

TAKING A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE

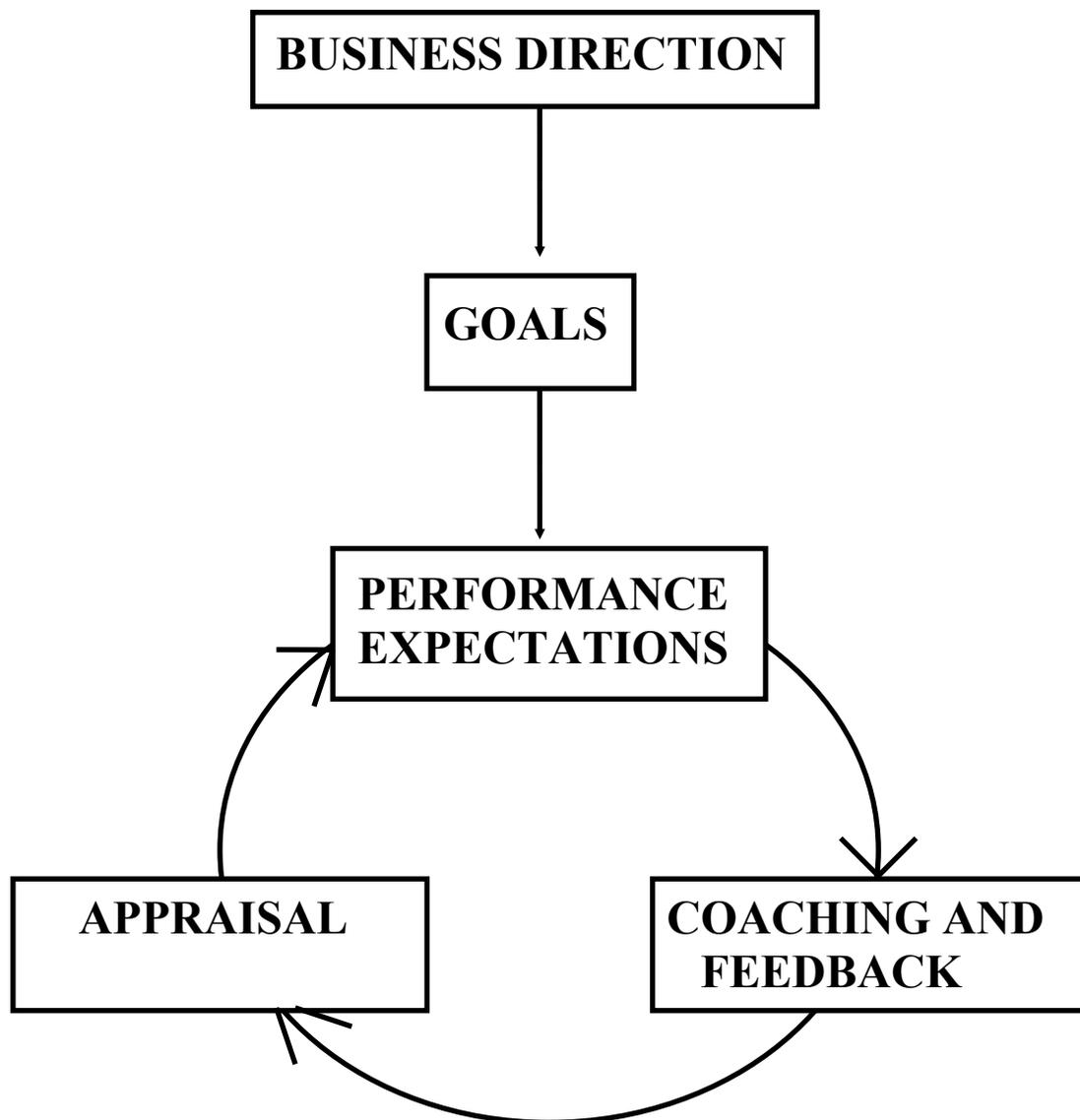
Thomas R. Maloney
306 Warren Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
Tel: 607-2551628
Email: trm5@cornell.edu

People in Ag
Webinar
July 16, 2008

THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Performance Management:

The daily process of working toward previously established performance expectations followed by a formal or informal evaluation.



ESTABLISHING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Individual performance expectations:

- are defined as the conditions or results of satisfactory work.
- should be discussed and agreed upon before the performance period begins.
- should be consistent with the mission, objectives, and goals previously discussed.

Advantages of written performance expectations:

- allow managers and supervisors to discuss and agree on expected performance.
- provide a permanent record which can be referred to at any time through the performance period.

Essential components of effective performance expectations:

- **Measure** - Truly result-oriented performance expectations must contain measures by which performance can be judged. Measures may include dollars, percentages, numbers of items, ranges, etc. By integrating measures into performance expectations, both manager and employee know clearly what level of performance is expected.
- **Time** - Productivity is often determined by how quickly desired results can be achieved. The employee and the manager should be clear on just when results are expected.
- **Attainability** - Performance expectations must be within the individual's and the organization's reach if they are to be an effective performance management tool. If either internal or external business constraints prevent attainability, they may serve to demotivate rather than motivate the individual.
- **Available Resources** - The individual or team striving to meet performance expectations must know what resources including time are available to them.

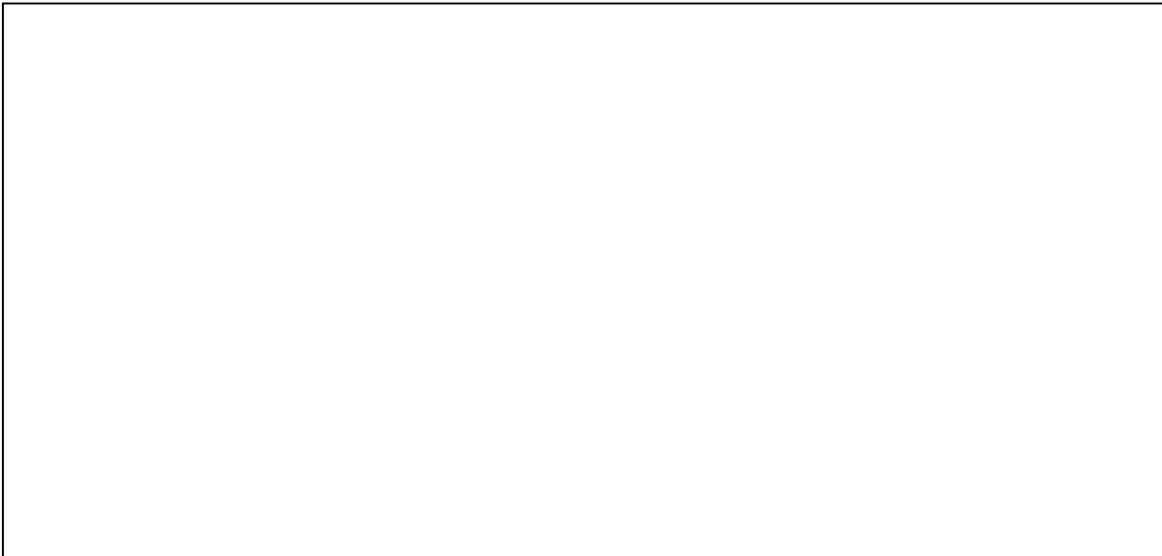
**EMPLOYEE DICIPLINE AND
DISCHARGE**

DISCIPLINE AND DISCHARGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of discipline?



2. Given that many states, probably including yours, are “at will” employment states, why is there such great fear of discharging an employee?



“AT WILL” EMPLOYMENT

Definition: Either the employer or the employee could terminate the relationship at any time for any reason.

Two events have eroded “at will” employment

1. An increase in protective legislation
2. The concept of implied contract for:
 - Long term employment
 - Termination only for a good cause

Erosion of “at will” employment has increased the emphasis on documentation

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE DEFINED

A progressive approach to discipline which defines unacceptable behavior and communicates the consequences of that behavior. The employee is involved in every step of the process.

THE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE APPROACH

Step 1: Coaching

Step 2: Verbal warning

Step 3: Written warning

Step 4: Terminate employment

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE APPROACH STEPS

Step 1: Coaching

- Discuss performance expectations
- Manager offers necessary support for employee success

Step 2: Provide a Verbal Warning

- Address specific unacceptable behavior
- Explore causes of problem and possible solutions
- Communicate specific change expected
- Express confidence that the problem will be solved

Step 3: Provide a Written Warning

- Meet to outline recurrent unacceptable behavior
- Avoid threats
- Gain employee's agreement to change
- Document the meeting in writing

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE APPROACH STEPS

(Continued)

Step 4: Terminate Employment

- Be brief
- Give specific reasons for termination
- Provide information on employee rights or procedures
- Collect keys and other golf course property

Source: Mader-Clark and Guerin

THE KEY COMPONENTS FOR DOCUMENTING DISCIPLINE

THE E – FOSA + SYSTEM

E Expectations (Ongoing performance management)

F Facts (What, When, Where, Where)

O Objectives (Define Expectations)

S Solutions (Methods to Improve Performance)

A Action (Consequences)

+ (create opportunities for the employee to succeed)

Source: Paterson & Debleax, Documenting Discipline Fourth Edition

DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND PREVENTIONS

Problem	How to Prevent
Employee frequently does job improperly or incompletely.	Properly train staff members and emphasize follow-up to ensure that employees have learned all parts of the job.
Employee does not understand why discipline is needed or why he or she is being disciplined, or denies allegations.	Enter into a discussion of the problem behavior only when you have specifically defined what the problem behavior is. Have facts, dates and specific descriptions of problem behavior. Prepare yourself and be confident that you can clearly convey your concerns to the employee.
Employee is unaware of course policies or rules, and consequently breaks rules or behaves inappropriately.	To ensure rules are understood, the supervisor should review rules and policies with new employees and provide an opportunity to ask questions. Rules should be included in employee handbooks or posted on a bulletin board where they are accessible to all employees.
Manager procrastinates or delays dealing with an obvious problem. Problem gets worse. Work of other employees is affected.	Address problems as soon as they arise. It is easier to address a new problem than to deal with one that has escalated into a major crisis. Be sure to speak with and coach employees on a daily basis. Set aside time routinely for this purpose.
Failure to follow up once discipline has started. Employee not held accountable.	A manager with many responsibilities can find that he or she is “too busy” to follow up on a problem situation. Set follow-up dates. Place them on a calendar and “to do” lists so they become a top priority.
Employee lacks basic skills to do the job and is incapable of learning them.	Extra time spent carefully recruiting and selecting employees can greatly reduce selection “mistakes.” Practical skills tests or trial periods can help screen out unqualified applicants.
The discipline discussion becomes an explosive confrontation.	Be prepared with a written set of notes. Stay in control of the discussion. If the employee shouts or becomes angry, avoid being drawn into a shouting match. Anticipate confrontations and involve another supervisor in the meeting, if appropriate, for support and assistance.

THREE PRACTICAL BOOKS

- The Progressive Discipline Handbook by Margie Mader-Clark and Lisa Guerin
- Documenting Discipline, Fourth Edition by Lee T. Paterson and Mike Deblieux
- 101 Sample Write Ups for Documenting Employee Performance Problems by Paul Falcone

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Deblieux, Mike, *Documenting Discipline*, American Media Publishing, West Des Moines, IA, 1995.

Falcone, Paul, *101 Sample Write-ups for Documenting Employee Performance Problems*, AMACOM, New York, 1999.

Mader-Clark, Margie and Lisa Guerin, *The Progressive Discipline Handbook*, Consolidated Printers Inc., Berkeley, CA, 2007.

Paterson Lee T. and Mike Deblieux, *Documenting Employee Discipline*, LexisNexis, Mathew Bender & Co., Charlottesville, VA, 2002.

Redeker, James R., *Employee Discipline Policies and Practices*, BNA, Washington, D.C., 1989.