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About This Document

owner	HR
access & use	Restricted to Managers & HR
what it is	<p>A guide that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Outlines the step-by-step process for managing a performance improvement plan ◆ Provides point-and-click access to the documents needed for each step, along with instructions and examples
who uses it	HR and Managers with direct reports
<p>Note: This document includes sensitive information. It should not be shared with staff members who do not have responsibility for direct reports. Use caution and discretion when using or printing.</p>	

Overview

At CUSTOMIZER: Insert informal company name, we monitor and evaluate performance at various stages of employment:

- ◆ New employees or regular status employees in new positions go through a probationary period
- ◆ Regular status employees participate in an annual performance review
- ◆ Employees who are not meeting performance expectations undergo a performance improvement plan with their manager, and
- ◆ Employees who still don't meet performance expectations after the performance improvement plan are subject to involuntary termination.

One of the most difficult tasks of a manager is dealing with an employee whose performance is not meeting expectations. However, letting poor performance go unchecked has negative consequences that ripple right through the Company. Not only are the people who work with the individual affected, but it sends a message to other employees that we aren't serious about maintaining consistent, high performance standards.

This guide provides step-by-step guidance on how to address performance issues with your employees, from the initial conversation to a decision to terminate employment based on an unsuccessful Performance Improvement Plan. It also directs you to forms, scripts, and other resources available to support the process.



If you require support or guidance relating to Performance Improvement Plans, please contact CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager.

Supporting Documents

There are a number of templates and guides available to support you through the Performance Improvement Plan process. The rest of this Guide describes when to use each one, but they're all listed below for quick reference.

Doc ID	Document Name	Description
JE-ALL-3530-M.	Job Description Form	Form template for creating consistently structured job descriptions
JE-ALL-3500-M.	Job Activity Log	Spreadsheet template used by all staff to record individual job activities and time spent on each activity over a period of time
PI-MGR-3200-M.	Performance Improvement Plan Form	Form template for managers to document and track the Performance Improvement Plan for a direct report
PO-MGR-3105-R	Performance Management Overview Guide	Guide for managers with direct reports. Provides overview information and guidelines regarding performance management

Before Starting a Performance Improvement Plan

There are several steps to take before you put an employee on a Performance Improvement Plan.

Step 1. Review the Position Job Description

It may be stating the obvious, but you can't hold an employee accountable for performance or responsibilities that have not been clearly communicated.

MANAGER

1. Review the job description for the position. Do you have one? Is it accurate? Has the position substantially changed since it was last revised? Do you and your employee have different expectations for what the position requires?
2. If the current job description is old or non-existent, use the *JE-ALL-3530-M. Job Description Form* template to create or update it.
3. Whether the job description is accurate or out-of-date, revisiting it with the employee creates a natural opportunity to discuss and set expectations for job responsibilities, competencies required, success traits, and level of performance.
 - If the job description is non-existent or out-of-date, work with the employee to revise or create it.
 - If the job description is still accurate, review it with the employee for the purpose of ensuring you both have the same expectations for the position.

Step 2. (Optional) Complete a Job Activity Log

You may want to ask your employee to record their daily activities over a period of time using the *JE-ALL-3500-M. Job Activity Log* if:

- ◆ Their performance is not meeting your expectations
- ◆ The position job description is old or non-existent
- ◆ You and your employee have a difference of opinion on what the position responsibilities are
- ◆ Your employee feels the position has too many responsibilities for one person to do

MANAGER

1. Inform **CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager** of your intentions and discuss the reasons why you want to log the job activities.
2. If you decide to proceed, customize a copy of the *Job Activity Log* for the position. Refer to the accompanying Instructions for guidance.
3. Meet with the employee to discuss the *Job Activity Log* for their position, and request them to complete it over a period of time. During the meeting:
 - Review a copy of the *Job Activity Log* spreadsheet and discuss how it will be completed.
 - Discuss the length of time they will log activities. For some positions you may be able to get a good sense of job activity with a couple of weeks, while others will take longer. Set the expectation that you will check in and review progress periodically - weekly or bi-weekly, as appropriate.
 - Make sure they understand the purpose of the activity, and how it will help you both set appropriate expectations for the position.
4. Give the employee an electronic version of the *Job Activity Log* spreadsheet and its accompanying Instructions document and ask them to begin logging daily work tasks immediately.
5. Check in with the employee regularly. Either review the spreadsheet together or ask them to send you a copy.
6. When sufficient time has passed (at least 2-4 weeks depending on the position) and clear patterns begin to emerge in the type and quantity of tasks, compare the job activities to the responsibilities in the job description. If the position includes responsibilities that are time-consuming but infrequent (e.g., quarterly or annual tasks), select the best option to meet your timing needs:

- Continue the job activity log until one instance of the infrequent activity has occurred, or
 - Put the job activity log on hold until the next instance, or
 - Work with the employee to estimate the amount of time required by those responsibilities when they occur.
7. Once the employee concludes the *Job Activity Log* activity, review the results and determine if the current job description is accurate or needs revision.
- If the job description is accurate and the employee's performance is not meeting expectations, discuss with CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager about starting the employee on a Performance Improvement Plan.
 - If the job description is not accurate and needs revision, work with CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager and the employee to create a revised version. Continue to monitor the employee's performance against the revised job description.

Step 3. Preliminary Discussion and/or Verbal Warning

Once you are confident the following conditions are true, it's time to broach the subject with the employee:

- ◆ The job description accurately reflects the position requirements
- ◆ The employee is aware of the expectations in the job description, and
- ◆ There is a problem with the employee's performance or behavior.

A preliminary discussion brings your concerns to the employee's attention in an informal manner and gives them opportunity to reflect on performance and what they might do to rectify the situation before a Performance Improvement Plan becomes necessary.

Performance Improvement Plans take a lot of work to create and manage. If you can avoid the need for one through an informal conversation, it's highly recommended.

MANAGER

1. Notify CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager of your intention to hold the meeting.
2. Schedule a time to meet with the employee and discuss the problem. Set aside at least an hour and make sure you have a private space available.
3. Conduct the meeting:

- a. Clearly define the performance or behavior that is not meeting required standards, and provide specific examples.
 - b. Clarify the expectations and the time frame in which improvement is expected.
 - c. Inform the employee that if improvement isn't made in the time frame given, you'll be initiating a Performance Improvement Plan. Be specific and give examples of what "improvement" will look like to you.
 - d. Ask that the employee commit to correcting the performance problem and explain the consequences if the problem is not resolved.
 - e. Develop a plan with the employee to support their improvement. For example, this may include coaching, training, or a professional development course.
 - f. Set a date for a follow-up conversation.
 - g. Depending on how the discussion goes, you may choose to issue a verbal warning.
 - If the employee is receptive and shows immediate concern to rectify the situation, you may choose to wait for a second conversation, if necessary, to issue a verbal warning.
 - If the employee is defiant and refuses to accept any responsibility for improving the situation, you may decide that a verbal warning is necessary in the first meeting.
 - In either circumstance, the employee needs to understand that the conversation and problems identified are serious, and a Performance Improvement Plan will be initiated if immediate changes are not seen.
4. Immediately following the meeting:
- Make notes about the preliminary discussion/warning meeting, and file them with any other documentation related to the employee's performance.
 - Keep your notes professional, relevant, and objective. They may be requested as discovery material if an employee ever challenges a decision to terminate employment in court.
 - Notify CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager that the meeting occurred and summarize the outcome.
5. Assess ongoing progress, consult with CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager and determine the next step to take.
- If the employee has made effort and improvements are obvious, continue to monitor the situation until performance meets expectations.
 - If progress isn't being made at an acceptable rate, proceed with a Performance Improvement Plan.
6. Schedule a follow up conversation with the employee.

- Review what happened in your previous meeting.
 - Discuss progress made and next steps. If you are proceeding with a Performance Improvement Plan, refer to **Step 4. Document a Performance Improvement Plan.**
7. Document the discussion and update CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager.

Initiate a Performance Improvement Plan

Initiating a Performance Improvement Plan is a serious undertaking. It means the employee will lose their job if they don't meet the goals and standards in it. Be prepared for this outcome before you start, and work closely with HR throughout the process.

Step 4. Document the Plan

The *PI-MGR-3200-M. Performance Improvement Plan Form* is the tool we use to formally document an employee's Performance Improvement Plan. Using it ensures that all steps of the process are fairly executed and documented.

MANAGER

1. Consult with CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager regarding your intention to initiate a Performance Improvement Plan.
2. Open the *Performance Improvement Plan Form* and its related Instructions document. Save a copy to an appropriate secure directory.
3. Complete the **Initial Meeting** section of the form. Step-by-step instructions are provided in the related Instructions document.
4. Review the completed form with CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager.
5. Once the **Initial Meeting** section of the *Performance Improvement Plan Form* is finalized, print 4 copies for the first meeting.

TIP: Plan for 3...

Each meeting with an employee regarding their Performance Improvement Plan should be attended by 3 people—the employee, the employee's manager, and someone representing HR to act as a witness.

Step 5. Conduct Initial Meeting

All meetings regarding the Performance Improvement Plan must include the manager, employee, and CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the HR representative, or if not available, include instructions that another manager needs to be present to witness the conversation .

➤ MANAGER ➤ HR

1. Schedule a meeting with the three participants. Set aside at least an hour and make sure you book a private space. Give consideration to the time of day the meeting is held. The employee may be upset afterward and want to leave.
2. Conduct the meeting:
 - a. If this meeting follows a verbal warning, and performance did not improve to the level necessary to meet expectations, discuss the prior commitments that were not met.
 - b. Review and discuss the Performance Improvement Plan form in detail with the employee, to ensure the content is fully understood.
 - For each area that requires performance improvement (there may be more than one), go through each example. Contrast current performance with the performance expected.
 - Discuss any corrective actions required, and support and resources the Company is willing to provide.
 - Be clear about the timeframe for the overall Performance Improvement Plan, the incremental goals and deadlines in the Action Plan, and the consequences if the goals are not met.
 - c. Communicate the date for the first follow-up meeting.
 - d. At the end of the meeting, provide the employee with **two** copies of the Performance Improvement Plan form and ask them to:
 - Initial each page in the lower-right corner, and sign as indicated with a witness present (both copies).
 - Return one signed copy to you within the timeframe stipulated on the form.
 - Keep the second copy for their records.
3. After the meeting:
 - a. Make notes about the discussion and file them with any other documentation related to the employee's performance.

Keep your notes professional, relevant, and objective. Your notes may be requested as discovery material if an employee ever challenges your decisions in court.

- b. Scan the form with the employee's signature and email it to the CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager.

Step 6. Conduct Follow-Up Meetings

Monitor the employee's performance throughout the period of the Performance Improvement Plan. Continue holding follow-up meetings at regular intervals as long as the employee is progressing and meeting the goals documented in the Action Plan.

Before each follow-up meeting, decide which message will be given:

- ◆ **Successful completion of the Performance Improvement Plan** - The employee has demonstrated satisfactory improvement, and fulfilled the terms committed to in the Performance Improvement Plan form.
- ◆ **Additional performance improvement required** - The employee has demonstrated improvement in one or more areas, but further improvement is required.
- ◆ **Termination** - The employee has not demonstrated satisfactory improvement and employment will be terminated.

If the employee is not meeting the goals and there's little or no evidence of improvement, it's not necessary to continue the Performance Improvement Plan for the entire period specified. For example, if the Performance Improvement Plan duration is 3 months, and after 1 or 2 months there's insufficient progress, a strong case can be made for termination of employment at that point. Progress in the first month is often a strong indicator of the eventual outcome.

MANAGER ➤ **HR**

1. Schedule the follow-up meeting with the same people who attended the initial meeting, at the interval specified in the Performance Improvement Plan (e.g., 2 weeks, 1 month).
2. Complete the appropriate **Follow-Up Meeting** section of the Performance Improvement Plan form (i.e., Meeting #1 or #2, etc.). Step-by-step instructions are provided in the related Instructions document.
3. Review the updated form with the CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager. Once the **Follow-Up Meeting** section is finalized, print 4 copies for the meeting.

Note: If the decision has been made to terminate employment, prepare to deliver this message at the meeting. Refer to the **Involuntary Termination** section below for more information.

4. Assuming employment is not being terminated:
 - a. Summarize the progress made since the last meeting and acknowledge the employee's effort.
 - b. Review and discuss the updated form, including any changes to the Action Plan.
 - c. Communicate the next steps to the employee and set a date for the next follow-up meeting.
 - d. Provide the employee with **two** copies of the updated Performance Improvement Plan form and ask them to:
 - Initial each page in the lower-right corner, and sign as indicated with a witness present (both copies).
 - Return one signed copy to you within the timeframe stipulated on the form.
 - Keep the second copy for their records.

5. After the meeting:
 - a. Make notes about the discussion and file them with any other documentation related to the employee's performance.
 - b. Scan the form with the employee's signature and email it to the **CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not their name). Example: HR Manager.**

Involuntary Termination

If the employee has not demonstrated adequate improvement throughout the Performance Improvement Plan, and has therefore not fulfilled the terms committed to in the Performance Improvement Plan form, two options remain:

- ◆ Find an alternative employment opportunity within the company that better fits the employee's skills and level of competence
- ◆ Terminate employment.

Before initiating termination of employment, it's critical that managers consult with HR to ensure:

- ◆ The required performance expectations were fully understood by the employee, and have not been met.
- ◆ Adequate resources and support were available to the employee during the performance improvement review period.

- ◆ The employee was provided with sufficient time to meet the performance/behavior expectations laid out in the Performance Improvement Plan form.
- ◆ The employee was informed of and fully understood the consequences of their failure to meet the expectations described in the Performance Improvement Plan form.

For guidelines, instructions and more information on involuntary terminations, refer to:

- ◆ *PO-MGR-3105-R. Performance Management Overview Guide* – see **Involuntary Termination** section
- ◆ *IT-MGR-3210-S. Process Guide for Managers – Involuntary Terminations*