

Navigating Performance Management as an Employee

Being placed into a performance management process can feel confronting, stressful or even unfair. It's normal to experience defensiveness, fear or frustration. However, performance processes are designed to clarify expectations and create an opportunity to improve, not automatically to exit you from the organisation. Here's how to approach it constructively.



Pause before reacting

It's common to feel shocked, embarrassment, anger or anxiety. Take time to regulate before responding. Emotional reactions can make productive discussion harder. If you feel overwhelmed during a meeting, it is okay to ask for a short pause or request time to reflect before responding.

Seek clarity

Ask for specific examples so you understand what is being discussed. Some helpful questions may include:

- What expectations are not being met?
- What does good performance look like in this role?
- What measurable outcomes are required?
- What timeframes apply?

Vague feedback is hard to act on. Clear feedback is actionable.

Reflect honestly

Self-awareness strengthens your position and helps you engage constructively. Before discussions, consider:

- Have expectations been clearly communicated?
- Do you have the tools and resources needed to succeed?
- Is workload manageable?
- Is something outside of work affecting your capacity?

Sometimes performance issues are influenced by training gaps, unclear priorities, workload pressures or wellbeing challenges.

Ask for support

Performance improvement is a shared responsibility. You may want to discuss:

- Training opportunities
- Clearer priorities
- Regular check-ins to monitor progress
- Mentoring or coaching
- Adjustments to workload or expectations

If personal stress, burnout or mental health challenges are impacting performance, confidential counselling support through your EAP can also help you navigate this period.

To book an appointment with one of our counsellors, call or scan the QR Code



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Bring a support person if needed

For formal meetings, you may have the option to bring a support person. This person is there to provide emotional support and help you feel more comfortable during the conversation. Discussions related to performance management are also typically treated as confidential, with information shared only with those who need to be involved in the process.

Document and stay organised

Keeping clear records can help you stay focused and accountable. You may want to keep track of:

- Agreed goals and expectations
- Meeting summaries
- Feedback received
- Progress made
- Review timelines

Focus on progress

Improvement takes time. Demonstrating effort, openness to feedback and consistent action often matters just as much as immediate results. Small, steady improvements build credibility and confidence.

Know your rights and responsibilities

Most organisations have policies that guide performance management processes. Understanding your organisation's policy, the formal steps involved and expected timeframes can help you feel more informed and prepared. You have the right to clarity and fairness, and the responsibility to engage actively in the process.

Be compassionate with yourself

A performance process does not define your capability or your value. Many high-performing professionals experience performance management at some point in their career. When approached constructively, it can strengthen skills, confidence and communication. If you are feeling overwhelmed, seek support early. Support is a proactive step, not a sign of weakness.

Referring Staff to EAP Services

- **Manager Support Line:** Call AWS for confidential advice on how to refer employees, manage sensitive situations or talk through concerns.
- **Onsite Support:** Pre-arrange an AWS counsellor to be available on site in the next room so the employee can access support after the news is delivered in the meeting.
- **Wellness Checks:** Provide structured, confidential support for employees identified as potentially struggling. A 15 minute phone session is conducted by an AWS counsellor to identify issues and offer support options.
- **Manager-Initiated Referral:** Formal referrals may be suitable for concerns like conduct, attendance or performance. Set clear goals for counselling, and note that while personal details remain private, you'll receive progress updates. You will receive progress updates and a written report upon completion outlining attendance, engagement, outcomes and recommendations.
- **Encouraging EAP Access:** Employees can call EAP directly—it's entirely their choice. If they ask you to make the call, they must be present to confirm their identity.

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