

Writing a Good Performance Improvement Plan

To promote performance improvement, you need a clear and deliberate procedure: a Performance Improvement Plan.

Requirements for the plan

An effective performance improvement plan has three major components:

- **Performance Gap Statement** — A performance gap statement describes the difference between desired and actual performance. This gap should be stated in measurable terms, with supporting evidence. The statement must relate clearly to the job expectations you have outlined to the individual or as published and communicated throughout the organization.
- **Action Plan** — An action plan must explicitly state the actions that the individual will undertake to address the problematic performance. It should also state any actions the manager and other members of the organization will undertake to help him/her improve performance.
- **Improvement Period** — The period over which the improvement should take place must be clearly indicated and what the standards for improvement will be. Periodic progress review meetings should be scheduled to reinforce the expectation of improvement and that monitoring is taking place.

Techniques for developing performance improvement plans

The most effective performance improvement plan is not one imposed by a manager. Instead, it is the product of both parties working together, manager and employee. Plans that motivate are more likely to encourage results.

As a manager, you should use some essential techniques to develop performance improvement plans:

- You need to clearly state your expectations and *offer clear evidence of the performance gap*. Factors that may have limited performance (lack of training, system or communication problems, etc.) must be acknowledged: however, you must emphasize that the individual is ultimately responsible for his/her performance.
- To make the activity profile effective, *prioritize activities* according to organizational objectives. This helps make the need for improvement more relevant. Some activities ideally will produce immediate improvement, which may boost the individual's self-esteem. For example, if the problem performance is missing deadlines and/or incomplete work, review the ThinkWise eCoaching modules [Coaching Someone to Better Manage Their Time](#) or [Coaching Someone Who Needs Improvement in Completing Projects](#) and take them through the exercises to prioritize their work more effectively.
- The improvement period should be a jointly agreed upon schedule that accepts phased improvement. It must be supported by *periodic reviews* that can help motivate workers who are faced with lengthy and demanding schedules.

Qualities of a good plan

A plan that prioritizes actions against company objectives is best, and one that produces some form of immediate result is motivating. The performance improvement plan is most effective when its timetable is jointly set and includes periodic reviews.

Good performance improvement plans will not fall naturally into your lap. They have to be crafted and managed to be effective.