

# Messenger

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## Helping Employees Reach Their True Potential

How many managers complain that their employees are not living up to their full potential? I would wager that at some point in their career, 100% of managers have experienced this problem. There seems to always be those handful of employees who are content to slack off and let everyone else carry the extra weight.



How can we improve the performance of our organization? Let's look at seven phases of performance management.

### ***Performance planning***

The most important thing to remember about performance planning is that it's *not* a quick fix! It takes time to learn skills and apply them. It requires detailed analysis and a correct diagnosis. A joint effort must be made by workers and management. You have to consistently hold people accountable. Teamwork is essential to make this happen. Allow employees to give ideas on issues and problems. Communicate needed information so teams can make informed decisions.

### ***Performance communication***

Don't make employees guess how you feel about their performance. If they're doing a good job, tell them. Use positive words, such as dependable, accurate, and professional, to specifically describe how they work. On the other hand, if their performance is subpar, they need to know that as well. Again, be specific in describing how they perform.

### ***Data gathering and documentation***

Map out the objectives desired by the organization, the required performance, and how it will be measured. For example, an organization wants to increase sales (organizational objective). Each member of the sales team needs to make more sales calls and increase sales contacts by 20% (required performance). To accomplish this, sales team members will count the number of outgoing sales calls and count the number of current contacts to be used as a benchmark (measurement).

### ***Evaluating performance***

There are many ways for you to evaluate performance. You can use pre- and post-examinations, observations and surveys, just to name a few. After you've evaluated the performance, you may find that some employees have a performance gap. This means that the current performance doesn't line up with what's desired by the organization. You may use training, communication, clarification of goals, and empowerment to lessen the gap. It's important to keep the employee in the loop while making the evaluation. Remind them of any policy, process, or behavior standards. Meet with them on a regular basis to review whether they are making

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***We need to get worthy of our own selves  
and understand that no one is more  
deserving of our best behavior than we are.  
Rochelle Pennington  
Writer***

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improvements to eliminate the gap. Observe their actions informally. Conduct yearly performance review and feedback sessions.

### ***Measuring performance specifics***

You will use hard data and soft data to measure performance. Hard data is easy to measure and quantify and is relatively easy to convert to monetary values. It is objectively based and credible with management. Examples are the number of items sold, loans approved, or patients visited. Soft data is sometimes difficult to measure or quantify directly and difficult to convert to monetary values. In many cases, it's subjectively based and may be less credible as a performance measurement with management. Examples of soft data are employee morale or a change in the customer satisfaction index.

### ***Performance diagnosis***

Once you have the measurements, you need to determine what it means. If there is a gap, what is causing it? Is this differing from the job description? Is this a process or procedure problem? Now is your opportunity to discuss how to improve performance. Coaching sessions may be useful.

### ***Performance improvement***

In order to improve performance, both the employee and supervisor must be willing to work together. The employee must agree to grow. He or she should ask questions, seek information, and take responsibility to change. The supervisor must be willing to train his or her employees correctly from the beginning, confront those who are not carrying their load, and give direction on how to fix the problem.

You can't expect an employee to fix all the problems on his own. It is vital that management be involved in all the steps of performance measurement and improvement. Working with your employees will encourage them to come to you when a situation arises and seek the help needed instead of expecting someone else to take care of it.



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**The Mathis Group, Inc**

**Dr. Keith Mathis**

**106 Lakeview Woods**

**Eureka, MO 63025**

**800-224-3731**

**636/938-5292 voice/fax**

**[keith@themathisgroup.com](mailto:keith@themathisgroup.com)**

**[www.themathisgroup.com](http://www.themathisgroup.com)**

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