

MANAGERS GUIDE

Managing Poor Performance

Purpose

This document will look at how to manage poor performance. It is the role and responsibility of the manager to ensure performance is acceptable and consistent. Should it fall below the standard expected then the performance has to be uplifted and supported.

Structure

Poor performance cannot be ignored and is one area where disciplinary action may be considered. It is however important to consider whether poor performance is a conduct or capability issue, and whether disciplinary action is appropriate.

Disciplinary on the grounds of “CONDUCT”

(Issues that may cause the employer to go down this route are usually identified in the employee handbook).

Disciplinary on the grounds of “CAPABILITY”

(This is related to the individual’s performance)

Many managers will initiate the “Conduct” disciplinary with confidence, as there are rarely any areas that may be misinterpreted. There are specific stages and actions required by employment law legislation that employers must go through before dismissal occurs. If this is not demonstrated an employer may find themselves in an industrial tribunal instigated by the employee.

However, managers often don’t feel as comfortable when dealing with disciplinary issues when “Capability” is the problem. The main thing to remember is that you have a responsibility to be fair, objective, honest and factual. Poor performance **MUST** be dealt with as it can cause major problems with the rest of the team and their performance. The outcome of managing performance issues is that the individual improves (you manage them up) or they don’t (you manage them out).

Preventing poor performance?

- Recruit or promote the right person to the right job
- Explain standards to employees
- Train, coach and develop employees so they have the skills and knowledge to do their jobs
- Carry out honest and objective appraisals & reviews
- Manage staff effectively through motivating, communicating and praising them.
- Manage expectations honestly and openly.

How do deal with poor performance fairly

- Discuss with the employee to find out the cause – lack of training, problems at home, bullying.
- Clarify and agree standards
- Offer training and support
- Monitor progress and review at a later date
 - If no progress – consider whether capability or conduct, and whether employee may be dismissed, transferred to alternative duties.

Using informal discipline effectively

- The intention of the informal warning stage is to give employees an opportunity to correct their behaviour or to improve their performance.
- The emphasis at this stage should be on nipping problems in the bud and helping people to improve.
- This approach will often alleviate problems, because it will raise awareness that high standards are important.
- Managers must be aware when it becomes necessary to take formal action, because informal action has not been effective.
- Many disciplinary problems are not serious. They may result from genuine ignorance, a lack of understanding, sheer thoughtlessness, or an attempt to see how serious a rule is or how tough the manager is. When this is the case, quiet but firm indication that the behaviour is not acceptable is often all that is needed to resolve the problem.
- When an employee's work performance is an issue, the informal stage should concentrate upon performance counselling and arranging the appropriate remedial measures to help the individual in reaching the required standard.

A problem solving approach

- Recognise that the problem exists
- Find out the cause of the problem
- Look for solutions to the problem
- Devise an action plan to resolve the problem
- Take time to reflect on the effectiveness of your solution for future reference.

Conclusion

Should performance fall below the standard expected then it needs to be uplifted and supported, not ignored.

- Deal with the cause of the underperformance rather than the effect.
- Tell the individual their performance has to improve.
- Agree specific performance targets that they need to reach and maintain. Make sure that the targets are achievable. (S.M.A.R.T)
- Let them know how and when you will be checking these targets.

Follow up

- Find out what additional training or support they need.
- Put a support system in place. You may need to coach them yourself, or ask another member of the team to help out.
- Check that the targets have been met
- Reassure the individual by confirming any additional steps that may be required