



2023 tHRive HR Fundamentals Cohort | Workshop #8

Employee Relations & The Employee Experience

Thursday, October 19th

Prepared by:
Christie Cawley | President | tHRive



tHRive Team



[Christie Cawley | LinkedIn](#)

Christie Cawley is a Senior Partner, Executive Consultant, Certified Coach & Master Trainer at Center for Victory, a global talent management consulting firm and is also the President of CCK Consulting LLC/tHRive-People Practices for Nonprofits (www.thriveHR.work). Additionally, Christie has a BA, Applied Psychology, is an active member of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), International Coach Federation (ICF), a Certified Master Trainer with Predictive Index Worldwide, Inc. and a member of Vistage Trusted Advisors.

With more than 25 years of professional experience, Christie specializes in leadership development, talent management and business performance using science and the Predictive Index suite of tools to help clients overcome their most challenging human capital and hiring dilemmas. Christie has extensive experience a human resources leader, non-profit executive, executive coach and business consultant, and supports organizations through significant change implementation and coaches for successful execution and sustainability.

Non-Profit Experience: ACTION Housing Inc., AIR, Allegheny Conference, Allegheny Health Choices Inc, Carriage House Inc., Center for Theater Arts, Center for Women, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, Construction Junction Inc., CISPAC-Communities In Schools Pittsburgh Allegheny County, DePaul School for Hearing & Speech, Easterseals of Michigan, Family House Inc., Family Means (Wisconsin), Global Links, Hillman Family Foundations, Humane Animal Rescue, Juniata College, Methodist Church Union, NAMI Keystone, National Council of Jewish Women, Pittsburgh (NCJW), P3R, Peoples Oakland, PRC- Pennsylvania Resources Council, Regional Housing Legal Services, The Forbes Funds, Trying Together (formerly PAEYC), University of Pittsburgh (Department of Athletics & Student Life), YMCA Central Virginia, YMCA Greater Dayton Area, and YMCA Greater Pittsburgh.



[Judy Eakin | LinkedIn](#)

Judy Eakin has been working in the nonprofit sector for over 35 years. She was a Director at George Junior Republic and CEO of Pittsburgh Big Brothers/Big Sisters. For the last 24 years she was the CEO of HEARTH increasing its size and number of families served by over 100%. Judy has a Bachelors and Masters degree in Social Work and is a certified Marital and Family Therapist. She has also completed multiple training programs offered by the University of Pittsburgh, Harvard, and Duquesne University with focus on strategic planning, fundraising, program evaluation, and employee development.

In addition to working with boards in her employment, Judy has also served on the Board of Directors and committees for numerous nonprofits. She specializes in Board Development, Program Development, and Strategic Planning. During her time as the "de facto Human Resource specialist", Judy created, modified and implemented policies, job descriptions, and performance evaluations, including those for volunteers and clients. She successfully managed her agency through COVID -19 with help from Christie and the tHRive program. Judy's strengths include identifying and responding to change, relationship development, revenue diversification, and coaching for growth and success.



[Joel Skerlong | LinkedIn](#)

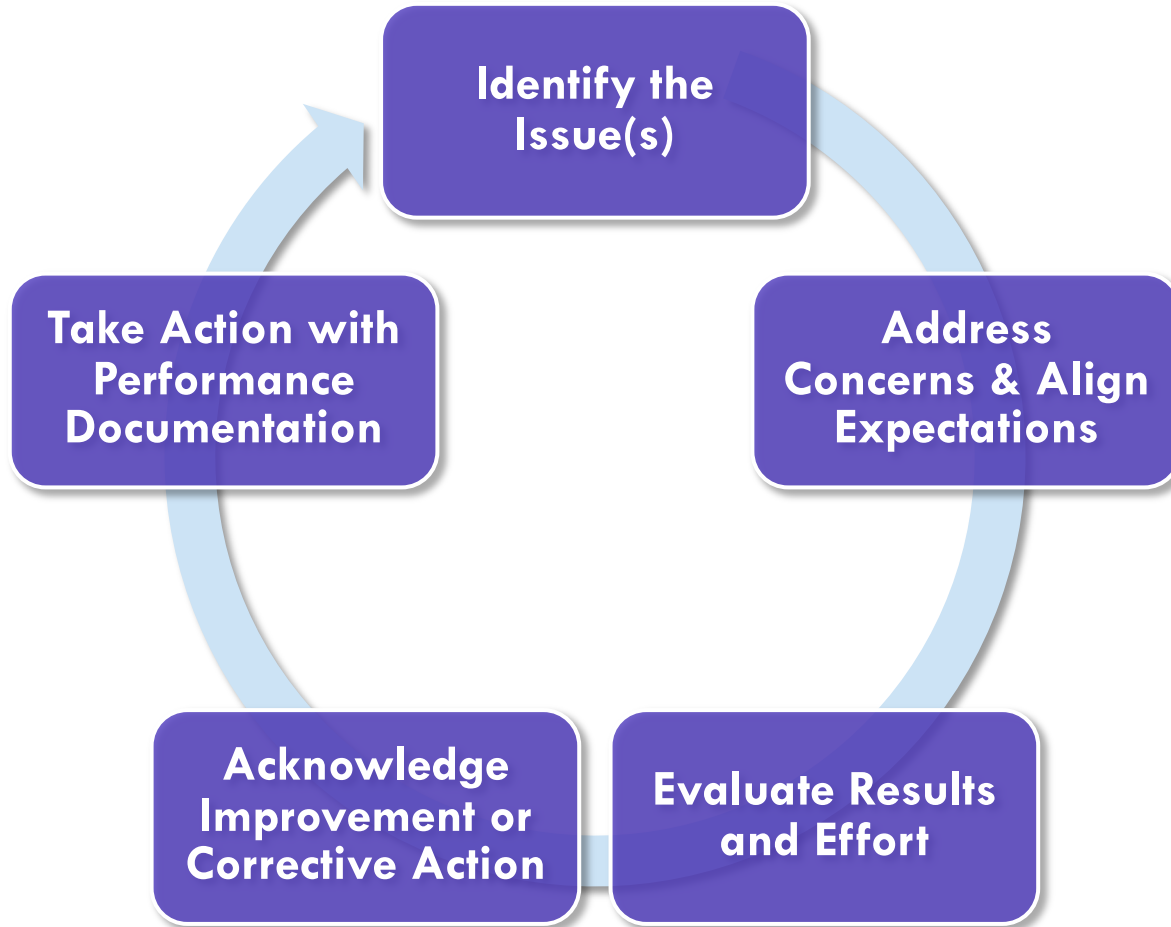
Joel Skerlong currently serves as a Project Administrator for tHRive and CCK Consulting LLC and also operates a remote consulting practice for Talent Management Agencies within New York City. Joel specializes in analyzing the components of business strategy, implementing value additive procedures within people operations practices, and developing/driving performance management initiatives. Joel recently obtained his certification as a PI Practitioner for the Predictive Index Worldwide, Inc.

Workshop #8

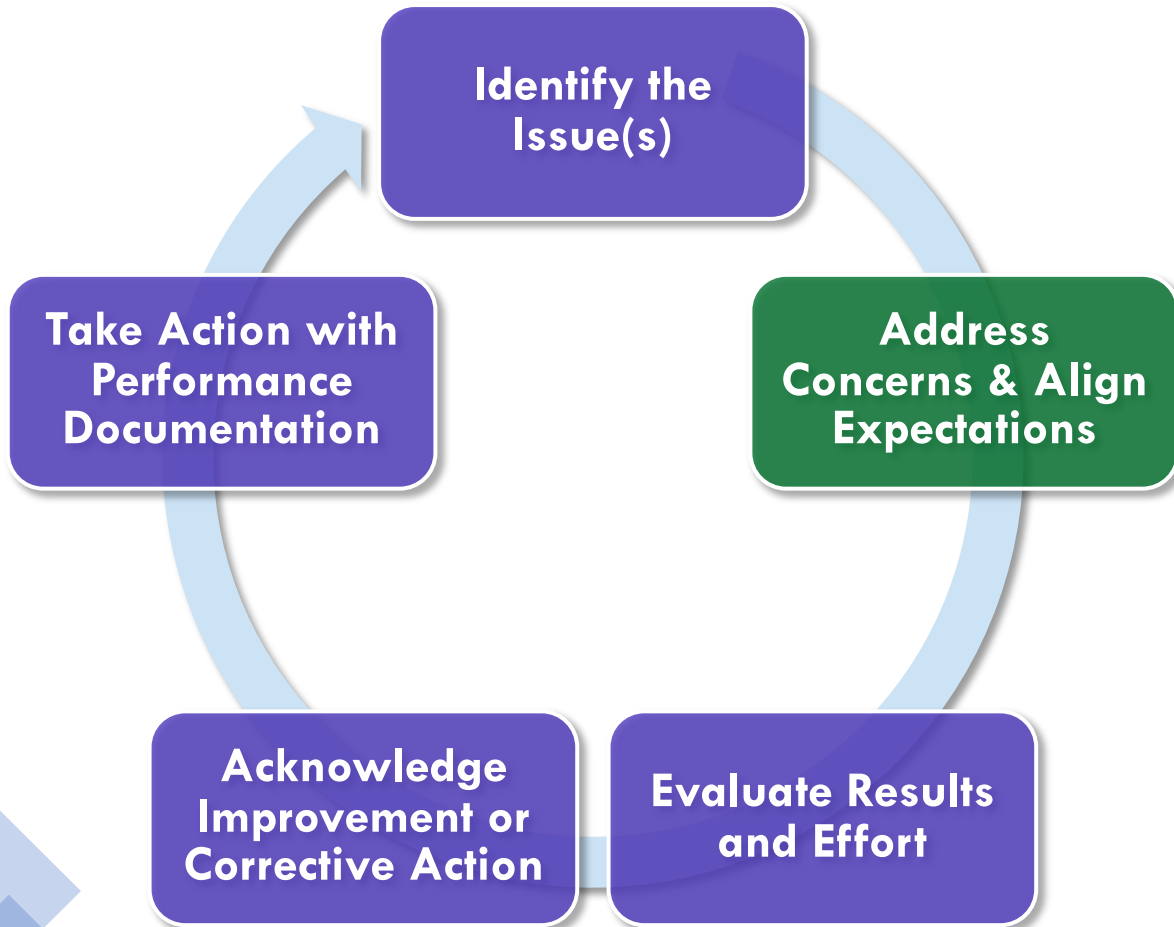
Employee Relations & The Employee Experience Agenda

- I. **Options to Address Employee Concerns**
 - **Conversation Types and Key Phrases**
 - **Performance Improvement**
 - **Corrective Action**
 - **Separation**
- II. **Navigating Conflict in the Workplace**
- III. **Employee Appreciation**
- IV. **Wrap-Up | Cohort Key Takeaways**

Employee Relations: Next Steps



Employee Relations: Next Steps



1. **Conversation Prep – Clarify WHAT you wish to tell employee**
2. **The Frame – Prepare HOW to tell employee**
3. **Practice Conversation Openers**
4. **Consider Employee Reaction (see next section)**
5. **Align on Steps Forward**

Employee Relations: Conversation Toolkit

Conversation Prep

Prepare for an Open Conversation

Instructions: Draft the four components of an opening statement for the developmental feedback conversation you'll have with an underperforming staff member that confirms the cause of their poor performance.

Employee Name: _____

Performance Issue: _____

Component	Statement
P Problem/Example The employee's core or most critical problem based on observable behavior.	
I Impact The impact of behaviors for the employee, team, and clients	
C Contribution Potential contributors to the problem.	
I Invitation An invitation to the employee to be a partner in a discussion to resolve the issue.	



The Frame

The Frame

Prepared Done well ahead of time	Ready Done ahead of time & just before	Engaged During
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the conversation Consider the personality of the participant; consider your work style Identify when/where Send calendar invite Block the time just before the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice, practice, practice Get a good night's sleep Bio needs (food, etc.) Breathe Focus on intention and outcome Turn off distractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt other focus Regulate breathing Ride the flow Manage own emotions/thoughts



Conversation Openings



Courageous Conversation Openings

A strong contributor begins to show some rough edges

Suneela, there is no doubt in my mind or anyone else's here that you deliver fantastic customer service for our customers time and again; you are a valuable employee with what I hope will be a long track record of success here and in general as your career unfolds, so thank you for all you have done. And I'm beginning to be concerned about some things I'm noticing that I'd like to bring to your attention now before they become more problematic. I hope you'll take what I'm about to share as intended, which is to be helpful and to guide you to even greater success. May I share what I've noticed?

Someone's gotten away with bad behavior, and you haven't talked to them

Jason, what we're about to talk about may be difficult to hear, and I take responsibility for not having had this conversation long before now. I owed it to you, and I put it off far too long, and I'm sorry. You have a track record of doing an excellent job on the line and delivering great results with low ticket times. What you've done, in other words, is tremendous. There are serious concerns, however, with the how you go about doing it. I want to give you the opportunity to hear the feedback and make real changes quickly and sustain them over time. If things don't change, I'm concerned about your ability to remain with (or be successful) here and that would be a shame. May I share with you, our concerns?

You inherit the problem employee that no one seems to have talked to before

Samantha, as you know, I'm relatively new here (or in this role). What we're about to talk about may be difficult to hear, and I apologize if no one has taken the time to have this conversation with you before now. My assessment is that you have a track record of getting things done for the store and delivering great results in your position what you've done, in other words, is of real value. I have serious concerns, however, with how you go about doing it. I want to give you the opportunity to hear my concerns and make real changes quickly and sustain them over time. If things don't change, I'm concerned about your ability to remain here and that would be a shame. May I share with you what I've noticed?

Strong performer has a shift in performance and/or engagement

Marquita, you have long been an outstanding member of the team who I could always rely on both to get the job done and in a collaborative and productive way. Recently that Marquita hasn't been showing up here, and I'm concerned. What's going on?

christie@cckconsulting.org

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Align

Write a Manager-Led Development Plan

Instructions: Begin the first draft of a manager-led development plan to address the development area of an underperforming staff member by filling out the first row of the template below.

Employee Name: _____

Development Objective	Action Steps	Support to Achieve Goal	Success Measures	Target Completion Date



Manager-Led Development Plan Checklist

Instructions: Use this checklist after drafting a manager-led development plan for an underperforming staff member.

- Have I confirmed the employee's underperformance area(s) in a two-way discussion with them?
- Have I discussed the development plan with the employee and gained his or her buy-in?
- Do I incorporate the employee's strengths to help them achieve their development goals?
- Have I identified a clear path that will help the employee reach their development goals?
- Have I outlined how I am available to support the employee as they take the defined action steps?
- Have I made sure that the majority of action steps come from on-the-job experiences the employee will have in the near future?
- Have I defined realistic and achievable metrics to measure the employee's progress?
- Have I tied the metrics to realistic deadlines to assess the employee's progress?
- Have I explicitly stated the next time I will check-in with the employee about their progress against action steps?



Discussion

Employee Relations: Conversation Openings

A strong contributor begins to show some rough edges

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Performance Improvement Plan

Performance Improvement Plan Action Plan Template

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN ACTION PLAN		
EMPLOYEE NAME	ROLE / TITLE	EMPLOYEE ID
SUPERVISOR	DEPARTMENT	DATE

AREAS OF CONCERN
In what areas have the employee not met expectations?

PREVIOUSLY ADDRESSED ISSUES
Provide details of any previously discussed issues, the context, and the outcome of discussions or training.

OBSERVATIONS

PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

IMPROVEMENT GOALS
Provide specific goals as they relate to areas of concern to be addressed and improved upon.

GOAL #	GOAL DESCRIPTION	DATE ACHIEVED BY MEETING GOAL

EXPECTATIONS
To demonstrate progress toward improvement goal achievement, the following performance standards/expectations must be met:

EXPECTATION DESCRIPTION

GOAL ACTIVITIES
List activities that will aid to achieve the improvement goals set above.

GOAL #	ACTIVITY	START DATE	PROJECTED DATE OF COMPLETION

RESOURCES
List resources available to complete Goal Activities: for example, training materials, training activities, seminars, peer mentoring, management support, etc.

RESOURCE NAME	DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCE

PROGRESS MONITORING
Provide an evaluator schedule to monitor progress of improvement activities.

FOLLOW-UP SCHEDULE

DATE SCHEDULED	ACTIVITY	CONDUCTED BY	DATE COMPLETED
30 Day Review			
45 Day Review			
60 Day Review			
90 Day Review			

PROGRESS BENCHMARKS

GOAL #	ACTIVITY	DATE OF CHECK	FOLLOW-UP METHOD (when/where/who)	EXPECTED PROGRESS	COMMENTS

TIMEFRAME FOR IMPROVEMENT, CONSEQUENCES, AND EXPECTATIONS
Provide a summary of any stipulations placed upon the performance improvement plan, consequences of insufficient effort, and any legal concerns such as confidentiality as related to this document.

SIGNATURES

EMPLOYEE NAME	EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	DATE

SUPERVISOR NAME	SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE	DATE

A performance improvement plan is “corrective action” for addressing employee performance, not employee behavior.

A PIP shifts the responsibility for improving performance so that it is shared mutually among the manager, the employee, and the company.

Sometimes referred to as a performance action plan, PIP is a process and a document that communicates corrective action, provides resources, and assigns a timeline of expected results to an underperforming employee.

[Smartsheet Performance Improvement Plan Templates](#)

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Discussion

Employee Reaction: Diffusing and Resolving Conflict



Feedback

Reinforce AND Redirect

- Continuous to provide just-in-time positive reinforcement or early intervention
- Catch them doing something right – you can never get enough positive reinforcement!
- Redirect if something is not right and catch it quick – the longer it goes on, the more likely it will become a habit and harder to change

Coaching: Repeated, Ongoing, and Informal evaluation “Instructive” Feedback (aka “Teaching moments”)

- Debrief conversation shortly after it occurred
- Focus on two areas: behavior (factual, this is what you did) and the impact of those actions (positive or negative)
- Ask employee how it went – what did they do well, what would they do differently next time
- Add on to employee’s comments – make sure to cover the most important points, and watch when it’s time to stop
- Agree on next steps try “What are the next steps you will take and how can I help you?”
- Document highlights of conversation in the Employee Performance File

Start, Stop, Continue

- Provides broad perspective with practical terms; what should employee start doing, stop doing, continue doing to be effective. Good structure for employee to do more self-evaluation



Tip: Use “AND” not “BUT”

Reacting to Feedback

Reaction to Feedback	Implications
Reject	Don't admit error, go on offensive
Admit and Explain	Justify action, compare to others
Instant Apology	May not feel criticism is justified, feel resentful and unjustly attacked
Receive Effectively	Look for root cause and ways to do better next time

If conversation goes south....

- Remind of the purpose of conversation and facts
- Listen to response/alternative viewpoint
- Agree to "time out" (reschedule) to diffuse emotions or digest conversation
 - Continuing conversation at a later time – this does NOT mean you are backing off the discussion, just want a different setting for productive conversation
- If in a team setting, stop the meeting

[How to Give Feedback to People Who Cry, Yell, or Get Defensive, Amy Jen Su, Harvard Business Review](#)

Conflict Resolution Process

1. Calm the emotional storm before attempting conflict resolution.
2. Get into the right mindset for conflict resolution.
3. Identify and manage emotional triggers.
4. Do not internalize the dispute.
5. Deflect unreasonable emotional reaction during the entire conflict resolution process.
6. Understand emotional control versus emotional influence.
7. Stay aware of your voice & body language.
8. Use empathy statements.
9. Use the power of ownership statements.
10. Redirect back to the conflict focus if necessary.
11. Use action statements to propose solutions.

Reminders

Related Solutions for Conflict Management Training

[Intelivate: 11 Conflict Management Strategies to Quickly End an Argument](#)

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned of Previous Conversation

- Assess your “directness” level - how do you get your message heard?
Remember it’s a combination of what you said, and what the employee heard
- Assess how you frame the message – Are you direct, respectful, factual (not personal)?

Plan for Next Conversation Differently

- Start sooner with ongoing feedback so “bigger” conversation is not a surprise
- Don’t forget to recognize improvements so all conversations are not “gotcha”
- Reframe conversation – acknowledge last discussion was not as productive as you would have liked
- Ask employee to evaluate situation first then build on (switch steps #2 and #4 in model to the right)

1. **State purpose**
2. **Describe what you have observed**
3. **Describe your reactions**
4. **Give employee opportunity to respond**
5. **Offer specific suggestions**
6. **Summarize and express your support**

Plan the Conversation

Goal - What do you want to achieve from the discussion?

History

- What has been the “tone” of previous discussions (updates vs. deeper feedback)

Plan what you want to talk about and what you want to say

- Be specific with examples – consistent pattern?
- Create questions to encourage two-way conversation – “how do you think it went? What could we have done differently?”
- If looking for change, clarify what needs to change
- Listen and be prepared to learn new information

Style

- How does employee generally receive feedback? Consider privacy, advanced notice (no surprises), conversational vs. factual tone of conversation
- How does that compare to your style?

What's Next?

- Have plan for follow-up and make sure employee is clear on what is expected

1. **Situation – what/when/who**
2. **Task – include expectations**
3. **Action – impact to expectations**
4. **Result**

Take Action: Performance Improvement Plan

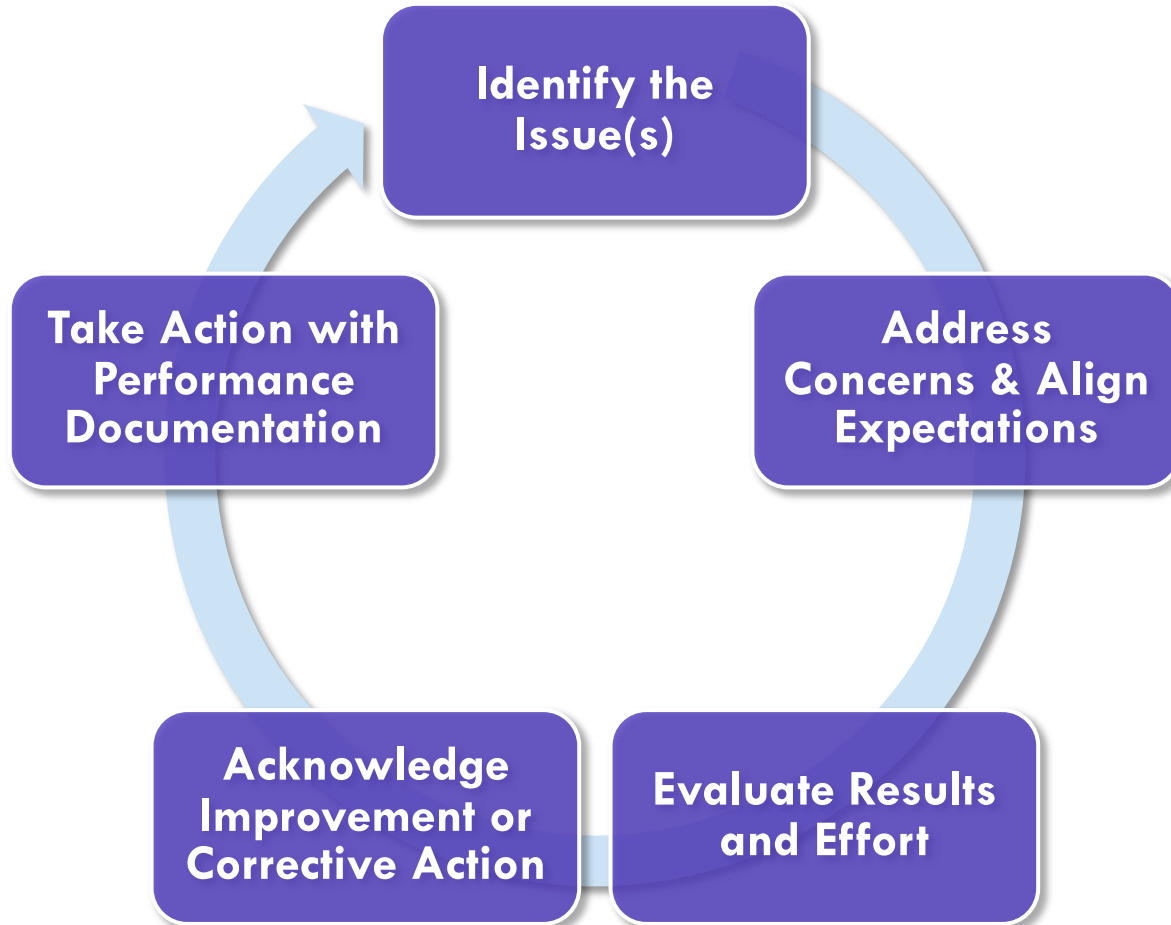


**Corrective Action,
Disciplinary Action,
Employee Warning**

Employee Relations: Next Steps



PIP or Corrective Action?



Discussion

Employee Relations: Next Steps

Performance Versus Conduct?

Misconduct differs from poor performance. Misconduct involves intentional or negligent conduct (such as not caring enough to be on time to work), whereas poor performance is actually doing the job poorly.

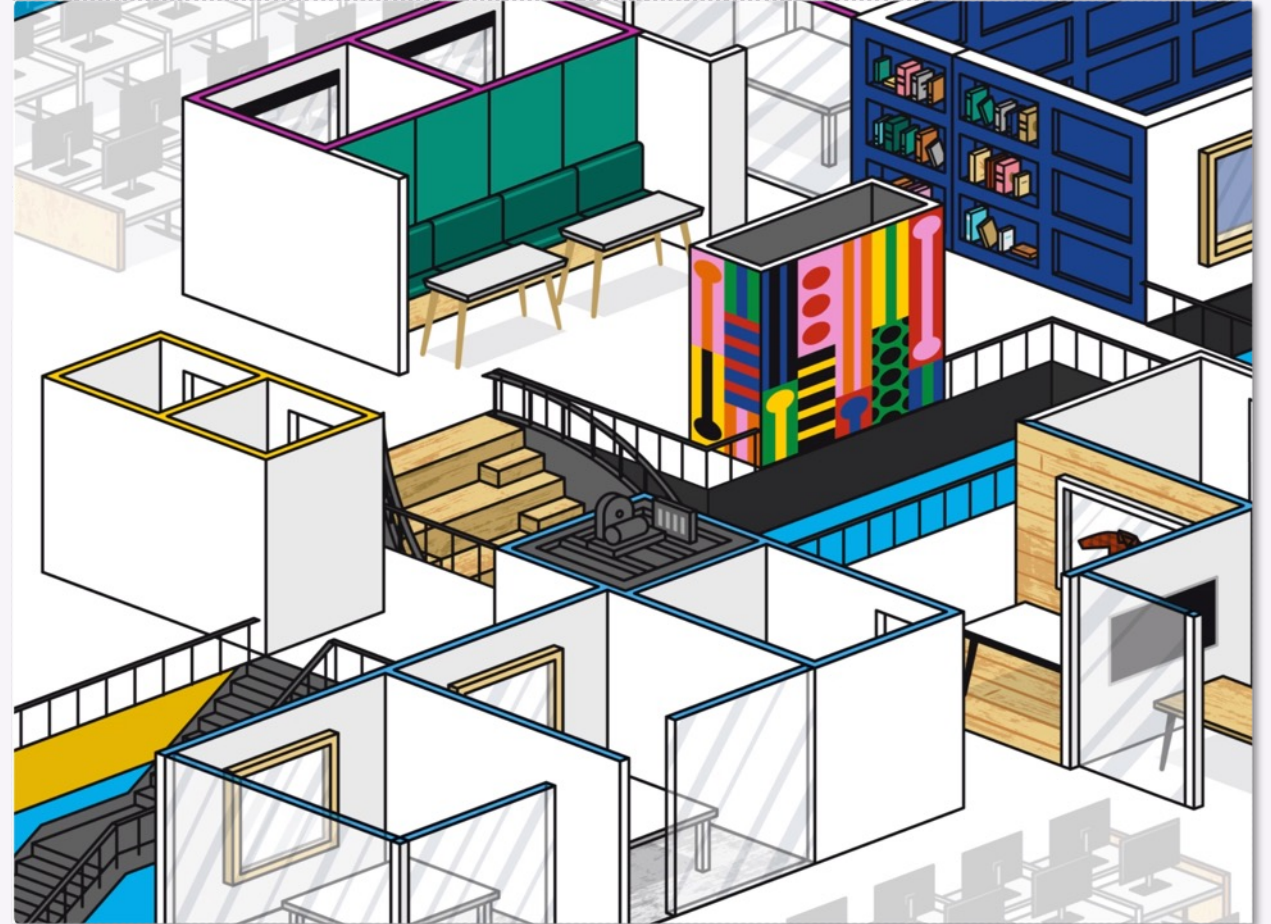
Misconduct requires discipline. Simply put, we have to discipline when employee misconduct warrants it. Managers dislike having disciplinary conversations. However, failure to discipline will result in poor morale overall and, ultimately, poor productivity and employee engagement.



[Ultimate Software Blog: Discipline vs. Performance – Spotting the Differences and Finding Solutions](#)



Resources



Corrective Action / Discipline

Employee Discipline Form - Template *Confidential*

Employee Name: _____ Warning Date: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Violation(s)

<input type="checkbox"/> Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Breach of Company Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Carelessness	<input type="checkbox"/> Tardiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorized Absence
<input type="checkbox"/> Creating a Disturbance	<input type="checkbox"/> Work Quality / Accuracy
<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to Follow Instructions	<input type="checkbox"/> Work Quantity / Output
<input type="checkbox"/> Insubordination	<input type="checkbox"/> Willful Damage to Company Property
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Description of Violation(s):

Further misconduct or violation(s) will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

I have read this Warning Notice and understand it.

Employee's Signature: _____	Date: _____
Supervisor's Signature: _____	Date: _____

Sets stage that there are serious consequences to employee behavior / action / choices.

Employee's signature does not indicate agreement – it validates that the terms have been made clear to him/her.

Always include statement that further misconduct will result in further disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Corrective Action Policy

Corrective Action Policy - Excerpt

Procedure

[INSERT ORGANIZATION] will normally utilize the following corrective action measures:

- STEP 1 - VERBAL CAUTION:** An employee will be given a verbal warning when he or she engages in problematic behavior. As the first step in the corrective action policy, a verbal caution is meant to alert the employee that a problem may exist or that one has been identified, which must be addressed. Verbal cautions will be documented and maintained by the employee's supervisor.
- STEP 2 - WRITTEN WARNING:** A written warning is more serious than a verbal warning. A written warning will be given when an employee engages in conduct that justifies a written warning or the employee engages in any unacceptable behavior during the period that a verbal warning is in effect. Written warnings are maintained in an employee's personnel file. The employee's supervisor and the Executive Director will be involved in this level of discipline.
- STEP 3 – FINAL WARNING:** A Final Warning is more serious than a written warning. An employee will be placed on Final Warning when he or she engages in conduct that justifies a suspension or the employee engages in unacceptable behavior or fails to improve in areas identified during the period that a written warning is in effect. A suspension with or without pay may be included to provide adequate time to assess the incident and/or actions. An employee's suspension will be documented. The employee's supervisor and the Executive Director will be involved in this level of discipline.
- STEP 4 - TERMINATION:** An employee will be terminated when he or she engages in conduct that justifies termination or does not correct the matter that resulted in less severe discipline. The employee's supervisor and the Executive Director will be involved in this level of discipline.

[INSERT ORGANIZATION] desires to see employees succeed. When an employee's behavior is corrected, [INSERT ORGANIZATION] will document the improvement and place it in their permanent file.

Again, while [INSERT ORGANIZATION] will generally take disciplinary action in a progressive manner, it reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to decide whether or what disciplinary action will be taken in a given situation.

Consult your Handbook for direction and guidance; review precedent; consider impact of continued conduct

Separation

[Your Name]
[Your Name]
[Company Name]
[Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP Code]
[Date]

[Recipient Name]
[Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP Code]

[Employee Name],

This letter is to inform you that your employment with [company name] will end as of [date termination is effective].

You have been terminated for the following reason(s):

[List factual reasons for termination].

This decision is not reversible.

You will receive: [List compensation they will receive, including pay for unused leave, severance pay, salary owed, etc].

Your health care benefits will [explanation of what will happen with their benefits].

You are requested to return [list all company property that is to be returned].

Also, please keep in mind that you have signed [list any agreements employee has signed, such as a confidentiality policy or a non-solicitation agreement].

If you have questions about policies you have signed, your compensation, benefits, or returning company property, please contact [contact name, typically someone from HR, with contact info].

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Title]

cc: [Manager's Name]

This [termination letter](#) downloaded from [Betterteam](#).

Check with Legal PRIOR TO progressing Corrective Action/ Performance Improvement to Final Warning Stage

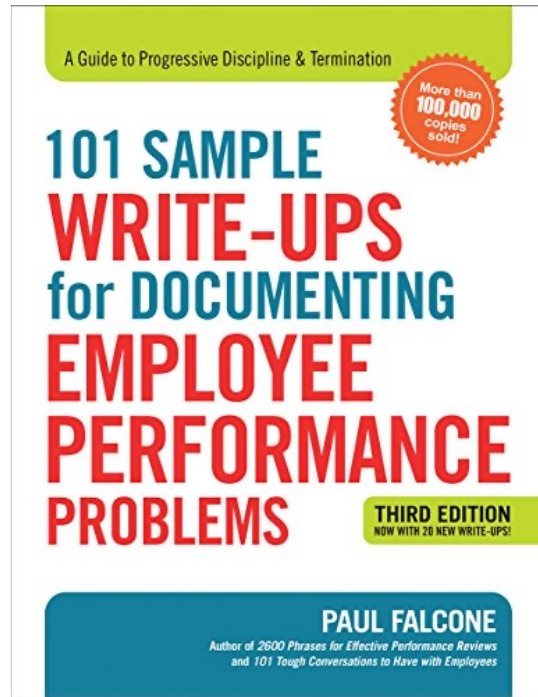
Review slides and prepare for the discussion, setting, anticipate response.

Big mistake - being so formal that you come across as uncaring or being so apologetic/emotional that you confuse the discussion.

[Better Team: Employee Termination Letter](#)

[How to Script Your Termination Meeting](#)

Additional Resources



101 Sample Write-Ups for Documenting Employee Performance Problems by Paul Falcone



SHRM: 5 Common Questions About Tricky Progressive Discipline Issues



Navigating Conflict in the Workplace



Navigating Conflict in the Workplace

Remember That Your Perspective Is Just One Among Many

Be Aware of Your Biases

Don't Make It "Me Against Them"



Know Your Goal

Avoid Workplace Venting and Gossip - Mostly

Experiment to Find What Works

Be - and Stay - Curious



Employee Appreciation



Employee Reward & Recognition

No Cost Reward & Recognition:

1. Autonomy
2. Sense of Purpose
3. Recognition
4. Communication
5. Growth
6. Personal Touch



Formal Program – Criteria, Budget & Timeframe

- Organization
- Peer
- Supervisor
- Leader
- Board

Informal Opportunities – little or no cost
(Bias / Favoritism...keep in check)

Astron Solutions | 7 Ways to Boost Your Nonprofit's Employee Engagement

Discussion



tHRive Cohort | Wrap-Up



Intake Assessment: Participant Priorities/Confidence Levels

We have sufficient bench strength to meet any critical position vacancies.



Our current organizational structure supports the effective/efficient use of resources and talent.



Strategy, goals, and tactics are adequately communicated, understood, and embraced across the organization.



Our organization sets individual performance goals and measure results.



Our organization is financially and operationally stable.



We offer training and/or professional development.



We have a practice of addressing employee misconduct, warnings or terminating for cause.



We use a formal performance management process that involves documenting and rating performance at least annually.



We have dealt with EEOC, ADA, discrimination, FLSA/Overtime, and other employment laws and regulations.



We have defined our culture and values, discussed with employees, and incorporate them into organizational decisions.





Q&A / Next Steps

- tHRive Anti-Harassment / Anti-Discrimination Training on Thursday, November 16th at 12noon
- tHRive Meet with a Lawyer Day (Date:TBD)
- tHRive Subscription
- Utilize tHRive Coaching Hours