



The Dana Pritchard Case Study

The following is an example of how MRA can be used to enhance performance. *Italicized comments refer to how your usages may differ.* This report is available at the **Spaulding Associates, Inc. (SAI)** web site (www.spauldingassociates.com.) Follow the links on the left-hand side of the home page toward *MRA Services* and the *MRA Case Study* or go directly to <http://www.spauldingassociates.com/MRACaseStudy.htm>. If you would like to know more about what MRA is, follow the links toward *What Is MRA?* or go directly to <http://www.spauldingassociates.com/WhatIsMRA.htm>.

Background

Dana Pritchard has been a manager with Advanced Technologies for over 6 years. She manages a team of four who are responsible for bringing a new product to market. Dana is proud of her management abilities and feels she is a strong advocate for her team.

Recently, however, she had begun to notice some deterioration in the team's productivity and morale. After consultation with her manager, she decided to ask her team to help her assess some of her leadership skills. In order to get the most candid and accurate feedback, Dana decided to use an assessment process that would not only allow respondents to remain anonymous but also give her specific feedback regarding her skills.

MRA can be used to assess individuals (as in this example) or groups of individuals, teams, or entire organizations. Generally, MRA can be helpful whenever answering the questions "How am I doing?" or "How are we doing?"

The Process

With help, Dana developed an MRA instrument that would assess skills in three areas:

- Team Building
- Delegation
- Performance Management

The assessment instrument contained a total of twenty-five items. Each item was carefully designed to provide her with specific feedback on an observable behavior that supported one of the above three skills sets. (The actual assessment items are listed on the second page of Dana's results that follow.)

An assessment for your use may have any number of assessment areas or categories.



These categories can be unique to your organization's needs. Additionally, you can design any number of items within a category. The items may also be of your own design.

Dana's staff responded to each item on a 1 - 10 scale that measured their "satisfaction" with how well Dana performed each item within each category. Dana's assessment also allowed respondents to include comments regarding each item.

Your survey can be on any scale of your own design: 1 - 5; 1 - 10; etc. It may also measure "satisfaction", "agreement", "importance" or any other measure you choose. You may gather up-to-three different types of comments regarding each item. For example, after each item you may ask "What you like", "What you don't like" and "What you would prefer". You can phrase the prompts for written responses in any way you choose.

The Results

Dana learned that her team felt she was a strong advocate for them collectively. She also learned that team members needed more individual feedback and more authority granted at the individual level. Using the developmental recommendations from her feedback report, Dana and her manager instituted a performance improvement program designed to help her be more responsive to the individuals on her team. Dana began to see positive results from her efforts within weeks.

You can generate reports showing performance at the item or category level. When assessments are done across an entire company (like a performance appraisal process) individual results can be compared to team results; team results can be compared to Divisional results; and Divisional results can be compared to overall organizational results. Aggregating data in this way can provide useful feedback at a variety of levels within the organization. These reports can be printed for individuals, teams, divisions or entire organizations. MRA can be used to answer "How am I doing?" or "How are we doing?" at any of these levels. Should you choose to re-assess at a later date, you can measure movement on items and categories at any level as well.

**If you would like to discuss a particular assessment need,
call Bill Spaulding at (336) 288-8713.**



Items Used in Dana Pritchard's Assessment

The following page lists the 25 items divided into three categories that were used in Dana Pritchard's assessment. Dana's categories were:

- Team Building
- Delegating
- Performance Management

How Your Assessment Can Vary

You may generate any number of categories for your assessment. Each category may contain any number of items.

You have complete control. Your assessment may be as customized as your needs require.

Your multi-rater survey could be used not only for team leader development, but also for important personal and organizational needs like:

- *Performance Management*
- *Upward Feedback*
- *Customer Satisfaction*
- *Needs Assessment*
- *Team Development*
- *Project Management*
- *Cross Functional Effectiveness*
- *Climate Surveys*
- *Executive Development*

You can design a multi-rater assessment to provide an accurate answer to the questions:

“How am I doing?” or “How are we doing?”



from any perspective: individual, team, departmental, divisional or organizational.

Teambuilding - 7 Items

1. Helps team members develop action plans.
2. Helps clarify the roles and expectations for individual team members.
3. Reports the team's progress towards accomplishment of team goals.
4. Gives praise or recognition to the team when it has performed well.
5. Helps the team address and resolve team issues.
6. Asks for the team's recommendations before making hiring or assignment decisions.
7. Represents the team effectively to the rest of the organization.

Delegating - 9 Items

1. Assigns tasks based on individual team member's strengths.
2. Gives team members challenging assignments.
3. States clearly and precisely the results that are expected.
4. Explains why a task, objective or goal is important.
5. Establishes clear standards for high-quality work.
6. Establishes reasonable milestones and completion deadlines.
7. Explains clearly how much freedom of action and authority have been granted to the team member.
8. Gives more direction and supervision to people who need development.
9. Goes outside the team for resources and solutions when needed.

Performance Management - 9 Items

1. Gives ongoing performance feedback throughout the year.
2. Gives informal verbal feedback about performance soon after it occurs.
3. When poor performance becomes a trend, formally counsels the team member.
4. Counsels team members about poor performance in private.
5. Gives fair and accurate performance appraisal ratings.
6. Writes specific, descriptive comments on performance appraisal forms.
7. Discusses the performance appraisal privately with the team member.
8. Allows the team member to read and make comments about his/her performance appraisal.
9. During performance appraisal meetings, helps the team member set performance and professional development goals.

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Dana Pritchard's Report

The following is an explanation of some of the important elements in Dana Pritchard's report. *Italicized comments indicate how a customized report to meet your needs may vary.*

Dana Pritchard's report has two sections: Item Ratings By Category and Recommendations for Development. *Your reports can be customized to meet your particular needs. You may report item ratings or category ratings at the individual, team, divisional or organizational levels. Your reports can be as specific or general as you like. You can also generate different levels of reports from the same data.*

Item Ratings By Category

The following pages contain the ratings for each item among the three categories chosen for Dana's assessment. *Remember your assessment can have any number of categories and items.* Notice the following features:

Arrangement of items - Items on Dana's report are arranged by category with the Teambuilding category listed first. Items within each category are arranged from the item rated highest by others to the item rated lowest. This is why the first page of Dana's report starts with Item #4 in the Teambuilding category. It was rated highest. Dana can quickly assess strengths and opportunities for development in any category. *A survey of your design may generate a report that lists items from lowest to highest, highest to lowest, or in natural order for each category.*

The scale at the top of each page - On each respondent's questionnaire, the 1-10 scale represented a level of satisfaction ranging from "totally satisfied" (10) to "not satisfied" (1). For each item, respondents were asked to indicate "How satisfied are you with the performance of Dana Pritchard?" with respect to each item you see listed on the following pages.

A survey of your design may have any type of scale you choose:

1. *Importance* - "How important is this action to the effectiveness of Dana Pritchard?"
2. *Agreement* - "How strongly do you agree that Dana Pritchard performs this action well?"
3. *Frequency* - "How often does Dana Pritchard perform this action well?"
4. *Expected Frequency* - "How often should Dana Pritchard perform this action well?"



or any other scale you might choose. You may also have multiple scales assessed on each item. For example, each respondent might respond to how frequently a particular behavior is observed (frequency) as well as how important that particular item is (importance). Ratings may be 1-10; 1-5 or any other suitable scale. Note also that instead of an individual, you may choose to assess a department, team or any other entity.

The graphical bars above each item - The solid black bar represents the average rating by "others" for each item. The light gray bar represents Dana's self rating for each item. You can quickly see a graphical difference between how Dana sees herself and how others see her with respect to each item. *A report to meet your assessment needs may have data segmented in any way you choose. You may have one bar to represent the ratings of others; two bars like Dana's report; or multiple bars to represent each subset of respondents. For example you could compare how supervisors, subordinates, customers, or any other subset of respondents respond to each item. (This is where multi-rater assessment becomes true 360° feedback.) While Dana's report represents the responses from herself and four others, you may gather feedback from unlimited number of respondents. You may, for example, ask 500 customers to respond to your department's customer service efforts. Remember, you can design a multi-rater survey to answer any variation of "How am I doing?" or "How are we doing?"*

The numbers above the bars for each item - These numbers indicate the distribution of responses for each item. For example, on the first item, #4. - "Gives praise or recognition to the team when it has performed well" - 3 of the 4 respondents (not counting Dana's self-response) rated their satisfaction as a "9" and the other respondent rated their satisfaction as a "10". The confidentiality of each individual contributor is protected and Dana can quickly see how consistently respondents view her performance with respect to any item. *In a survey of your own design, you may choose to show distribution in this fashion or not.*

Comments - Below each item are three sets of comments: "What you LIKE", "What you DON'T LIKE", and "What you WANT". These prompts were used to solicit constructive feedback from each respondent. The collective responses from all respondents are listed below each item. Dana gets the benefit of this type of feedback. Because no response is matched to any particular respondent, the confidentiality of all contributors is protected.

A survey of your design may solicit and show one, two or three types of comments. The comments may ask for anything you choose. For example, instead of "What you LIKE", you may ask "Explain your rating" or any other suitable question.

An explanation of **Recommendations for Development** precedes that section of the report.

Special Confidential Report
Prepared For:

Dana Pritchard*

of

Advanced Technologies*

Prepared By:



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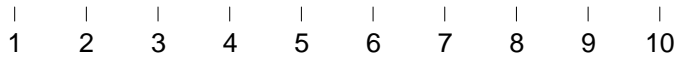
Web Site: <http://www.spauldingassocates.com>

***NOTE:** Dana Pritchard and Advanced Technologies are hypothetical.
This report is for illustration only.

Advanced Technologies

Teambuilding
Dana Pritchard

Item Ratings - by Category



Satis

4. Gives praise or recognition to the team when it has performed well.



Avg: 9.25
SELF: 9.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Our team knows where we stand.
- Very complimentary of entire team in staff meetings.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Not enough ongoing individual feedback.

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336-288-8713

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More ongoing individual feedback.

5. Helps the team address and resolve team issues.



Avg: 9.00
SELF: 9.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- See #4

7. Represents the team effectively to the rest of the organization.



Avg: 8.75
SELF: 7.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Dana defends and advocates for our team.
- Dana always stands up for us to rest of the organization.

6. Asks for the team's recommendations before making hiring or assignment decisions.



Avg: 8.67
SELF: 5.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- 1 - Always asks for collective team opinions.
- A horizontal scale with vertical tick marks labeled 1 through 10.

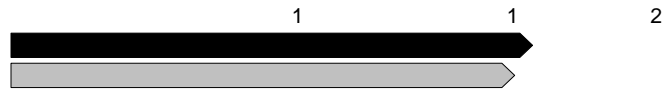
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Item Ratings - by Category



Satis

3. Reports the team's progress towards accomplishment of team goals.



Avg: 7.25
SELF: 7.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Very team focused. I feel our team is strengthened by your efforts on our behalf.
- Our weekly staff meeting is very helpful.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- We only get feedback at appraisal time.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- Ongoing feedback.

1. Helps team members develop action plans.



Avg: 7.25
SELF: 7.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Overall, you do a great job, Dana.
- Self:

2. Helps clarify the roles and expectations for individual team members.



Avg: 6.25
SELF: 7.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Great team focus
- I know what is expected of our team.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- I'm not always sure of what is expected of our team.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- Spend more time with individuals
- I need more clarification as an individual.



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Delegating
Dana Pritchard

Item Ratings - by Category (cont'd.)



Satis

16. Goes outside the team for resources and solutions when needed.



Avg: 9.50
SELF: 8.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Dana does what it takes to make the team successful.
- You always get us whatever help is available in terms of resources, people, whatever. I know you go to bat for our team.
- Dana always defends, protects and supports our team.

13. Establishes reasonable milestones and completion deadlines.



Avg: 7.25
SELF: 8.00

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- Make distinction more clear between team expectation and personal expectations.

12. Establishes clear standards for high-quality work.



Avg: 7.00
SELF: 8.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Of team - yes.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Of me as an individual - no.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More face time with Dana.



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Delegating
Dana Pritchard

Item Ratings - by Category (cont'd.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Satis

9. Gives team members challenging assignments.



Avg: 7.00
SELF: 8.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Sometimes assignments seem to be based on the "luck of the draw".
- Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More individual consideration.

11. Explains why a task, objective or goal is important.



Avg: 6.50
SELF: 8.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- See#10

10. States clearly and precisely the results that are expected.



Avg: 6.25
SELF: 8.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Of our team - yes.
- Makes expectations of team clear.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Of me personally - no.
- This is more true of the team than of the individual members of the team.
- You don't make your expectations of me clear.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- Assign more directly to me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Advanced Technologies

Delegating
Dana Pritchard

Item Ratings - by Category (cont'd.)



Satis

8. Assigns tasks based on individual team member's strengths.



Avg: 5.75
SELF: 7.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Dana meets each week with the team but rarely with me as an individual.
- I'm not sure you're aware of my particular strengths and weaknesses.
- Dana sometimes assigns tasks seemingly randomly.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More individual focus.
- Consider my particular strengths and weaknesses.

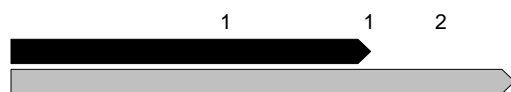
15. Gives more direction and supervision to people who need development.



Avg: 5.50
SELF: 8.00

No Comments

14. Explains clearly how much freedom of action and authority have been granted to the team member.



Avg: 5.00
SELF: 7.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- I don't know what is ok or not ok for me to do in executing my team responsibilities.
- I'm not always sure where I personally stand and how much authority I can exercise on behalf of our team.
- You hold the reigns too tight.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- Give us more room and authority.



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Item Ratings - by Category (cont'd.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Satis

24. Allows the team member to read and make comments about his/her performance appraisal.

1 1 1 1



Avg: 8.50
SELF: 8.00

No Comments

23. Discusses the performance appraisal privately with the team member.

2 1 1



Avg: 8.25
SELF: 8.00

No Comments

20. Counsels team members about poor performance in private.

1 1 2



Avg: 7.50
SELF: 8.00

What you WANT:
Improvements that you desire
- See 19

25. During performance appraisal meetings, helps the team member set performance and professional development goals.

1 1 1 1



Avg: 6.75
SELF: 9.00

What you WANT:
Improvements that you desire
- More specifics.
- Would like to see this occur more frequently outside of staff meetings.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Advanced Technologies

Item Ratings - by Category (cont'd.)



Satis

21. Gives fair and accurate performance appraisal ratings.



Avg: 6.25
SELF: 8.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

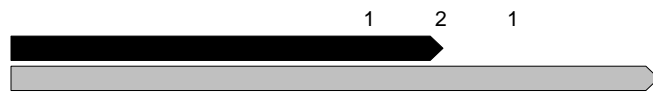
- To the team - yes.
- Dana is sincere and tries to be fair.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- To me - I'm not sure.

22. Writes specific, descriptive comments on performance appraisal forms.



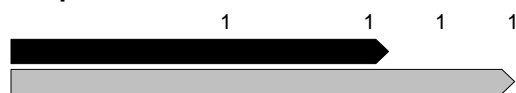
Avg: 6.00
SELF: 9.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Comments are too general. I'm not sure what to do to improve.

18. Gives informal verbal feedback about performance soon after it occurs.



Avg: 5.25
SELF: 7.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- This hardly ever seems to happen.



Advanced Technologies

Performance Management

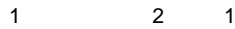
Item Ratings - by Category (cont'd.)

Dana Pritchard



Satis

19. When poor performance becomes a trend, formally counsels the team member.



Avg: 4.75
SELF: 8.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Dana addresses us well collectively.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- I really don't know if my performance has ever been unacceptable.
- I never know where I personally stand.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More frequent personal feedback.

17. Gives ongoing performance feedback throughout the year.



Avg: 4.25
SELF: 8.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Dana rarely meets with me outside of regular staff meetings.
- I only get feedback at appraisal time.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More frequent meetings with me, individually.
- More frequent interaction and feedback.

For More Information
Contact Spaulding Associates, Inc.
336-288-8713





Recommendations for Development

The following is an explanation of some of the important elements in Dana Pritchard's Recommendations for Development report. *Italicized comments again indicate how a customized report to meet your needs may vary.*

The last section of Dana's report lists her three lowest-rated items and includes developmental recommendations. Each item shows the same bar graphs, numbers and comments that were included in the first section of the report (Item Ratings By Category). On this report, the name of the category that the item is drawn from appears in parentheses directly below the item.

A report of your own design may include as many or as few highest or lowest rated items that you choose. You may design developmental recommendations to be included with any or all items.

Note the following features of the Recommendations for Development Report. *Any or all of these features may be included in a report for your assessment. All features may be customized to your needs.*

Explanation of item - Immediately following the item are a couple of paragraphs that explain to Dana what the item means.

What lower ratings may mean - An explanation of why ratings for this item may be low.

Recommended follow-up development actions - Steps Dana may want to take to improve.

Recommended resources - Readings, videos, training programs and other resources Dana may utilize to improve.

Advanced Technologies

Recommendations for Development

Dana Pritchard

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Satis

17. Gives ongoing performance feedback throughout the year.

(Performance Management)

1 2 1



Avg: 4.25
SELF: 8.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- Dana rarely meets with me outside of regular staff meetings.
- I only get feedback at appraisal time.

For More Information
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336-288-8713

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More frequent meetings with me, individually.
- More frequent interaction and feedback.

There are advantages to conducting regular, formal performance reviews and making them a matter of record. Feedback about skills can diagnose the need for developmental initiatives. Individuals can use the printed feedback reports as a reference while implementing their development plans. Also, feedback about results can create a fair basis for personnel action. Records of results data can provide evidence that retention, assignment, promotion, bonuses, salary increases and other positive personnel action have been earned. They can also become legally appropriate documentation for negative personnel action, if needed.

However, feedback that is reduced to paper every six or twelve months is not how leaders have their greatest impact on performance. That occurs during daily interactions between leaders and members of the work group. The praise, encouragement, constructive feedback and coaching that leaders provide on an ongoing basis has more impact on performance than any formalized system. Periodic formal reviews serve as documentation for personnel action.

What lower ratings may mean:

The people who gave you feedback may feel that you do not give them enough ongoing feedback about their performance.

- They may have been surprised by comments on their performance reviews.
- They may want to know where they stand at all times.
- They may want to be sure they are always doing what is expected.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Advanced Technologies

Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

Dana Pritchard

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Satis
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- You may feel that the performance review system is enough.
- Perhaps you aren't sure how much feedback is appropriate.
- Possibly you're uncomfortable giving regular performance feedback.
- You may not be sure how to give performance feedback effectively.

Recommended follow-up development actions:

- If the comments in your report do not describe in enough detail why you received a relatively low rating, consider asking the people who rated you for more specific examples of your actions.
- Perhaps the people who work around you expect more of you than you realize. Tell them that you want them to know where they stand at all times. Ask them what improvements they would like to see in the way you provide ongoing performance feedback.
- Think of a time when you did not get regular feedback from your manager and you were not sure where you stood. How did you feel? What impact did this have on your desire to perform at your best?
- Acknowledge that a formal performance review system only supplements the need for your day-to-day performance feedback. It doesn't take the place of it. Were it not for the need for documentation, these formal systems probably would not exist. Your on-the-scene feedback is indispensable; it is many times more influential than a formal, periodic performance review.
- Focus on building your skills in several areas:
 - ◆ Encouraging higher levels of performance
 - ◆ Praising outstanding performance
 - ◆ Giving constructive performance feedback
 - ◆ Helping a team member analyze a work experience for lessons learned
 - ◆ Conducting performance counseling sessions
 - ◆ Conducting performance review and planning sessions
- Even if your organization requires a formal performance review only once a year, consider conducting an informal one, half-way through the cycle. This can be an opportunity to adjust some of the goals to align with reality, solve problems and rethink your approach to empowering the individual.
- Think about how you'd reply if a team member asked you, "What's your honest opinion of my work so far? How am I doing, really?" What specifics would you

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

Dana Pritchard

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Satis

include in your answer? Consider delivering this message to individuals every three to six months.

- Consider believing in and doing things based on these positive attitudes:
"The real performance review should happen every day."
"There will be no surprises when I do my regular performance reviews."

Recommended Resources

Boyette, Joseph H., and Conn, Henry P. *Maximum Performance Management, 2nd Ed.* Lakewood, CO: Glenbridge, 1993.

Burley-Allen, Madelyn. *Managing Assertively.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983.

Kirkpatrick, Donald L. *How to Improve Performance Through Appraisal and Coaching.* New York: AMACOM, 1982.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
| | | | | | | | | |

Advanced Technologies

Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

Dana Pritchard

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Satis

19. When poor performance becomes a trend, formally counsels the team member.

(Performance Management)



Avg: 4.75
SELF: 8.00

What you LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions you hope will continue

- Dana addresses us well collectively.

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- I really don't know if my performance has ever been unacceptable.

- I never know where I personally stand.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- More frequent personal feedback.

Constructive feedback is given to correct a performance problem. It is usually verbal, but it's intended to be binding. In most cases a record of the interchange is not prepared for future documentation. However, if similar problems occur again, it is usually not effective to continue giving verbal-only feedback.

When performance problems persist, leaders should elevate the seriousness of the feedback. The next step in the performance improvement process is to formally counsel the individual. Formal counseling involves a private discussion in which a trend of poor performance is described, discussed and analyzed, leading to solutions and agreement to action. A written record of the meeting is usually prepared.

What lower ratings may mean:

The people who gave you feedback may feel that you rarely counsel them when there are performance problems.

- They may want more guidance when they know you aren't satisfied.
- You may feel that verbal feedback is sufficient.
- Your workplace may be a hectic one, with little time for such meetings.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
| | | | | | | | | |

Advanced Technologies

Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

Dana Pritchard

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Satis
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- It may be hard to find an office for performance counseling.
- You may be unsure about how to handle a performance counseling meeting.
- You may not like confronting people directly about performance.
- You may be concerned that people will not like being counseled.

Recommended follow-up development actions:

- If the comments in your report do not describe in enough detail why you received a relatively low rating, consider asking the people who rated you for more specific examples of your actions.
- Perhaps the people who work around you expect more of you than you realize. Tell them that you want to resolve trends of unsatisfactory performance. Ask them what improvements they would like to see in the way you formally counsel people.
- If the incident is a part of a trend, you may want to handle the performance counseling differently. Since the performance shortfall has occurred before, you should have already given constructive feedback. A more active, problem solving interchange is now needed. The purpose will be to jointly troubleshoot and agree on a solution to the problem. Here is a suggested approach.
 1. Describe the trend, including past constructive feedback you have given. Explain the impact of the poor performance.
 2. Ask the person to explain the pattern or poor performance. Listen actively to ensure you understand. Do not argue with excuses, but be open to legitimate problems.
 3. Confirm expectations. Be assertive about what you need and expect in the future.
 4. Commit to future actions. Get agreement for improved performance and your support. Express your confidence in the individual.
- Although a formal performance counseling meeting is a serious one, try to get people to relax and feel comfortable. You want them to focus on solving the problem, not their anxiety.
- Make sure the individual understands that a problem exists. Sometimes people don't want to face up to their shortcomings. They may give excuses. On rare occasions, they may not tell the truth. Focus on determining if their explanation involves legitimate problems they may need help with, or excuses. In no case should you argue with excuses. Simply hear them out without comment. Then reaffirm what is expected.

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Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

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- Be prepared to discuss the full range of possible reasons for the trend of poor performance:
 - ◆ Self-awareness: a lack of feedback
 - ◆ Character: weak self-esteem, confidence, courage, persistence, etc.
 - ◆ Abilities: gaps in skill, knowledge, experience or physical capabilities
 - ◆ Commitment: mismatch in incentives, values, attitudes or personality
 - ◆ Empowerment: failure to provide the person with responsibility, authority, guidance, trust, time, information, or resources
- Ask the person what will solve the problem. Help the person come up with several possible solutions. Start a discussion to evaluate and commit to the best course of action.
- Affirm your own role in supporting them, whatever it may be. Examples:
 - ◆ "For my part, I'll revise your job description by the first of the month."
 - ◆ "My role will be to let you know about changes as soon as they occur."
 - ◆ "I'll make sure that you get a replacement for your work station."
- Consider having people restate the commitment to action to ensure they understand what to do.
- When you know they understand the desired future actions, ask for their commitment. Examples:
 - ◆ "Can you live with that?"
 - ◆ "Do we have an agreement?"
 - ◆ "Are you committed to doing that?"
 - ◆ "Can I count on you to do that?"
 - ◆ "Are you willing to follow through?"
- End constructive feedback on a positive note. Express your confidence in the person's ability to succeed. Examples:
 - ◆ "I'm confident you'll do fine."
 - ◆ "I'm sure you can handle this."
 - ◆ "This was a good learning experience. I expect good things from you."
 - ◆ "We'll support each other and get it all done."
- Consider believing in and doing things based on these positive attitudes:
 - "It is only fair to give people a chance to improve their performance."
 - "I assume good intentions until people let me down."

Recommended Resources

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Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

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Bittel, Lester R. *What Every Supervisor Should Know, 6th Ed.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.

Burley-Allen, Madelyn. *Managing Assertively.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983.

Lucas, Robert W. *Coaching Skills.* New York: Irwin, 1994.

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Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

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14. Explains clearly how much freedom of action and authority have been granted to the team member.

(Delegating)



Avg: 5.00
SELF: 7.00

What you DON'T LIKE:

Behaviors or conditions that bother you and why

- I don't know what is ok or not ok for me to do in executing my team responsibilities.
- I'm not always sure where I personally stand and how much authority I can exercise on behalf of our team.
- You hold the reigns too tight.

What you WANT:

Improvements that you desire

- Give us more room and authority.

Effective delegation means empowering people with the authority to make decisions and take action. Leaders can't be everywhere, and it would be cumbersome for leaders to check every decision. Talented people are capable of making such decisions, and leaders should trust them to do so when their efforts are needed to achieve objectives.

However, it is important to specify how much rope a person has. What are the boundaries? What is not permitted? What kinds of decisions should be reserved for leaders? Talented individuals should not be kept on a short leash, but rarely is it appropriate to give them unlimited freedom of action. They want guidance from their leaders. They want to know the rules; they want to do what is expected of them.

What lower ratings may mean:

The people who gave you feedback may feel that they are not sure how much authority they have.

- They may not know when to take initiative or when to check with you.
- They may be unclear about constraints or boundaries you have in mind.
- When you delegate a task, you may not describe the parameters.

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Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

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- After granting authority, you may have become upset when people used it.
- You may assume people already know how much authority they have.

Recommended follow-up development actions:

- If the comments in your report do not describe in enough detail why you received a relatively low rating, consider asking the people who rated you for more specific examples of your actions.
- Perhaps the people who work around you expect more of you than you realize. Tell them that you want them to be clear about their authority. Ask them what improvements they would like to see in the way you specify the amount of freedom of action you want them to use.
- Think of a time when you were not sure how much freedom of action you had. How did you feel? What impact did this have on your ability to be successful?
- The next time you find yourself making an assignment, think about describing clearly the boundaries of the task. Make clear what the person can and cannot do. Empower the person with the right amount of authority.
- Think about whether it is your habit to spell out boundaries, or do you assume that people know what they are and will act accordingly? To change your pattern, consider writing down everything you want people to avoid doing, so that you can communicate clearly. It is like telling them the length and width of the playing field and showing them where the goal line is. You should feel comfortable with whatever they decide to do within the boundaries of the playing field.
- As a leader, you probably will never be involved in an unconstrained project. Be specific about any boundaries that may exist:
 - ◆ Safety--requirements to protect people and equipment
 - ◆ Resources--what kinds are available and how much can be used
 - ◆ Deadlines--when certain actions must be completed
 - ◆ Standards--specific levels of quality that are expected
 - ◆ Authority--what decisions can be made without checking with the leader
 - ◆ Regulations--any laws or policies that may apply
- Consider this rule of thumb: the fewer boundaries that constrain team members, the better. The more guidance and instructions you give, the less original thinking will go into the project. You certainly do not want to

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Recommendations for Development (cont'd.)

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over-specify implementation to talented people.

- Be sure you have given careful thought to the minimum boundaries you wish to specify. You will lose credibility as a leader if you change your mind later.
- Consider believing in and doing things based on these positive attitudes:
"People want to play the game. First, they've got to know the rules."
"People will turn themselves loose if they have room to operate."

Recommended Resources

Kouzes, James M., and Posner, Barry Z. *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.

Hersey, Paul. *The Situational Leader*. New York: Warner Books, 1984.

Tracy, Diane. *10 Steps to Empowerment*. New York: William Morrow/Quill, 1990.

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