Setting Goals and Expectations: The Beginning of the Year

Setting goals and establishing clear performance expectations with employees at the beginning of the performance cycle provides the opportunity to ensure alignment between the employee’s goals and the goals of the school/unit and the University, and is an important driver of employee performance and job satisfaction.

NYU’s performance communication process provides employees and managers the opportunity to set two types of goals: operational and developmental.

**Operational goals:** These are the goals that focus on improvements, changes, implementations of new processes, etc. for a school/unit or department.

**Example:** Manage the XYZ project, meeting all deliverables by x date. Create and implement a project plan and charter for the project which includes: project scope and timeline, training, communication, human resources, and technology requirements for a successful implementation of the project. Provide updates on the results of the implementation to the project manager on a quarterly basis. Success of this project will be measured by the attainment of deliverables at key milestones in the project charter.

Operational goal setting can be thought of as a “cascading” process from the strategic level to the individual level, with goals getting more narrowly defined as they cascade. It is important for the operational goals set for an individual to support the goals set for his/her department and for departmental goals to support the goals of the University overall.

**NYU Goals**

**School / Unit / Dept. Goals**

**Individual Goals**

**Developmental goals:** These are the goals that help the employee to develop the knowledge, skills, or abilities that they need in order to maintain or improve their ability to do their work. Ideally, most development provided to an employee (about 70%) should come through on-the-job experiences, some (about 20%) should come through coaching and feedback, and the rest (about 10%) is learned through courses and training programs.
Performance Communication Process: “SPEAK”  
(Success: Performance, Engagement, Alignment & Knowledge)

**Example:** Improve project management skills by taking the Project Manager role on XYZ project. Receive ongoing coaching from manager. Enroll in a project management workshop offered by SCPS by X date. Demonstrate improved skills by applying them to XYZ Project and provide ongoing updates on progress.

**Writing “SMART” Goals:** Whether you are writing operational or developmental goals, well defined goals should include the following “SMART” characteristics:

- **Specific:** Describing in precise terms what will be done
- **Measurable:** Describing how you will know whether or not the goal was met
- **Achievable:** Defining a goal that is challenging but attainable
- **Relevant:** Connecting and aligning the employee’s role with the objectives of the school/unit
- **Time-bound:** Specifying the time frame within which the goal should be completed

**Goal setting process steps:**

1. Managers should meet with their own manager to understand the goals of their unit and discuss how the unit goals should translate into goals for their employees. Managers should also share the unit goals with their employees.
2. Employee and Manager meet to discuss and agree upon the employee’s operational goals and their alignment with unit goals, the employee’s developmental goals, career aspirations, and any other performance expectations for the coming year (including values/competencies/leadership competencies, and any other unit-specific expectations).
3. Operational and developmental goals, along with the employee’s career aspirations, are documented by the manager in the **NYU Performance Communication Form**. Employee and manager each keep a copy of the completed form for future reference. Click [here](#) for a copy of this form.

Please refer to the **Performance Communication Guide for Supervisors** (click [here](#) for a copy of the guide) for more information about how to write goals and prepare for the discussion with your direct reports.