

A person with long blonde hair, wearing a blue top and a watch, is sitting at a desk and writing in a spiral notebook. The desk also has a laptop, a coffee cup on a saucer, and another notebook. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a cafe or office setting. The entire image has a teal/cyan color overlay.

Performance Improvement Plans

The PIP

A performance improvement plan (PIP), sometimes referred to as an action plan, is the best way to give struggling employees the opportunity to succeed while still holding them accountable for past performance.

It is not always clear why an employee has poor performance. Did they receive appropriate training? Does the employee not understand the expectations of the job? Are there unforeseen roadblocks in the way? It is critical to allow for an open dialog and feedback from the employee to help determine whether the employee has been provided all the tools and resources necessary for him or her to be successful.

PIPs may be used to address either failures to meet specific job performance-related issues or behaviour-related concerns.

PIPs may lead to several different outcomes, including improvement in overall performance, the recognition of a skills or training gap, or possible employment actions such as transfer, demotion or termination.





The PIP:

Documenting Performance Shortfalls

The first step in the PIP process is for you, as the employees manager, to document the areas of the employee's performance that require improvement.

In documenting the main performance issues, you should be objective, factual and specific in providing facts and examples to further clarify the severity or pattern of performance concerns. It is always advisable to provide evidence to support your findings if possible.

This information is recorded in the 'Summary of capability concerns/ performance shortfall' section of your PIP form.

Next you need to specify *and evidence* the support, training, coaching and guidance you have provided to the staff member in the 'Support provided to date' section of your PIP form.

If you cannot give evidence of support provided, or there has been no support provided, this could mean that a PIP is inappropriate for the staff member and more support is required before it is appropriate to put the employee onto a PIP.

The last section 'Supervisors comments' has been provided for you to give any other information that supports the case for your PIP, it is best to detail the impact that the staff members current activity has had, will have and/or could have.

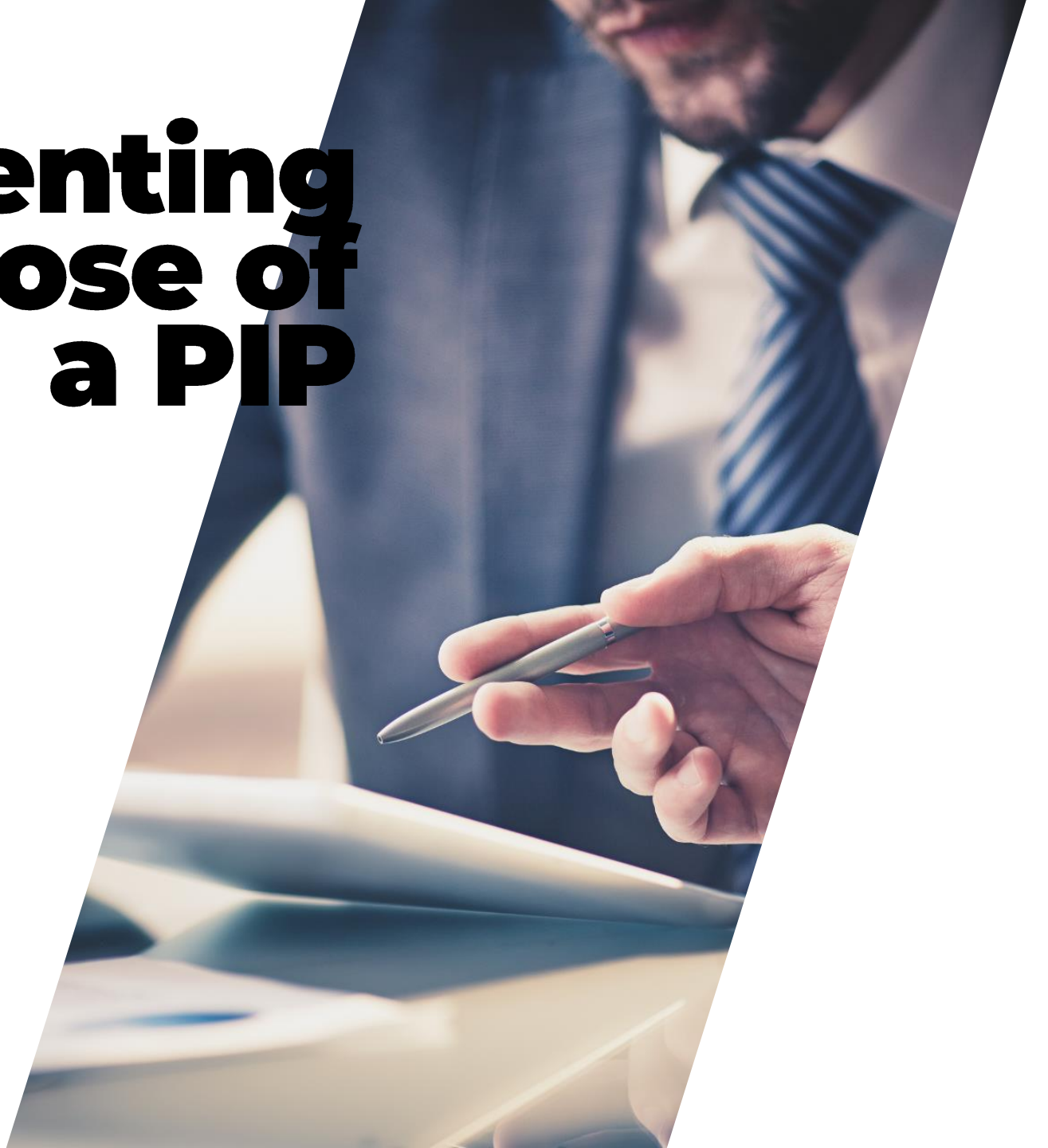
Documenting the Purpose of a PIP

The section 'Purpose/ intent of this Performance Improvement Plan' is intended for a manager to detail what the agent needs to achieve specifically for the PIP to be considered a success and the employee to be considered to have achieved a required standard.

For this reason this section is important in that it dictates the success or failure of the PIP, therefore it is vital that the objective you set is SMART.

If the objective of your PIP isn't SMART, you significantly reduce your ability to measure success or failure accurately and may be setting an employee up to fail (unintentionally) as their goal lacks clarity.

The SMART methodology is detailed overleaf.



Performance Improvement Plan

Staff Member

Joe Bloggs

Supervisor

Jane Doe

Date

01/01/2017

Overview

Summary of capability concerns/ performance shortfall

Joe has failed to meet the last 5 submission deadlines for projects set.

Support provided to date

- **Time management training delivered by L+D 01/12/2016**
- **Feedback given 05/12/2016, 10/12/2016 and 15/01/2016 focused on Joe's failure to adhere to deadlines and the actions he needed to undertake to improve.**
- **Coaching provided 06/12/2016 to support Joe's time management techniques.**
- **Joe was 'buddied up' with Jill Jones from 06/12/2016 to 12/01/2016 to share best practice.**

Supervisors comments

Joe's failure to meet deadlines has impacted other staff members workload as I have had to assign them his unfinished tasks. As of this date we are 2 full days behind on our workload as a result.

Purpose/ intent of this Performance Improvement Plan

Joe must manage his time more effectively by implementing the time management methodology trained out to my team immediately.

Within the term of this PIP, Joe must meet all 10 of his submission deadlines. He has managed to do this before, and his colleagues who perform the same role are capable.

The SMART Model:

For Building Robust Actions

Specific

What do you want the employee to do SPECIFICALLY? It's no good to use words like *improve, change, more of, less of* without an actual, measurable figure attached to this.
E.g. I want to you improve your NPS score to be in line with or above the team's average of 8.2.

Measurable

How will you, as a manager, know when the goal has been achieved? How will you measure success? What does the staff member need to have achieved?
E.g. You will need to improve your current NPS by 2.3 over the next month.

Achievable and Realistic

Is the goal achievable? Is this in line with the business needs/ goals? Can the staff member reasonably be expected to hit the target/ goal?
E.g. I know this is achievable as you have previously attained this score over the last quarter.

Timebound

By what date should we reassess these goals and the achievement against them? Ideally you want to check that the employee is 'on track' mid way through their objective to ensure they are still capable of achieving, so detail any touchpoints you have planned.
E.g. By the end of week two I will check in to ensure you have made an improvement of no less than 1.5 and then again at the end of the month to ensure you have met your target.

Next, you should establish a provisional action plan in support of the employees improvement, which may be adjusted based on the employees feedback in the meeting.

Making the process collaborative can help in identifying areas of confusion or misunderstanding on the employee's part and can encourage ownership of the issue by the employee. This action plan should include specific and measurable objectives.

This provisional action plan should be detailed in the section 'Initial Performance Agreement' and should contain:

'Objective(s) to improve performance' – Think of these in terms of STOP, START and CONTINUE. Each point should ensure the employee does one of these three,

How the agent will achieve the objective(s) – This section should detail the action or actions the agent will perform to support and achieve their objective(s).

Support Provided – Any existing or ongoing support from the employees manager to help them achieve their objectives should be detailed. Will you coach, train, feedback or mentor in support of any of the points you have set?



The PIP: Developing An Action Plan

Initial Performance Agreement

Actions(s) to improve performance/ capability		How will this be measured?		Support to be provided	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start to plan out the day's activities at 9:00 each day on the 'to do' sheet provided and had this in at 17:00 fully completed. • Produce a utilisation matrix as shown in training and identify areas where time is being wasted with manager. • Track breaks using a time provided and ensure no more than 45 mins per day is spent offline (excluding lunch etc). • 10 submissions over the next 20 working days requires a submission rate of 1 per 2 days. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a completed 'to do' list at the end of every day and update manager with anything not completed and reasons. • Completed no later than 07/01/2017 • Monitored by manager. • Joe will track his submission rate for regular review. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager to provide 'to do' book. • Once reviewed, support will be provided if necessary. • Timer provided on desktop. • N/A 	
Agreed term of PIP		1 Month		Agreed date for next review	
Staff Member Sign		Supervisor Sign		Date	
				01/01/2017	



The PIP: Discussion

Once you have adequately prepared, you should invite the employee to a meeting to discuss their performance and the reasons for, and aims of, their PIP.

During this meeting, you should clearly lay out the areas for improvement and plan of action.

To structure your meeting, you can use the SAID model to deliver robust feedback before passing over to the employee to get their perception (overleaf).

It is important to get the employees perception as this may reveal additional development areas or mitigating circumstances, either strengthening the PIP or indicating it may not be the best course of action.

You may need to modify the action plan after receiving the employee's input and feedback.

The SAID Model:

For Challenging Poor Performers

Standard

Legitimise your criteria - your feedback is not your opinion, so where has it come from? E.g. Metrics, standards, compliance ruling etc.

E.g. If we look at the call quality criteria we can see where our areas for development are.

Action

What specifically have you observed - again keep it factual - based on your criteria.

E.g. So what I found when I audited you was...

Impact

You want this person to change their behaviour. Why should they? What is the impact of doing so/ not doing so?

E.g. What we need to do is improve your performance in these areas so we can move you into a 'green' category. If we continue in this way, we're going to find that you will lose your competency and aren't eligible for bonus

Do/Develop

What are WE going to do? What will you do to support the employee, and in return, what will they do for you?

E.g. So what can we do to improve performance? I've drafted a plan of action to improve these areas and id like you to tell me what you think, would this mean you were more effective/capable?

Setting Periodic Reviews

Once you have reached consensus with the employee on their actions and the support that will be provided, the last step before you sign off on the PIP is to agree the term and review dates.

First, the term of the PIP should be discussed. A PIP would usually last no less than a month and run for no more than three months. Less than a month to complete a PIPs objectives may mean this is difficult to achieve and/or measure accurately. As the intent of a PIP is to reinforce behaviours and drive sustainable performance, a short term PIP would normally run at odds with this.

With a PIP of longer than three months, a manager should ask themselves why such a long period of time is required to evidence a genuine improvement and whether it may be best to look at whether this employee is actually capable of discharging their duties effectively. If not, then a PIP, designed to improve upon existing skills and behaviours, would be inappropriate.

The term of the PIP should be documented in 'Agreed Term of the PIP'.

Next, periodic reviews of the employees progress against the PIP objective(s) should be set. The frequency of these will depend entirely on the type of actions/ activity the employee has been set and are recorded in 'Agreed date for next review'

As a rule of thumb, for a month long PIP, you would review weekly. For a PIP of three months, it may be appropriate to review as little as once a month dependant on the PIP. With all PIPs, there should be at least one review before the PIP is brought to a close.

Once you have set your staged reviews, the employee should put into action the objectives you have set them.

During your reviews you should discuss and document progress toward objectives. Every review should be documented using the 'Ongoing Performance Agreement' page of the PIP.

First, using the section 'Progress against actions set' detail the employees

Ensure that any potential roadblocks are discussed and that the employee has been provided the necessary tools and training, before detailing this in 'Support Provided'.

It may be appropriate to add additional objectives in support of an ongoing PIP. These should be to ensure an employee achieves the PIP objective, not because there is another performance shortfall that needs addressing. These should be detailed in 'Further actions(s) to improve performance'

Successful progress made toward the goal should be recognized as a means of motivating the employee to continued improvement.

The Ongoing PIP:



Ongoing Performance Assessment

Progress against actions set	Comments/ Support Provided	Further actions(s) to improve performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the last 5 working days, Joe has submitted 4 completed 'to do' sheets. Joe has produced a utilisation matrix and we have reviewed it together. I have attached Joes break times. Of the last 5 working days, Joe has adhered to the 45 minute target 4 out of 5 days. Joes submissions should total 2 full and 1 part completed. He has submitted 1 full case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheets were provided at the start of the week. Joe states that he was unable to complete a sheet for Friday due to losing the paper. Having reviewed the matrix, I have moved some tasks delegated to Joe to others. On Friday, breaks were over by 15 minutes. Joe states that this was an error due to not using his timer. This may have been affected by the delegated activity, but I am concerned that this could have been done on Friday if the above actions had been followed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you cannot find a 'to do' sheet you inform your manager at the start of the day and/or fill out a blank sheet rather than not recording your activity. N/A N/A Joe will now need to complete 4 submissions in the next 5 days. Deadline for this will be the next review of the PIP.
Agreed date for next review		1 Week from today (14/07/2017)
Staff Member Sign	Supervisor Sign	Date
		07/07/2017

Possible Outcomes of a PIP

If an employee is unable to improve or refuses to commit to the PIP, or if his or her performance actually worsens, then you should close the PIP and consider a possible escalation to the company disciplinary procedure based on the specific circumstances.

When the employee does show some improvement but is unable to achieve some or all of the established action plan objectives within the PIP timeline, there are a few options:

- If the employee is doing his or her best but just cannot meet one or more objectives, you may agree to extend a PIP for a few more weeks or months.
- If you determine in retrospect that the objectives were too hard or not completely within the employee's control, you could decide to either extend the PIP or end the PIP due to the progress that was observed.

If the employee is not a good fit or is not really trying to improve even after all this effort, then you should consider a possible escalation to the company disciplinary procedure based on the specific circumstances.

When the employee has responded positively by meeting the objectives, you should formally close the PIP and allow the staff member to continue. This may occur prior to the deadline outlined in the PIP document. This should be a positive occasion for the staff member, but you must be sure they understand that continued good performance is expected.

Ending a PIP

Whatever the outcome of the PIP, this needs to be recorded and a decision on the next steps communicated in a meeting with the employee.

To do this we complete the 'Summary' section of the PIP. A manager can complete this prior to the meeting, detailing:

'What has the agent's performance level been? Have the objectives set been achieved?'

If the PIP criteria have been met then the manager should detail 'How will the agent sustain performance?' this can be added to during the meeting with the employee if necessary.

The manager can also add any supporting comments in the last section of the form: 'Supervisors Comments/ Next Steps'. If the PIP has failed, then this section should detail what will happen next.

During the summary meeting, the manager should detail what has happened factually, referring to the 'Summary' section, and then explain the next steps to the employee before both sign the document.

The PIP in its entirety should then be uploaded to PeopleHR and signed by the employee.

Summary

Have the objectives set been achieved?

Joe has followed the time management methodology and has achieved a total of 12 submissions, achieving his target.

How will the agent sustain performance?

Joe will now commit to building the PIP actions into his normal working days and if something comes up that may negatively impact his workflow, will raise it with his manager.

Supervisors Comments/ Next Steps

Great work Joe, I'm happy for you to come off your PIP, keep going with your to do sheets!

Signed Agent

Signed
Supervisor

Date

Key Learns



PIPs are intended to improve performance

PIPs are not the start of the disciplinary process, they are intended to support staff to improve and retain their role whilst ensuring they meet the standards required.



Planning a PIP in advance of your meeting is best practice

Most of the PIP can be planned in advance for the most complete, considered and impactful intervention.



Regular reviews keep a PIP on track

PIPs must be reviewed to ensure their success, as a manager you should not place employees on PIPs and forget about them.