Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

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A formal [performance improvement plan (PIP)](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/is-a-pip-the-first-step-in-firing-an-employee-3980663) can resolve workplace productivity issues and help even the most unlikely employee succeed in your organization. Not all workers are efficient at delivering projects on time. Some lack focus or create extra work that delays completing assignments. To address their concerns, a supervisor may speak to an employee, hoping that this will fix the problem. However, although the employee tries to improve, they still have difficulty completing their tasks.

A well-designed PIP provides employees with the necessary directions for completing specific goals. It is an efficient tool for increasing worker productivity and resolving weaknesses in the workplace.

Performance Improvement Plan Explained

A PIP is designed to facilitate constructive discussion between a staff member and their supervisor and to clarify the exact work performance requiring improvement.

It is implemented, at the discretion of the manager, when it becomes necessary to help a staff member improve their performance. The manager, with input from the affected employee, develops an improvement plan; the purpose of the goals outlined is to help the employee to attain the desired level of performance.

The PIP differs from the [performance development planning](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/performance-development-planning-1916761) (PDP) process in the amount and quantity of detail. Assuming an employee is already participating in the company-wide PDP process, the format and the expectation of the PIP should enable the manager and staff member to communicate with a higher degree of clarity about specific expectations.

Case Study on Using a Performance Improvement Plan

The following example describes how a formal PIP can increase worker performance.

A newly promoted plant manager of a 150-person organization was failing miserably in completing key deliverables for an important project. [Communication](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/communication-in-the-workplace-1918089) and [performance improvement coaching](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/tips-for-effective-coaching-1917836) had little impact, and there was no indication that the manager was capable of improving. The manager's supervisor, the vice president of manufacturing, grew increasingly concerned about the plant manager's performance.

In an attempt to resolve the problem, a formal PIP was developed for the plant manager citing 11 [goals](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-set-and-achieve-goals-1918137) and their measures of success. A 90-day time frame was provided, as these goals were challenging and not short-term items to accomplish. The manager was given a strong, supportive environment in which the supervisor's expectations for success were a key factor.

To everyone's surprise, the manager met all of the goals. The manager was able to succeed because he was given specific direction about what was required to accomplish the 11 goals set out in the PIP.

Armed with this information, the manager gathered his entire team, four supervisors and several members of support staff, and shared the PIP with its 11 key goals. The manager requested their help in reaching the goals, so that the entire group could succeed.

Therefore, watching this process play out made believers of everyone involved in the power of a well-planned, measurable PIP characterized by positive reinforcement and expressed support and encouragement.

Performance Improvement Plan Process

In all cases, it is recommended that the manager's supervisor and [human resources](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-the-human-resource-department-1918141)(HR) review the plan for objective feedback and approval. This will ensure employees experience consistent, fair treatment across all departments in the company.

Prior to beginning the PIP, the supervisor should review the following six items with the employee to ensure the plan is clearly understood:

1. State the exact performance that must be improved; be specific and cite examples.
2. State the level of the work performance expectation and that it must be performed on a consistent basis.
3. Identify and specify the support and resources that you will provide to assist the employee to succeed.
4. Communicate your [plan for providing feedback](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/provide-feedback-that-has-an-impact-1916642) to the employee. Specify meeting times, with whom and how often. Specify the measurements you will consider in evaluating the employee's progress.
5. Specify possible consequences if the performance standards you are establishing in the document are not met.
6. Provide sources of additional information such as an [employee handbook](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-does-an-employee-handbook-do-for-you-1918123), training sessions, and any other resources you believe will assist the employee in improving their performance.

During the PIP process, the manager monitors and provides feedback to the employee regarding their performance for meeting plan goals and may take [additional disciplinary action](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/use-disciplinary-actions-effectively-and-legally-1917913), if warranted, through the organization's [progressive discipline process](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-progressive-discipline-1918092).

**Performance Improvement Plan Form**

The following sample performance improvement plan form can be customized for your specific use.

Performance Improvement Plan Form - Example

Employee Name:

Title:

Department:

Date:

Performance in need of improvement: (List the goals and activities the employee will initiate to improve performance. Include [skill development](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/employee-training-4161676) and changes needed to meet [work performance expectations](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-s-the-big-deal-about-clear-performance-expectations-1919253).)

Target date for improvement:

Expected results: (List measurements where possible.)

Dates to review progress by the employee and supervisor:

Progress at review dates:

Employee Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion

A formal PIP is best used for those employees who appear to have the greatest potential for improvement. To help ensure an employee's success, the PIP should be realistic, fair, and clearly specify the required goals and means for accomplishing them. It should also be vetted and approved by upper management and HR. If used properly, a PIP can transform a struggling employee into a top performer.

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*Source:* [*https://www.thebalancecareers.com/performance-improvement-plan-contents-and-sample-form-1918850*](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/performance-improvement-plan-contents-and-sample-form-1918850)