Lesson 7:
Leading Performance Conversations
Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

• Describe the purposes of each of the performance conversations required/recommended under NSPS and tell when each is to occur.

• Discuss how to prepare for and lead each performance conversation.

• Describe a simple process to follow within each conversation.

• Discuss your responsibility for identifying and addressing performance deficiencies.

• List guidelines for writing an employee self-assessment.
Communication drives performance by doing all of the following:

• Creating shared understanding.
• Building mutual trust and confidence.
• Promoting a common sense of purpose and direction.
• Encouraging teamwork and cooperation.
• Cultivating personal accountability and excellence.
Performance Conversations

Conversation 1
Performance Plan
• Establish performance expectations
• Align employee objectives with organizational goals

Conversation 2
Interim Review
• Check progress
• Provide feedback
• Make course corrections

Conversation 3
Annual Appraisal
• Review written appraisal
• Communicate rating of record and performance payout

RECOMMENDED
End-of-Cycle Review
• Review employee self-assessment
• Gather data for written appraisal
Performance Conversations Timeline

**Performance Plan**
- **OCT**

**Ongoing Feedback**
- **NOV DEC**
- **JAN FEB**

**Interim Review**
- **MAR APR MAY**
- **JUN JUL AUG SEP**

**End-of-Cycle Review**

**Annual Appraisal**
- Performance payout in January

Performance Management for Managers/Supervisors
**Leading Performance Conversations**
Performance Conversations

Process

**Preparation**
Each conversation requires **preparation**
Example Task
- Drafting job objectives
- Reviewing organizational goals
- Writing a self-assessment

**Conversation**
Each conversation has a distinct **purpose**.
Example Topics
- Accomplishments
- Contributing Factors
- Development goals
- Areas for improvement

**Outcomes**
Each conversation has important **outcomes**.
Example Products
- Performance plan
- Written appraisal
- Recommended rating
- Recommended payout
Performance Plan Conversation: Purposes & Outcomes

PURPOSES

• To reach a joint understanding of performance expectations for the current (new) rating cycle
• To align employee objectives with organizational goals
• To identify developmental needs

OUTCOMES

• Performance plan
• Development plan
• Conversation notes, other relative documentation
EMPLOYEE

• Draft job objectives for current (new) rating cycle.
• Review Contributing Factors and relevant Performance Indicators.
• Consider stretch goals and developmental needs.

MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

• Communicate organizational goals to employee in advance.
• Review employee’s previous performance plan and current salary.
• Review Contributing Factors and relevant Performance Indicators.
REQUIRED TOPICS

• Organizational goals
• Work priorities
• Job objectives
• Contributing Factors
• Developmental needs
• Impact of conduct on performance

Optional Topics
- Potential barriers to success
- Tasks, timelines, and milestones

TIPS

• Be open to employee input and ideas.
• Be open to employee concerns about potential barriers and unknowns.
• Consider talking about your own job objectives and how these fit with the employee’s job objectives.
Guidelines for Productive Conversations

**Clarify**
Gather information to reach a shared understanding of issues and concerns.

**Explore**
Seek ideas and options for achieving positive results.

**Agree**
Agree on a plan that promotes successful completion of objectives.
**PURPOSES**

• To check progress toward achieving objectives
• To acknowledge what is working
• To make course corrections as needed
• To provide feedback so the employee has the direction needed to achieve objectives

**OUTCOMES**

• Confirmed performance plan
• Confirmed development plan
• Conversation notes, other relative documentation

**Optional Outcomes**

- Revised performance plan
- Revised development plan
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)
Interim Review Conversation: Preparation

EMPLOYEE

• Review your performance plan and development plan.

• Write a self-assessment (recommended) or be ready to present examples of progress made toward achieving objectives.

Schedule the meeting for a mutually agreeable time.

MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

• Review your own notes regarding previous feedback given and employee self-assessment (if submitted).

• Review organizational goals and work priorities.

• Review employee performance plan and development plan.

• Create an agenda for your feedback.
Interim Review Conversation: Topics & Tips

**TOPICS**

- Progress made toward achieving objectives.
- New or changing organizational goals and work priorities.
- Adjustments to performance plan and/or development plan.

**Optional Topics**
- Areas for improvement
- Problems solved, problems needing solutions

**TIPS**

- Distinguish this conversation from the “everyday” feedback you give employees.
- Note problems, but avoid problem-solving.
- Provide feedback that is specific and supportive.
- Provide examples of the employee’s performance.
- Do not say, “If I were to rate your performance today ...”
Interim Review Conversation

ROLE PLAY

Performance Conversations
Types of Actions:

- Remedial training
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Reassignment
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) (not required)

- Letter of counseling
- Verbal or written warning
- Written reprimand
- Adverse action
  - Removal
  - Suspension (any length)
  - Reduction in rate of basic pay or pay band
Component Discretion

- Timing, recording, and minimum number of interim reviews.
- Preferred methods for addressing poor performance.
- Identification of competencies for developmental positions.
- Guidelines for individual development planning.
- Guidance regarding reduction in rate of basic pay or pay band.
END-OF-CYCLE REVIEW CONVERSATION: PURPOSES & OUTCOMES

PURPOSES

• To review employee self-assessment.

• To clarify understanding of accomplishments and contributions and to gather additional information regarding employee performance.

• To provide feedback for continuing success and development.

OUTCOMES

• Written appraisal

Outcomes required regardless of whether recommended conversation occurs:

- Recommended rating
- Recommended share and payout distribution
- Conversation notes, other relative documentation
End-of-Cycle Review Conversation: Preparation

**EMPLOYEE**
- Write a self-assessment.
- Review the Performance Indicator.
- Review your Contributing Factors.

**MANAGER/SUPERVISOR**
- Review employee self-assessment.
- Review your notes from the Interim Review and other feedback conversations.
- Review the Performance Indicator and the descriptors for selected Contributing Factors.
- Create an agenda and plan your questions.
End-of-Cycle Review Conversation: 
Topics & Tips

**TOPICS**

- Employee self-assessment
- Employee job objectives, accomplishments, and link to organizational goals
- Selected Contributing Factors and Benchmark Descriptors

**Optional Topics**

- Improvements shown, areas needing further improvement

**TIPS**

- Use your best listening skills. Ask questions to clarify understanding, otherwise let the employee do most of the talking.
- Give feedback throughout the year to reduce employee anxiety at this meeting.
- Do not say, “If I were to rate your performance today ...”

The End-of-Cycle Review and Performance Plan conversations should be scheduled separately.
Guidelines for Self-Assessments

• Restate your understanding of your objectives.
• Highlight your most significant achievements for the rating cycle.
• Make the connection between what you did and why that should matter to your organization.
• Cite instances where your actions or conduct exemplified your Contributing Factors.
• Note challenges you faced and how you fared.
PURPOSES

• To review written appraisal.

• To communicate rating of record and performance payout (share and payout distribution).

• To provide feedback for continuing success and development.

OUTCOMES

• Performance payout (January)

• Rating of record

• Conversation notes, other relative documentation

Optional Outcomes

− Revised performance plan (for current cycle)
− Revised development plan
− Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)
− Appeals process
Annual Appraisal Conversation:
Preparation

EMPLOYEE

• None

MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

• Review comments from Pay Pool Panel (if any) and incorporate them into the final written appraisal.

• Review your notes from the End-of-Cycle Review and other feedback conversations.

• Plan your feedback, particularly if the rating is below Valued Performance or otherwise not what the employee expecting.
Annual Appraisal Conversation: Topics & Tips

**TOPICS**

- Written appraisal
- Rating of record
- Performance payout (share and payout distribution)

**Optional Topics**
- Areas for improvement
- Appeals process

**TIPS**

- There should be no surprises. All concerned want the appraisal to be fair.
- If the rating of record is below Valued Performance, it is important to discuss next steps immediately.
- Do not criticize or blame the pay pool panel for lowering a rating.
In the first scene, what does the supervisor do wrong?

In the second scene, what does he do right?

What does the employee do right?

Supervisor: LTC Martinez
Employee: Al Simpson
• Each performance conversation has distinct purposes and important outcomes.

• Employees should prepare for each conversation, as should supervisors.

• A simple process to follow in each conversation is Open → Clarify → Develop → Agree → Close.

• Employee self-assessments provide valuable information for managers/supervisors during the review process.
• While each conversation presents opportunities for giving feedback, feedback should not be limited to these conversations.

• Your employees are likely to feel less anxious about performance conversations if you have done your job and given feedback throughout the year.

• NSPS expects managers/supervisors to take responsibility for identifying and addressing performance deficiencies.
Questions