



Solving the Problem Employee: Performance Improvement Plans

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what we'll do

rehabilitate struggling
employees ready to grow

ease out 5%-ers

minimize disruption

contain legal costs

all through a respectful,
non- confrontational mechanism

fill documentation
holes

engage management

scourge of the 5%

5/95% rule

failure-to-fire issues

↑ productivity

lower expectations pull
everyone down

talent flight + residual
suckiness

↑ manager respect

preempting the 5%

effective application process

due diligence: references, background checks,
drug screens

ongoing performance management

the crutch of the annual evaluation

but once you've dug your hole...

remember:

**axiom 16: angry people sue
surprised and disrespected
people get angry**

managing is hard

the PIP process is cheaper than litigation

4 possible outcomes

poor employee will quit pronto

once in the process, either party may decide it's not working

oh, yeah - manager learns a lesson, too

good employee successfully rehabilitates

full documentation justifies separation

each a net positive for the employer

keys to the successful PIP

sincere effort to help
and rehabilitate

employee buy-in on
process, goals, roadmap

both sides make the
process a priority

thorough documentation
+ clear communication

solve the problem

is the situation ripe?

HR and legal involvement

what's missing
and why?

is rehabilitation
possible?

management
bandwidth

upcoming
projects

pick your timeline:
30/45/60

prepare the plan

2-4 areas of improvement

don't shy away from subjectivity

non-accusatory, helpful tone

specific examples to support areas

documentation of
previous counseling

As has been discussed with [EMPLOYEE], the areas in which the [COMPANY] requires improvement include:

- **Quality of Work Effort**
- **Quality of Work Product**
- **Receptiveness to Feedback**

subjectivity
OK

creates
box for
problem
employee

Starting now, therefore, and for the next [#] days, [COMPANY] will agree to provide additional support for [EMPLOYEE] via this Performance Improvement Plan. [EMPLOYEE] will be expected to meet all of the expectations set forth for the full [#] days. At the end of the plan, [EMPLOYEE] will be expected to continue to meet all expectations, even with the resumption of normal management processes.

1. **Quality of Work Effort**

One of the most important performance competencies for a successful consultant at [COMPANY] is independent drive and a sense of urgency. [COMPANY] needs employees to demonstrate a sense of ownership of their work and a hunger for excellence on behalf of clients. [EMPLOYEE] has not successfully demonstrated these competencies related to quality of effort:

- ...[EMPLOYEE]'s "utilization percentage" is consistently among the lowest on the team, ...
- [EMPLOYEE] does not report to work at consistent hours ...
- Despite instruction on numerous occasions to enter his time on a daily basis, [EMPLOYEE] consistently fails to do so. This month, he waited nearly two weeks to enter his time for the first two weeks of January. ...

Improvement Expected

- [EMPLOYEE] must report to work at regular hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30-5:30. These are the minimum hours required. Client demands may dictate longer hours either in the office or from home.
- [EMPLOYEE] must submit time on a daily basis prior to leaving each day.
- When [EMPLOYEE] has any period of the workday when there is not a billable client task, he must proactively seek utilization eligible work and then treat that work with the same care and attention as a client task.
- **[OTHER GOALS AS ARTICULATED BY EMPLOYEE]**

valuable
FLSA
information

get employee investment

make
objective
and easy

Assistance to be provided by [COMPANY]:

- [SUPERVISOR] will provide refresher training on time entry
- [SUPERVISOR] will provide instructions on billing client time
- [SUPERVISOR] will help brainstorm ideas non-billable tasks when [EMPLOYEE] is not assigned to a client task
- **[OTHER ASSISTANCE AS AGREED TO BY EMPLOYEE AND [COMPANY]]**

talking points

get right to it: employee not meeting expectations

emphasize:

- respect
- potential
- team effort
- mutual obligations

anticipate:

- questions
- defensiveness
- necessary contingencies

cover for
poor past
documentation

- [EMPLOYEE] has now been working at [COMPANY] for [TIME].
- At various checkpoints within that time, his supervisors have discussed actions needed to improve his work and meet [COMPANY]'s job performance expectations.
- Following these occasions, [EMPLOYEE] has generally demonstrated immediate and modest, but not sustained and comprehensive, improvement.
- At this point, [EMPLOYEE] has received formal and informal feedback and guidance on several occasions, and his performance is ***still not completely meeting [COMPANY]'s expectations on a consistent basis.***
- [COMPANY] is willing to move into a limited period of significantly more structured supervision in the hope that more express direction and rapid feedback will help [EMPLOYEE] understand and deliver the quality of effort and work product that [COMPANY] requires and of which we believe he is capable.

don't have to
overstate the
issue

PIP initiation

early friday afternoon

- 2 managers walk through the PIP
- answer questions
- let the employee get started
- be available
- check in before EOD

late monday morning

- start with questions
- minimal direction

- zero prejudice
- honest feedback

check-ins

employee-arranged, employee-led

chance to demonstrate commitment

answer questions with questions

candidly assess:

- progress
- trajectory
- potential

prompt follow-up memo

more opportunities to demonstrate intentions

Regardless of whether [EMPLOYEE] is assigned to client or internal work, he will prepare a short daily status report with the following information:

- Quick bullet point list of accomplishments
- Summary of any challenges he faced during the course of the day, his problem solving approach, and the resolution of the problem
- Goal for the following day (what will be completed by end of day tomorrow)
- Any meeting or help needed to complete the goal

The summary and plan should be emailed each afternoon to [SUPERVISOR]

On a bi-weekly basis (every other week), [EMPLOYEE]'s leadership team will meet with him to review his progress including feedback on the daily summaries, a review of time entry, and a review of deliverables and provide constructive feedback and guidance as needed.

[EMPLOYEE] will be responsible for scheduling this meeting, setting the agenda, and running the program.

putting onus on employee

keep your foot on the gas

pull the trigger as
early as necessary
and appropriate

ongoing search for
opportunities

also needed to separately preserve at-will employment relationship

If at any time during the [#]-day period [EMPLOYEE] does not meet the expectations set forth in the plan, [COMPANY] may terminate his employment.

At any time following the [#]-day period, if [EMPLOYEE] fails to meet [COMPANY]'s performance expectations around quality of effort and quality of work product, [COMPANY] will terminate his employment.

However, it is [COMPANY]'s hope that with this clear guidance and significant support, [EMPLOYEE] will be able to get on the right track and bring his performance up to acceptable standards and maintain that performance over time.

wrapping it up

possible outcomes:

success memo

extension

separation

celebrate the success

separation

- should not be a surprise
- practical preparation
- talking-point-based discussion
- respectful and dignified
- option to resign
- separation package
- address uncertainties

don't ruin it

that means don't:

ignore or downplay legitimate progress

begin planning termination before
employee has had a chance to apply PIP

move the goalposts without notice to and
input from employee

fail to document follow up

take aways:

specific contemporaneous
performance feedback = strategy #1

focus on the problem, not just the
employee

separating poor performers is
possible

BUT: PIPs require authenticity,
preparation, follow through, and
patience

Questions?

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