

The Truth About Distinguished Ratings

This is not as much a mystery as supervisors and employees might think.

The Employee Performance Communication System is designed to facilitate a partnership between the supervisor and employee. During the establishment of the employee's performance appraisal plan, the supervisor and employee work together to establish the performance elements and then define the performance standards that are measurable and focus on the results for each element. This gives the supervisor and employee an opportunity to discuss the performance expectations in the important areas of the employee's job. Ultimately, the supervisor has the responsibility for the final decision on what the elements and standards will be on the employee's plan; however, the focus here is the communication that takes place between the employee and supervisor to ensure both parties understand the requirements and expectations.

It is also important to understand that the performance standards are written at the "Meets Expectations" level—remember, the standards tell the employee what is required to do the job successfully. At this point, the supervisor, with input from the employee, has provided the necessary expectations for the employee to meet the requirements of the job.

The employee can be successful in the job just by meeting the required expectations or the employee can bring new insight, innovation, and creativity to exceed them. Communication between the employee and supervisor during the course of the appraisal cycle will assist the employee in making sure that he/she is on the right track. However, it is through an employee's own initiative to seek out opportunities that allows an employee to exceed in their performance objectives.

At the end of the appraisal cycle, the employee has the opportunity to provide written documentation on their contributions and accomplishments for each of the performance elements. The supervisor will use this information, along with other sources, such as the day-to-day communication with the employee, team activities, samples of work products, or feedback from customers and peers, to assess an employee's performance on each element and then assign an overall performance summary rating level. The meeting that takes place at the end of the appraisal cycle between the supervisor and employee gives the supervisor the opportunity to discuss how he/she reached their decision on the assigned ratings for each element and gives the employee the opportunity to explain his/her accomplishments.

The key factor in making the EPCS successful is the continuing communication between the employee and supervisor throughout the entire process.

For more information about the EPCS go to the NASA People Web site at:
<http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/perform/>

OHCM point of contact for the EPCS Program: Katrina Young, extension 43868.