Performance and Coaching

HELPING STAFF IDENTIFY WORK PRIORITIES © Achieve Global – used with permission

You may need to help staff identify work priorities when:

- Staff members are confused about conflicting work demands
- You're beginning a planning or goal-setting cycle
- You're concerned that people are not devoting enough time to top - priority responsibilities
- You need to help staff reevaluate their workloads in light of a change in university, faculty, department or center strategy
- You're orienting someone to a new role

Although the key actions that follow are structured toward working with an individual, the techniques can also be used with a group of people (such as the department staff group or a project team) provided everyone shares essentially the same work responsibilities.

Before meeting to set priorities and goals

Key Action 1 - Develop a list of work responsibilities.

To help someone prepare for a meeting with you to discuss work priorities, have the person draw up a list of work responsibilities ahead of time and indicate their percentage of time spent on each activity. To help, you can give the person a copy of *"Worksheet for Identifying Your Work Priorities"* in the appendix of this workbook.

The list should include the following types of responsibilities:

- Ongoing activities
- One-time tasks and projects
- Responsibilities to the department/faculty/center
- Learning or developmental opportunities, both current and anticipated

For each responsibility, ask the person to estimate the percentage of time it takes or will take per month and to record this information. Have the person bring the worksheet to the meeting.

During the meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to draw out the other person, encouraging him or her to take the lead. Instead of imposing your views, try to create a shared understanding.

However, you should be prepared to clarify your expectations should the staff member seem unclear about responsibilities you see as important.

The lists in Appendix 1 may help you to clarify responsibilities with your staff.

Key Action 2 - Review and revise the list.

You want the staff member to maintain ownership of the list. However, he or she may need help from you to overcome blind spots and to put his or her work in perspective. For example, you may want to point out some overlooked responsibilities or to identify opportunities that the staff member may not be aware of.

Use open-ended questions to draw out the other person's ideas.
For example:

How does that task fit in?

What do you think about...?

Experienced leaders say:

Your role is to provide the big picture within which the staff member can consider his or her responsibilities. Ask questions to guide the discussion. Add your own ideas and suggestions at the end, but only if necessary.

Key Action 3 - Rate each responsibility based on its contribution to the university, faculty, center or unit.

The task here is to determine the extent to which each responsibility contributes to University, Department or Faculty goals, not to establish an order of importance or priority. For example, you and the other person may decide that two or more responsibilities are equally high or equally low in terms of their impact on the unit.

Use questions like these to stimulate discussion:

What is the purpose of this responsibility?

Which university unit goal or goals does this activity impact?

Who are the stakeholders or clients?

What do they expect?

How does this responsibility relate to what the University or the unit is trying to accomplish?

Remember, although you may be aware of what the university or unit is trying to achieve, the staff member may not. If necessary, share your understanding of the university or unit goals, strategy, and direction. This will provide a basis for evaluating how a responsibility contributes to the big picture.

If you disagree on a rating, don't compromise by splitting the difference. For example, if you rate a responsibility as a 1 and the other person rates it as a 3, don't compromise on a 2. Instead, continue the discussion until you reach agreement.

After you have reached agreement on the university or unit contribution of each responsibility, write the rating in the space provided on the worksheet under "unit contribution."

Key Action 4 - Rank responsibilities in order of priority.

Using the ratings as a starting point, discuss and rank each responsibility based on its contribution to the university or unit.

Here are some suggestions for handling two or more responsibilities with the same rating:

- Rank individual responsibilities ahead of shared responsibilities.
- Rank responsibilities only this staff member can do ahead of those others are capable of handling.
- Give priority to the responsibility the person is more enthusiastic about.
- Give priority to the responsibility that will produce the greatest impact in the least amount of time.

Record the ranking for each responsibility in the boxes provided on the worksheet.

Experienced leaders say:

Don't get too caught up in the numbers here. The idea is to create a vehicle for discussing the other person's work in the context of what's important to the university or unit.

Key Action 5. Make adjustments as needed.

Review the percentage of time the staff member spends on each responsibility and assess its priority ranking. Discuss the results. Encourage questions about workload and competing priorities. Jointly make adjustments so that the staff member will spend most of his or her time on the highest-priority responsibilities.

Consider the possibility of the following types of adjustments:

- Shift responsibilities to or from others.
- Eliminate low-impact responsibilities.
- Examine tasks and activities to see if they can be streamlined.
- Explore the possibility of applying new technologies to tasks or activities.
- Negotiate time lines.
- Assign additional resources.

Experienced leaders say:

Resist the temptation to be so directive that you reduce or destroy the staff member's feeling of ownership. Once all the facts are laid out, the staff member will probably see many possible adjustments. Use questions to provide guidance. Your ultimate goal is for the staff member to be able to make independent, day-to-day decisions about how to spend his or her time.

HELPING STAFF SET GOALS © Achieve Global – used with permission

Your Role

If you prepare people well beforehand, they'll be able to take the lead in setting their own goals. Your role will be to offer guidance on procedures, to facilitate discussion, and to make sure that important topics are fully explored.

You may need to help staff members set goals when:

- They need to link their work to larger university, faculty, department, or centre goals
- You're starting a new planning cycle or beginning a new project
- You need a framework for evaluating employees objectively.
- You need to clarify accountability

Involving employees in setting their own goals is among the most motivating approaches you can take.

The process and key actions that follow consist of steps an individual can follow to set goals. The description here and on the pages that follow explains how you can coach individual staff members or groups through the goal-setting process.

You will want to schedule a meeting with the staff member or staff group and provide specific information before the meeting.

Before the meeting

Start the staff person thinking about how his or her responsibilities support university or unit goals by furnishing information such as:

- The University's strategic plan
- Department, faculty, centre or unit plans
- Established university or unit goals and measures

Ask the staff member to list his or her major responsibilities, to rank them in order of priority based on their university or unit impact, and to bring the list to the meeting. **(See process for helping staff identify work priorities)**

Hint for Groups:

Suggest that staff group members spend some time thinking individually and then meet to prepare a list of responsibilities for the group.

At the meeting

- Begin your meeting by explaining the purpose and objective.
- Review the list of responsibilities the staff person created.
- Review the university or unit's goals and any other big-picture issues or initiatives to which goals must be linked. Position these goals as a framework for the person to use in selecting his or her key responsibilities.

Key Action 1 - Begin with a list of high-priority work responsibilities.

This can be a list the person created using the *"Worksheet for Identifying Your Work Priorities,"* a list you develop together during the meeting and record on the back of the goals worksheet, or another already existing list.

Hint for Groups:

If group members have not already done so, have them create one list of high-priority responsibilities from their individual lists.

Key Action 2 - Select one responsibility and identify its intended outcomes.

To decide which responsibility to start with, ask:

- Which of these responsibilities will make the most significant contribution to the university or unit's goals, strategy, or direction?
- To determine outcomes, encourage the person to brainstorm and, using his or her own thinking, list up to six outcomes. If questions arise, refer to the material on university or unit goals you provided before the meeting. Offer your own opinion only as a last resort.

Hint for Groups:

If disagreements arise, refer people to the information on University/Faculty or group goals.

Key Action 3 - Rate each outcome based on its Department, University or Faculty contribution.

Encourage constructive thinking by asking questions like:

- How does this outcome contribute to university or unit goals?
- Which of these outcomes contributes most? Least?

Key Action 4 - Set aside low-impact outcomes and ones over which you have little or no control.

Have the staff person draw lines through any outcomes that should be eliminated.

If the person or group has partial control over an outcome, you may want to arrange a goal-setting session at a later time with whoever shares the responsibility for this outcome.

Key Action 5 - Add verifiable terms to the remaining outcomes.

Help the staff person or group rephrase each outcome as a verifiable goal. Guide thinking by asking questions like:

- Does the goal link to the university or unit big picture?
- Does it directly relate to the-most important aspect of the outcome?
- Is the goal stated clearly and objectively? Will it help clarify progress? Does it clearly identify the point at which the goal will have been accomplished?

Key Action 6 - Establish a data-collection plan.

Raise issues such as the following:

- What sources of data, if any, already exist?
- Who will collect the data?
- How will the data be made available?
- How will it be used?

Key Action 7 - Review and adjust all goals set using this process.

Guide thinking by asking questions like:

- Are the goals in line with what's important?
- Do you have the accountability and authority to achieve the goal?
- Will the goal help guide your decisions and daily behaviors?

Hint for Groups:

Ask people to step back and take a look at how these group goals fit with their individual goals

PROVIDING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK © Achieve Global – used with permission

Constructive feedback is information that calls attention to a problem or potential problem. Constructive feedback opens a door to problems solving or other follow-up actions. The key to giving constructive feedback is maintaining a spirit of mutual respect and learning.

Key Action 1 - Convey your positive intent

- Mentally prepare to give feedback
- Choose a time when the staff member is likely to be receptive to what you have to say
- Briefly state what you'd like to talk about.
- Point to a common goal.
- Avoid placing blame.

Key Action 2 - Describe specifically what you have observed

- Be brief and to the point
- Focus on behaviors and actions, not on the person
- Limit your feedback to one issue at a time
- Avoid using you as much as possible

Key Action 3 - State the impact of the behavior or action

- Link the behavior or action to important goals like student support or costs, or timeliness
- If appropriate, state the impact on you and others
- State only one or two of the most significant consequences.
- Maintain an objective tone.

Key Action 4 - Ask the staff member to respond

- Invite the staff member to respond
- Listen with an open mind.
- If necessary, summarize the staff member's key points.

Key Action 5 - Focus the discussion on solutions

- Take your cue from the staff member
- When appropriate, ask directly for the change you want
- Avoid coming across as an expert
- Leave the responsibility for the action with the staff member
- Manage your own expectations

CONDUCTING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS © Achieve Global – used with permission

Performance Reviews are most productive when:

- They are truly a collaborative process
- Both people prepare ahead of time
- There have been several other discussions about performance at 'check-ins' throughout the year.

Key Action 1 - Prepare for a focused discussion

- Review the staff members plan and check in notes
- Identify 2 or 3 key accomplishments for this staff member during the review period
- Prepare you key message or points – what 2 or 3 points do you want the staff member to remember throughout the next review period
- Identify 2 or 3 areas for development for the next review period

Key Action 2 - Set expectations for the meeting

- Review the purpose of the discussion (i.e. to review and document the staff members performance results over the past year)
- Review the 'agenda' or process for the meeting (e.g. the staff members assessment or review of their results and accomplishments, your perspective and feedback, and next steps)

Key Action 3 - Invite self-evaluation and discussion

- Ask the staff member to review their results and accomplishments based on their plan for the review period.
- Prior to the meeting the employee should be encouraged to document their results on their written plan. If they are not prepared, the meeting should be postponed until they have done so.
- During the self-evaluation, listen carefully, remain non-defensive, and take notes.
- When the employee has finished their self-assessment, ask open-ended questions to clarify and gather information.
- Invite discussion on the goals and ideas for future work and career goals. Often this is a great time for the employee to share their ideas of what they would like to do in the next review period – take note of any ideas.

Key Action 4 - Share your key points

- Focus on your key points – i.e. what you want the person to remember
- Begin with your points of agreement emphasizing those that support your key points
- Identify areas you see for improvement or development based on specific examples of performance and the employee's review of results.
- Resolve major 'disconnects' or differences by limiting discussion on 'disconnects' to those that link to your key points, sticking to the facts and linking to the staff members responsibilities and goals.
- Avoid lecturing and stay open to revising your opinion, if warranted.

Key Action 5 - Jointly decide next steps

- Identify any bring forward goals (e.g. goals that were not completed in the review period)
- Recap opportunities for learning and development
- Agree on next steps
  - goals to bring forward to the next performance plan
  - learning and development opportunities
  - new assignments
  - ways you will support the staff member
  - new performance goals

Key Action 6 - Close the Meeting

- Ask the staff member to summarize your key points (or summarize them yourself)
- Recognize the staff member's contribution and accomplishments
- Express your confidence in the staff member's performance
- Offer your continued support