



## Performance Evaluations

Performance evaluation is essential when training and assessing public safety employees. When used properly, evaluations and positive reinforcement memos are an objective record of behavior and acquired skills. Additionally, merit raises may depend on employee reviews. Appropriate documentation is therefore vital to the continued motivation of employees.

Adults invest much time and energy in learning - an investment upon which they expect a return. To verify the investment is paying off, adults must get feedback. This feedback should be objective and must accurately reflect employee accomplishments. If adults do not receive accurate input, the amount of time and effort being invested in learning may decrease.

Feedback may take the form of daily observation reports or monthly/quarterly evaluations. Written feedback that includes positive comments and sound plans for improvement give employees a sense of how to move forward. Comments must be objective. Subjective comments are opinions and have no place on evaluations. Facts will speak for themselves so there is no need to draw conclusions in your documentation.

Documentation must focus on facts relating to the employee's behavior and performance rather than on the person. Employees cannot be compared to one another. Comparisons should be made to behavioral standards that exist for all employees. Above all, do not criticize employees in public. An appropriate guideline is to praise in public, correct in private.

Documentation provides accurate and objective feedback to employees, as well as a permanent record of activities, behavior and performance. Both positive and corrective narratives should include specific data like dates, times and incident numbers. Documentation should be written clearly and concisely. Use simple language that is easy to understand. Be sure that narratives convey only one idea at a time, and that statements can be interpreted in only one way. Situations should be described in chronological order. This helps readers follow the incidents more easily. Remember to compliment employees in writing. Memos that recognize proper employee behavior are strong motivators and should be used as often as possible.

The following examples are provided to illustrate the differences between objective and subjective documentation.

Objective comments include facts and details, draw no conclusions, and do not have opinions.

### **Correct (Objective)**

- 6/5 Lou accepts feedback with interest and enthusiasm
- Annie served on the EMD policy review committee from June through August
- 8/22 Vince attempted to enter 10 calls for service on CAD, and was able to enter one without trainer assistance
- 2/12 Karen entered incident 67554 with wrong address (used North Adams instead of South Adams), officers were responding to the wrong bank for the holdup alarm, trainer corrected address
- 3/19 Conrad entered incident 894378 with wrong address (used South Harbor Point instead of South Harbor Oaks), officers were responding to the wrong store for the holdup alarm, supervisor corrected address
- 9/19 Yoko maintained contact with the suspect for 30 minutes while the TAC team assembled, incident 646876

Subjective comments are those which cannot be verified, are opinions or have no frame of reference.

### **Incorrect (Subjective)**

- Bill's understanding of the phone system is much better
- Lisa will improve after she works on 9-1-1 some more
- I am looking forward to Kim's progress soon
- 7/2 With more use of the EMD software, Phyllis will increase her skills
- Althea has shown some improvement already and I know it will be better in the next week
- 6/16 Wade's understanding of the leave policy is better than yesterday

Adults appreciate feedback so they know where they stand with their employers. Documentation is a critically important tool of communications training officers and supervisors in providing the feedback that adults want. It is also significant to employees because it impacts their permanent records as well as pay raises. Objective comments are essential when writing narratives. Specific facts and details provide a clear picture in documentation.

**By Helen Straughn, APCO Institute Online Instructional Designer**

## Quiz

### **CDE Article – Performance Evaluations**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Comments in documentation narratives must be subjective.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
2. Employee behavior can be compared to established behavioral standards.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
3. Documentation provides a permanent record of employee performance.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
4. The order in which a situation is described is not important.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
5. Proper employee behavior recognized in writing is a strong motivator.
  - a. True
  - b. False