance action plan is a tool for offering employees with performance problems a chance to excel. It can be used to fix flaws in achieving particular job targets or to resolve behavioural problems. Performance improvement plans can fix organisational morale problems and even help the organisation's most unlikely employee succeed. Not every employee is successful in completing tasks on time. Some lack focus or create additional work which delays the completion of assignments. If there is a desire to help the employee improve, a performance improvement plan should be used, not as a tool for a disgruntled manager to initiate the termination process.

It is a formal document stating any recurring performance issues along with objectives that an employee needs to achieve in order to regain a good position in the company (usually with a specific timeline for completing the plan). If you are put on a performance improvement plan, your manager and HR are likely to meet you to go over it and answer any questions you might have. In layman's terms, when you are in school, it is like being placed on probation — you are going to be closely monitored throughout that time. If at the end of the timeline you are not successful in completing your performance improvement plan, usually the end result is to lose your work.

How to develop a performance plan

An employee performance improvement plan is drafted and submitted to HR by the worker's boss. It has a time limit to reach the designated milestones — typically 30, 60, or 90 days. The implications should the performance of the employee fail to fall short should also be clearly stated. It is recommended that the boss and Human Resources of the manager review the constructive input and approval plan. This would ensure clear, equal treatment for workers in all divisions in the organisation. The following are the steps for developing a performance improvement plan:

1. **Determine acceptable performance** - State what performance will be appropriate, and compare it to what your employee is actually doing. Be clear on precisely where the employee falls short, including behavioural and performance examples.
2. **Create measurable objectives** - Use the SMART system to identify the priorities the employee wants to accomplish. Determine how success will be evaluated. It may be that the employee is frustrated by demands at work or maybe he is struggling with personal issues that you don't know about. Alternatively, the issue may be that the employee has no long-term interest in remaining with your company.
3. **Define what support the employee will receive** – List how the boss of the employee can help him achieve the performance improvement plan objective. This could involve preparation, coaching, or making use of additional resources.
4. **Draw up a schedule for check-Ins** – Specify how often you contact the employee and get input from them. Build a Check-in Calendar.
5. **State the consequences of a lack of improvement** – Make clear what the repercussions will be if the employee fails to achieve the target of change. You should know by this stage why you want to use a performance improvement plan, how to build a successful plan for your particular situation, and exactly what to include. One thing remains: the employee needs to know how to answer and pass the performance improvement plan.

Before developing the performance improvement plan, the supervisor should check with the employee the following six things to ensure the plan is clearly understood:

1. State the exact value that needs to be improved; provide clear examples and reference them.
2. State the degree of expectation of job success and that it has to be carried out regularly.
3. Specify and identify the assistance and services you will be offering to help the employee excel.
4. Communicate your intention to have employee input. Specify times of meeting, who, and how much. Specify the steps that you would consider when determining the progress of the employee.
5. Specify potential implications if the performance expectations that you set are not met in the document.
6. Provide sources of useful knowledge such as a checklist for workers, training sessions and any other tools that you feel can help the employee enhance their performance.

During the performance improvement plan process, the manager tracks and provides the employee with input on their success in achieving plan targets, and can take further disciplinary measures, if necessary, through the proactive discipline process of the company.

Benefits of a performance improvement plan

Having a performance improvement plan will help to reduce the risk associated with any terminations. It helps employees whose performance has fallen, become inconsistent or need enhancement in some other way. The following are some of the benefits of a performance improvement plan:

- Better company culture
- Save time and money
- Shows the employee that the organisation recognises individuals' current challenges
- More effective than reviews
- Engaging employees by providing them with the power to change their performance and behaviours
- Provides employees with detailed feedback and specific areas for improvement
- The potential risk of litigation is reduced if performance does not improve and dismissal occurs

Performance improvements examples and templates

There are a number of items that need to be incorporated in a performance improvement plan and these include the following:

- **Employee Information** - Information describing who the employee is, what role they have and who their manager is.
- **Target Area** – Describe the behavioural and performance issues, detailing specific examples of where and when standards have not been met.
- **Expected Standard** - Describe what is expected of the employee with regards to performance and behaviour.
- **Improvement Actions** - Outline what actions need to be taken in order to meet the required level of performance.
- **Training and Support** - agree upon what training and support the employee may need to improve their performance.
- **Check-in and reviews** – schedule periodic meetings to track performance and discuss strengths and weaknesses and potential barriers.
- **Final Review** - in specific detail, log any improvements made in the target area. Document any instances of unacceptable or exemplary behaviour, be as detailed as possible. Record quantifiably if the incident is re-occurring. Substantiate your evidence by attaching any physical documentation.
- **Acknowledgement** - an acknowledgement from the employee, recognising that they are being placed on a performance improvement plan. The employee acknowledges that failure to meet and sustain the required level may result in further disciplinary action.

You can also download the sample template [here](#).

Performance Improvement Plan

Employee Information

Full Name: Position:
Department: Manager:

Target Area (Describe the behavioural and performance issues, detailing specific examples of where and when standards have not been met)

Expected Standard (Describe what is expected of the employee with regards to performance and behaviour)

Improvement Actions (Outline what actions need to be taken in order to meet the required level of performance)

Training and Support (agree upon what training and support the employee may need to improve performance)

Check-in and reviews (schedule periodic meetings to track performance and discuss potential barriers)

Here are a few performance improvement plan examples which can be used:

Example to improve the low-quality of work

An employee may have little or no contact with customers in some situations but in other ways, he could still deliver poor-quality work.

Goal: Improve the quality of work.

Objectives: Meet deadlines or produce work that is free from errors.

Action: The first goal is simple which the employees need to miss no deadlines within the timeframe set out in the performance enhancement plans. The second goal requires collaboration with a senior member of the team to check for errors and assess if the quality is acceptable.

Metrics: Number of late deadlines and quality of work (the latter may be subjective).

Example of productivity

This is best suited to a middle management positioned person. Say the employee is responsible for growing a program by increasing the number of subscribers. Minimum change occurs after several months.

Goal: Grow program by X amount of subscribers.

Objectives: Increase the number of clients subscribed to the program and decrease the number of unsubscribes.

Action: Improve campaigns, better publicize (or increase) the program's benefits and implement a retention strategy.

Metrics: Subscriptions and unsubscribes.

Example of unprofessional behaviour

This may be necessary for a variety of situations, ranging from subordinates or co-workers being mistreated to persistent lateness and unauthorized absences.

Goal: Cease behaviour entirely.

Objectives: Arrive on time, treat others with respect, or attend all required meetings.

Action: Only miss work when authorised for personal or medical reasons. Receive appropriate workplace behaviour training.

Metrics: Some behaviours are easily measurable (for example, did the employee arrive late every day for no more than 5 minutes?) Other situations are more subjective. For example, you might need to talk to subordinates who found working with the employee difficult.

Example to improve customer service

This type of performance improvement plan may be needed if clients complain about the attitude of support they receive from a particular employee.

Goal: The overall goal may be to improve interactions with clients.

Objectives: Possible objectives to meet such a goal could be to see better customer retention or engagement.

Action: To achieve the above objectives, the employee could work more closely with customers to resolve problems or attend a customer service training session.

Metrics: The most appropriate metrics would likely be the customer churn rate or customer satisfaction score.

A performance improvement plan is a perfect strategy for maintaining an employee whose performance has recently been lacking but who has the ability and incentive to remain a good team player. If you are the boss or the worker, a performance improvement plan can never be seen as a superficial move before termination. Rather, converting a failing employee into a productive asset for the business can be a useful tool. If the employee is committed to change but falls short of the goals within the defined timeframe, it might be worth extending the plan to allow him or her a little more time to achieve. In addition, if goals were found not to be realistic or fully within the control of the employee in retrospect,

the plan could be successfully terminated on the basis of the improvements achieved.

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<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/How-To-Develop-A-Performance-Improvement-Plan>