

Managing underperformance – the ‘initial steps’ checklist

The following checklist has been created to help you manage underperformance in your business.

Step 1: Identify the issue

- Start by writing down specific examples of your employee’s behaviour that’s causing an issue, and when it’s occurring. Gather any documents that demonstrate the issue (eg. work examples, complaints or performance statistics).
- Also write down why the behaviour is an issue – it may be affecting your business, other employees, customers or the safety of the workplace.
- Write down how the behaviour needs to change.

Step 2: Assess the issue

- Before you meet with your employee, think about how serious the issue is and how long it’s existed.
- Assess how wide the gap is between what you expect of your employee and what they’re doing.
- Think about the possible cause of the issue – make sure you keep an open mind.

Step 3: Meet with your employee

- Discuss the issue with your employee as soon as possible – ignoring it is likely to make it worse.
- Arrange to meet with your employee at a time and in a place where you won’t be interrupted, overheard or rushed.
- Let your employee know in advance what the discussion will be about so they don’t feel ambushed.
- Allow the employee to bring a support person of their choice to the meeting, if they want to.

A support person may be a co-worker, family member, friend or union representative. Their role is to support the employee during the meeting, not to speak or advocate for them.

- Clearly describe the issue, using examples, along with how it’s affecting the business.
- Invite your employee to respond.
- Explore the issue and possible causes by asking open questions.

- Make sure the employee understands the change required.
- Think about the impression that your body language gives – face the employee, adopt an open posture, maintain good eye contact and try to be relaxed.

Giving constructive feedback can be difficult. For more information about having difficult conversations see our online learning courses at www.fairwork.gov.au/learning.

Step 4: Jointly devise a solution

- Explore possible solutions by asking open questions.
- Invite your employee to suggest solutions.
- Agree on a way to resolve the issue.
- Offer appropriate support (eg. training).
- Agree on a time for your employee to improve their performance and set a date for review.

Step 5: Monitor performance

- Make sure you follow through with any training or other support that you offered to your employee.
- Monitor your employee’s progress and provide ongoing feedback – be very clear.
- Meet with the employee to review their performance at the agreed time.
- If your employee’s performance has improved, acknowledge that the issue has been resolved and discuss how to maintain the improvements – continue to offer support and encouragement.
- If your employee’s performance hasn’t improved, extend or repeat the process, or consider progressing to the formal steps.

Step 6: Keep records

- Keep notes of your discussions with your employee and the outcome of the process.

Find out more

For more information about managing performance see our online learning courses at www.fairwork.gov.au/learning.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is committed to providing you with advice that you can rely on.

The information contained in this template is general in nature. If you are unsure about how it applies to your situation you can call our Infoline on 13 13 94 or speak with a union, industry association or a workplace relations professional.