# Section 2: Walking the Walk

In Section 1: Planning the Journey provides tools and creates opportunities for you and your employees to plan for their successful performance. The next essential part of the process is to ensure that progress and goals are on the right track—that you and your employees are "walking the walk." A common pitfall in supervising performance is not proactively following through with ongoing monitoring and problem-solving. Supervisors who understand that performance management is an ongoing, yearlong process, and who utilize both tangible tools and interpersonal interactions, are most likely to be successful in getting the performance results that are effective and desired.

- Watch: [The Myths of Performance Management](#) (2:25 minutes), in which management consultant Dick Grote busts the "myth of comfort"
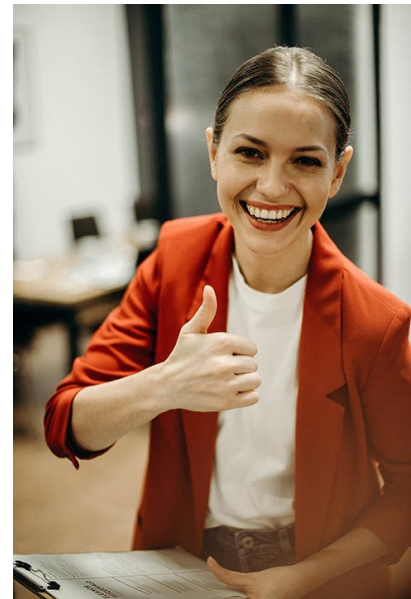
Thumbs Up by cottonbro on Pexels

As Grote says, management means having to stand in judgement of another's performance. "It's always going to be difficult." This guide intends to make the effort more manageable by breaking it down into four tips:

- **Tip 1**: Conversations That Guide Progress

- **Tip 2**: Accountability and Course Correction

- **Tip 3**: Getting Started with Documentation

- **Tip 4:** Annual Reviews and Organizational Context

Tip 1: Conversations That Guide Progress

Conversation is the cornerstone of management. Through conversations with our co-workers and employees, we gain updates on projects, a feel for the mood of the organization, and critical feedback on our goals and personal effectiveness. Conversations also afford us, as managers, the opportunity to provide critical feedback and to establish a rapport with our workers. These conversations take place one-on-one or in team meetings more often than in formal coaching meetings. The location isn't nearly as important as listening carefully to your employee and being genuinely invested in their personal well-being and success. Knowing how and when to engage employees are vital skills in the coaching process, which aims to guide employees and improve their performance and success. This applies to both their current role and their long-term professional development.

Review the following three resources on providing feedback and effective coaching, then practice.

1. Watch: [Closing the Loop on Feedback](#) (17:13 min)

Daniel Suwyn, President of the Rapid Change Group employee engagement firm, believes that feedback has to function as a closed loop that entails not only providing your own views and assessments, but also soliciting the feedback of the employee. In particular, he notes the importance of treating employees like individual people. The person receiving feedback has the power to take responsibility for their own behavior and work. Whenever possible, feedback needs to be:

- Timely
- Frequent
- Self-reflecting

Take Action

After reviewing the above video, write down at least two different ways that you can initiate daily or weekly conversations with your employees to discuss their projects and performance. (Hint: Some of the most impactful coaching sessions take place outside of formal meetings.)

1.

2.

2. Watch: [How to Build (and Rebuild) Trust](#) (15:05 min)

When it comes to coaching there are many important elements to consider. Listening carefully for the employee's values, passions, strengths, emotions, and inconsistencies

can provide vital context and connection. Beginning with the 'Why' statement by connecting the employee's role and purpose to the institution's mission - the 'why we're here' - can help to inspire followers and connect you both on shared values. In this video, Frances Frei considers one of the most essential elements to coaching and feedback. She notes the importance of trust as the foundation for conversation and instructs on how to build the three cornerstones of trust:

- Authenticity

- Empathy

- Rigor in Logic (Effectively communicated)
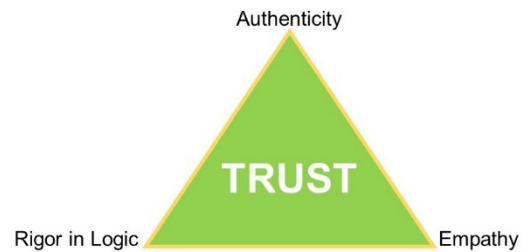
Take Action

After reviewing the above video, consider examples where either you or one of your own managers may have failed for each of these elements (authenticity, empathy, rigor in logic).

- Was there a time when you felt pressured to not be yourself (act authentically) or a time when a manager failed to empathize with your situation?

- Write down each of these examples, list the outcome, and consider how it might have been handled differently.

3. Read: [Coaching Questions for Managers](#)

Communication is a vital coaching skill. One of the most important aspects of this is listening. Whether you are coaching an employee on their current professional role or helping them to navigate plans for their long term development (and you should be genuinely interested in both), asking useful questions and listening for the meaning in their response is the key to success. You should ask questions that help to clarify goals, identify obstacles, and demonstrate their path forward.

In the above article, leadership development consultant Dan McCarthy suggests a variety of questions that can help you to achieve these goals. Questions are aligned with exploring the individual's goals, their current reality, options available to reach their goals, and identifying a plan to move forward.

REFLECTION: Which managers have you responded to most positively when receiving feedback? What was your relationship with them and their approach to you like? Did they solicit your opinions and genuinely listen to you? Did you feel like they trusted you? And when/how often did you receive feedback from them?

Additional Resources

1. Lee, M. (2009). Growing librarians: mentorship in an academic library. *Library Leadership & Management, 23*(1), 31-37. This article provides an overview of practices for coaching interns, coworkers, and new librarians.

2. Millennial leadership: Stop complaining, start coaching. This video (15:32 min) discusses using coaching to address challenges between workers of different generations.

3. How to hold a difficult conversation with an employee. This article discusses challenges and provides tips for holding difficult employee conversations.

4. Giving Feedback Guide. This is a detailed guide for giving and receiving work feedback.

5. Providing Constructive Employee Feedback. This self-paced course in the WebJunction catalog uses an interactive format to build good employee feedback habits.

Tip 2: Accountability and Course Correction

One of the most frustrating aspects of being a supervisor is being faced with the question, "Why won't my employees do what they are supposed to do?" There are generally two categories of issues—performance and discipline.

Performance billboard by Alexas_Fotos on Pixabay

- **Performance issues** are typically related to the non-performance of job duties, those expectations outlined in a job description or regular performance goals and activities. Examples: a librarian is not completing a task list of required summer reading program activities, or a clerk is not meeting the standard of processing a certain number of Interlibrary Loan requests. These types of issues are addressed in the employee's goal documents or Individual Action Plans (IAP), and tracked accordingly.

- **Discipline issues** are typically related to behavior that is prohibited in organizational policies, often outlined in an employee handbook or library policy statements. Examples: an employee swears at a customer or otherwise violates specified customer service policies, or an employee refuses to work with a co-worker. These issues are typically addressed in the library's policies and practices.

Being accountable is a critical job skill. When an employee fails in accountability, it directly affects not only the successful achievement of the individual's goals and activities, but also creates disappointment, anger, and apathy in co-workers as well as in the employee.

Keep in mind that responsibility and accountability are different; the former is what is supposed to be done, the latter is whether it was accomplished. For example, a job responsibility is to shelve materials; accountability is whether materials are put on the shelves correctly and in a timely manner. The expectations and goals documented in the IAP are essential components in holding people accountable.

You and Accountability

Holding your employees accountable is arguably the least-liked element of a supervisor's job. Most supervisors would agree it is the hardest aspect. Why is this? Very often it is because most people don't like creating conflict or being disliked. And accountability often has a negative connotation that it is about both of these. Certainly this can occur, but there are other ways that accountability can be an effective, and even positive, process.

The federal Office of Personnel Management lists these [positive results of practicing a constructive approach to accountability](#):

- improved performance,

- more employee participation and involvement,

- increased feelings of competency,

- increased employee commitment to the work,

- more creativity and innovation,

- higher employee morale and satisfaction with the work.

REFLECTION: Does holding others accountable cause you unease? Why? What negative results do you believe will happen - to you, to others? Consider a situation where you held an employee accountable. Did any of the above positive results manifest in their attitude or behavior? In what way? What or who do you need for support?

Holding an Accountability Conversation

Margie Warrell, an international thought leader in human potential, acknowledges that it is hard to have a conversation about accountability, and that we must step up in order to not ignore our own supervisory responsibility by letting others get away with not doing what they said they would do.

- Read [Tired of Being Let Down? How To Hold People Accountable](), in which Warrell outlines seven steps for an accountability conversation:
  1. Decide what you want upfront.
  2. Be specific in clarifying expectations.
  3. Ask for what you *do* want, rather than what you *don't.*
  4. Seek for an explanation before making an accusation.
  5. Share the impact of them not keeping their word.
  6. Reset expectations.
  7. Reward the positive and coach the negative.

All employees of an organization fundamentally need and desire to know the answers to the following four questions, which well-drafted goals and expectations will guide:

  1. **What** am I supposed to do?
  2. **How** am I supposed to do it?
  3. How **well** am I doing it?
  4. What **else** can I do?

Supervisors who ensure that every employee, every day, knows the answers to each of these questions will have a more engaged, productive, happier team. And in spite of all best efforts, supervisors do well to remember that teams are made up of individuals who may at times need support, redirection and sometimes correction.

Take Action
Pick an accountability issue that you have with one of your employees and write down one or two sentences for each step that you will use in a conversation with this employee.

1.

2.

A Consideration of Changes

"At times it makes sense to coach someone into another position or even out of the organization. People, change, and their interests and needs change. Organizations change, and the nature of work changes around people. It is not a disgrace or a matter of blame when the person and the job are mismatched. Someone who is perfectly content in a position upon accepting may want something different five years later. Acknowledging that this change happens and providing coaching for it is a humane response to the normal course of events."   *Ruth Metz, Coaching in the Library*

You may want to consider that in occasional cases when accountability efforts are not working well, the employee may not be best suited for the position they are in. Sometimes new hires perform differently on the job from what was seemingly apparent in the hiring process; sometimes employees change in their interests and priorities; and sometimes staff just get tired or fed up with their job.

Then supervisors must use their coaching role and have the sometimes difficult, sometimes ultimately positive, conversation about the needs of the employee and the workplace. Plan out this talk with the well-being of both in mind.

REFLECTION: Do you have an employee where this situation might apply? What leads you to think so? How can you explore this? Who might provide you with insights? How will you structure a conversation with the employee?

Additional Resources

1. Giesecke, Joan. [Fundamentals of Library Supervision](#), ALA, 2005. *Chapter 11 Managing Performance.* An easy-to-use resource focusing on daily, real-world practices, offering specific strategies for new supervisory staff and hundreds of tips that guide supervisors through the intricate process of managing others.

2. Mader-Clark, Margie and Lisa Guerin. [The Employee Performance Handbook,](#) 2nd ed., Nolo, 2016. A complete how-to guide for employee discipline. Packed with practical and legal advice, this book offers smart strategies that will help improve employee performance and avoid legal trouble

3. Metz, Ruth. [Coaching in the Library](#), ALA, 2001. Metz outlines a focused and results-oriented plan for achieving the best results from staff members through a coaching style of management.

4. Puder-York, Marilyn. The Office Survival Guide: [Surefire Techniques for Dealing with Challenging People and Situations](#), McGraw-Hill, 2006. Workplace behavior experts identify ten common interpersonal problems and offer a two-step method showing how to respond to a variety of situations and adjust behavior for different personalities.

Tip 3: Getting Started with Documentation

Documentation can be one of the duller parts of performance management. It is, however, a vital starting place, an important practice for creating department plans, setting goals, and for addressing performance concerns. Your institution likely has documentation that they expect you to maintain in order to conduct performance evaluations, but this is often insufficient for the coaching that you will need to provide on a regular basis. Careful and appropriate documentation can:

- effectively plan individual and department goals

- help you to guide improved performance

- track trending problems and record warnings

- ensure you have evidence to justify your actions and that the steps taken were reasonable

- protect against hearsay

- avoid or prepare for legal issues

You want to make sure that, at a minimum, your documentation efforts meet the requirements of your organization. If you're unclear, ask Human Resources if they have guidelines or preferred forms.

While it is understandable for many people to feel apprehension at the prospect of engaging workers in order to address and correct behavior or performance, it is an essential part of management practice. Review the following two resources on documentation of performance issues and the maintenance of personnel files; then practice.

1. How to Create Bulletproof Documentation

Doni Meinert, Senior Editor for *HR Magazine*, discusses the critical elements in documenting poor performance. She describes setting expectations, including the employee's perspective, and creating an action plan. In particular, she points out common pitfalls such as:

- Making vague statements
- Being subjective or using personal attacks
- Providing limited evidence to support decisions

Take Action

After reviewing the article above, consider the following vague statements and practice creating versions that would be more clear. Write down a few ideas for what types of evidence might support your record.

Vague Statement	Your Clear and Evidenced Statement
Mr. Davidson is always late to work.	
The patrons do not like Ms. Stephens.	
Ms. Yue is proactive about volunteering to help others.	

2. Recording Keeping: May Supervisors Keep 'Desk Files' of Personnel Records?

There are many types of records that may be kept by employers and managers. Annual goals, written warnings, doctor's notes, etc. However, the location of these files and access to them can be an important legal consideration. The legal requirements for what must be kept and where it should be kept varies from state to state. A supervisor

should always speak with their Human Resources department or whomever is responsible for personnel files about the institution's preferred and required practices.

The article above gives a quick look at some typical personnel file practices. It includes a number of tips for what should be and should not be retained in a manager's 'desk file'.

Take Action

After reviewing the article above, visit the NOLO site and select your state to review state laws for company personnel files. Review these files and consider whether any of your practices may be in conflict. If you haven't received instructions from them previously, meet with someone from your Human Resources department to request guidance on your organization's practices.

REFLECTION: Take a moment to consider any concerns or anxieties you have about managing others. Create a list and consider whether there are any forms of documentation that can either help plan, organize, or address issues in a way that might ease some of your concerns.

Additional Resources

1. Performance Issue Conversation Outline. This handout provides an outline for navigating through a performance conversation.
2. Performance Improvement Sample Form. This handout can be used as a model for creating your own Performance Improvement Plans.
3. Verbal Warning. This example letter can be used for documenting verbal performance or behavior warnings.

4. [Written Warning.](#) This example document can be used for recording formal written warnings.
5. [Final Written Warning and Suspension.](#) This example document can be used as a template for final warnings or other disciplinary actions.

Tip 4: Annual Reviews and Organizational Context

The Employee Annual Review Process

Performance reviews and their process have a bad rap. Often it's because of lack of clarity and agreement as to what their purpose really is. Here are some useful considerations:

Positive purposes associated with performance reviews:

- *To foster meaningful and open communication between employee and supervisor concerning job performance*

- *To set and clarify expectations - the what, the why and the (often forgotten) how*

- *To increase job efficiency and performance of ALL staff due to everyone having consistent clarity regarding goals and activities*

- *To identify an employee's present and future needs to successfully perform the job*

- *To provide a formal opportunity (in addition to conversations throughout the year) for recognition and appreciation*

- *To be an organizational mechanism for performance documentation, merit increases, promotions and transfers*

- *To be an organizational **and** employee-utilized legal document if needed*

Negative impacts often associated with performance reviews:

- *They are biased, e.g. personal likes or dislikes, lack of clear knowledge of activities, favoritism.*

- *The forms and ratings are (pick a critical adjective here!)*

- *They are time-consuming and one-size doesn't fit all*

- *They are a once-a-year, stand-alone event, and are not utilized effectively throughout the year.*

- *They have unfair surprises.*

- *They cause fear, unhappiness, and possible retaliation.*

REFLECTION: What are your thoughts and assumptions about how your employees regard performance reviews? How can you as a supervisor respond to each of the above considerations? What do your library's processes and culture support or hinder? How can you respond within your role as a high-performing supervisor?

Completing the Annual Review Form

A strong annual performance management cycle closes with a review of the employee's performance. Annual reviews that work in conjunction with IAPs help make the review process easier. They help keep the process positive and reduce the negative impacts inherent in many review processes. If the supervisor was specific in documenting expectations, goals and development on the employee's IAP and has been giving feedback and coaching throughout the year, the review becomes straightforward and avoids surprises. Because the IAP ultimately defines what successful job performance looks like, the supervisor is simply checking to make sure the employee did what was outlined and agreed upon. Some questions to consider:

- *Did the staff member achieve all of the expected goals/expectations for this appraisal cycle, i.e. did they successfully do their job?*
- *Did the employee exceed expectations?*

- *Did the staff member achieve some but not all goals/expectations for this appraisal cycle?*

- *Were there extenuating circumstances, which affected the staff member's ability to achieve the desired results?*

- *Do they still need improvement?*

Both the IAP and Annual Review forms used will vary based on institutional needs, but they must align with each other in order to yield an effective performance management process. Both forms should be clear and concise with easy-to-understand instructions for the supervisor and employee to follow.

Any rating scale used needs to be clearly defined, fair, consistent, and as objective as possible. Check with your HR department to see if they recommend a rating scale for consistency across the organization. The following scale could be used to evaluate whether the employee met all expectations and achieved their goals as outlined in their IAP:

Solid Performance	Consistently meets expectations and requirements for duty/competency.
Exceptional Performance	Significantly surpasses expectations and requirements for duty/competency.
Needs Improvement/ Development	Meets expectations and requirements for duty/competency in some areas, but not consistently or entirely. Improvement or further development identified.

The sample review form on the next page provides an example of how a supervisor might rate and comment on the performance of an individual employee. The sample is excerpted from the [Patchogue-Medford Library Employee Evaluation](#).

SAMPLE Review Form

A: Review of Main Duties

Review employee's main duties and expectations as outlined in their PDP. Rate and comment on the results obtained. *Were all performance expectations met, exceeded, or is improvement needed?*

Solid	Exceptional	Needs Improvement
[X]	[ ]	[ ]

Comments:

Susie had a very solid, very appreciated year where her contributions were important in the department's work. She was especially helpful in the success of our xxs project, where her skill in xxx helped make our xxx result possible. Susie also was invaluable in our achieving xxxx with our customers, her customer service skills are a good example to all. Thank you, Susie, for being a valuable team member!

B: Review of Goals

Review any areas for improvement/goals established last year. Was progress made? Were new skills implemented? Is further development needed? Etc.

Solid	Exceptional	Needs Improvement
[X]	[ ]	[ ]

Comments:

Susie was solidly successful in increasing her skill in xxx and managing her xxx goal - congratulation! Next rating period, per her IDP, Susie will work on further increasing her skills in xxx to achieve her goal of becoming an expert in this area. In our goal of xxxx, Susie will make extra effort to achieve our team's goal of xxxx. I look forward to seeing her have a great next year!

Take Action

Locate, review, and be clear on the objectives and details of your library's performance review process documents, requirements, and any supporting guidelines. You are your

employees' guide to this process and the better you understand and can explain its purpose and specifics, the better the outcome for everyone. Discuss the process with your supervisor, HR or any other responsible staff about how you can learn more and grow your performance review skills.

Additional Resources

1. DPL Employee Accomplishments Form (Employee documents activities achieved in rating period; submits to supervisor)
2. DPL Performance Appraisal Form 2016 (Supervisor rates employee on their performance; the evaluation portion of the process)
3. DPL Employee Action Form for Next Rating Period (Employee and Supervisor document upcoming expected activities and accomplishments for the next rating period; is a fluid document)
4. Employee Performance generic form
5. Neal, James E. Effective Phrases for Performance Appraisals: A Guide to Successful Evaluations, 13th ed., 2014. Key phrases, adjectives and verbs for supervisors to utilize in documenting and discussing employee performance, arranged by topic.

Conducting a Performance Review Meeting

Many experienced supervisors strongly recommend that an annual performance review discussion is just one of many performance conversations that must happen throughout an employee's year. The difference is that one conversation, for example a quarterly accountability and touch-base meeting, is for on-going support, clarification, updating and problem-solving, and the other, more formal conversation - the annual review - is a summary of accomplishments, official evaluation, recognition and a plan for the next period.

In order to avoid surprises, the feedback delivered during the annual performance review should have already been covered in meetings throughout the year. Issues should be addressed as they arise, and the annual review then becomes a summary, no surprises, productive conversation about accomplishments and goals.

Checklist and Tips for supervisors for a productive annual review meeting:

- ❏ Review the purpose of the meeting; focus on your employee's job and performance
- ❏ Acknowledge and emphasize your employee's strengths and accomplishments
- ❏ Discuss all elements of your employee's Individual Action Plan as well as on-going expectations
- ❏ Be candid and clear about performance that needs improvement
- ❏ Ask how you can support your employee meeting and exceeding performance goals
- ❏ Review in detail any plan to improve or develop skills
- ❏ Summarize what has been discussed and agreed
- ❏ Outline any related merit pay impacts per your library's procedures
- ❏ Specify the timeline for follow-up discussions and on-going check-ins
- ❏ Give your employee copies or review access to all relevant documents
- ❏ Express appreciation for a productive conversation as well as confidence in future accomplishments

In general:

- ❏ Be descriptive and fact-based, not judgmental
- ❏ Encourage your employee to ask questions and comment
- ❏ Be supportive, not authoritarian

Checklist and Tips for employees for a productive annual review meeting:

- ❏ Come prepared to receive and ask for information; remember the focus is on your job and performance
- ❏ Ask for information and clarification regarding any part of your job responsibilities and details
- ❏ Be sure to understand your Individual Action Plan tasks and goals
- ❏ Talk candidly and productively about any needs and issues
- ❏ Comment as desired and end the meeting with a positive, professional manner

Learning from Humor

Watch this humorous reenactment of a supervisor and his employees at performance review time; enjoy the scenarios and notice the impacts.

- ● **Watch** *What Really Happens in: A Performance Review* (5:43 minutes)

REFLECTION: In the first part of the video, a variety of employees share their responses - what might you say in turn to each of them about the goals of a performance review? In the second half, what might the supervisor say or do better? What larger perspectives on doing performance reviews can you take from this humorous, albeit realistic, parody?

Additional Resources

1. Appraisal Do's and Don'ts lists effective and ineffective supervisor behaviors when conducting an appraisal interview
2. Feedback Best Practices lists tips for preparing and delivering corrective feedback

Conclusion

The key to performance management is to work collaboratively to accomplish each employee's personal and professional goals for the benefit of the library. Employee and manager should work together to find the places where those personal and institutional goals meet.

When planning the stages of the performance management cycle, it is vital that the manager consider when and how to include input from their employees. It is important to not only establish expectations but to ensure that employees understand and consider those expectations to be reasonable.

When walking the walk, the organizational tools and ongoing conversations are key to the overall success of the process and the outcomes for the library, the supervisor, and the employee.

When providing feedback, it is important to remember that feedback is a two-way conversation. A manager cannot build trust unless they are willing to listen and empathize with their employee. The annual review process is the result of all these conversations. As such, its contents should not come as a surprise - as the employee should have been providing and receiving input throughout the year.

Finally, bear in mind that the goal is to discover or awaken employee goals and then direct and encourage them in a way that benefits your organization's desired outcomes. This requires that your employees know the organization's values and goals and that they understand how they can contribute to them.

Supervisor Success Series

Performance management involves creating a work environment in which people are motivated and trusted to perform to the best of their abilities. For more insights into the holistic environment, see the other two modules in the Supervisor Success series:

- [Encouraging Motivation in the Workplace](#)
- [Managing Conflict for Supervisor Success](#)