

## DID YOU KNOW??

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### DOCUMENTING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

If you supervise or manage others, documentation is a basic management tool you can use to preserve information, remove ambiguities, and keep track of processes. Accurate documentation of performance, good and bad, and of disciplinary action, is essential to long term employee management and development. The following are some guidelines:

1. **Document personnel activity as it occurs, not weeks or months later.** Documents should reflect a complete, accurate account of what individuals discussed and what events transpired on a specific date.
2. **Set aside some time. The benefits of documentation far outweigh the time and effort required to document** performance-related conversations with your workers. Write down what topics were discussed, who was present, what issues or concerns arose and what agreements were made. Amassing a well-documented employee file prevents misunderstanding among all parties and affords legal protection to you and your employer in the event of litigation.
3. **Describe the highlights of a conversation.** Summarize negotiated terms (i.e., who will do what, by what deadline), warnings issued to an employee, specific performance measures that you reviewed together, and itemized commitments by all sides.
4. **Stick to the facts.** Keep clear, professional notes. Write in a detached tone, as if you're an outsider detailing what happened from a safe distance. Focus on quality of work, behavior and conduct, attendance and availability. Do not comment on an employee's character.
5. **Include exhibits and other support to build airtight documentation.** This will be different depending on the situation and process. Examples include the following: complaint letters from customers or clients, copies of time cards as proof of an employee's chronic tardiness; documentation of poor productivity.
6. **Document disciplinary meetings with employees by taking notes that summarize three elements of the conversations.**
  - The acceptable standard of performance—or minimal expectation—as it applies to the matter under discussion.
  - The extent to which the employee did or did not meet the objective specified above. Specify any violations and/or resulting disciplinary actions.
  - The employee's perspective, response or position in addressing the issue. Give a detailed account of his or her points, even if you disagree or doubt their validity.
  - Ask the employee to review and sign an acknowledgment of your documentation. While some workers may refuse to comply, your offer shows good faith. If your employee refuses to sign the paperwork, explain to them that their signature notes that you talked to them about it, not that they agree with what is said. If they disagree, encourage them to file an amendment.

