

Manager fact sheet:

Responding to Performance Concerns



Performance management is an important part of a manager's role. It helps set expectations, address concerns and support employees to understand what needs to improve.

Sometimes performance concerns may be linked to wellbeing, personal circumstances, workplace stress, conflict, unclear expectations or other factors. This can make the process feel more complex.

As a manager, your role is to approach performance concerns fairly, respectfully and consistently, while recognising when additional support, documentation or HR guidance may be needed.

Supporting performance in your team

Below are some strategies you can use to navigate performance management with care. You can also access the [Manager Assistance Program through PeopleSense by Altius](#) at any stage. Support from a qualified psychologist can help you prepare for difficult conversations, consider wellbeing factors, maintain appropriate boundaries and identify practical next steps that support both employee wellbeing and workplace outcomes.

- 1. Start with clear expectations**
Make sure the employee understands their role, responsibilities, priorities and required standards.
- 2. Focus on observable behaviour**
Discuss specific examples of work performance, behaviour or outcomes rather than making assumptions about motivation or personal circumstances.
- 3. Consider contributing factors**
Explore whether workload, role expectations, communication, workplace relationships, wellbeing or personal circumstances may be affecting performance.
- 4. Keep the conversation respectful**
A calm and respectful approach can help reduce defensiveness and keep the discussion focused on improvement and support.
- 5. Offer appropriate support**
Where relevant, discuss practical workplace support such as clearer priorities, additional training, regular check-ins and confidential support through [PeopleSense EAP](#).
- 6. Document agreed actions**
Record key concerns, expectations, support offered, agreed actions and review timeframes in line with your organisation's processes.
- 7. Involve HR when needed**
Seek HR guidance when performance concerns are ongoing, complex, formal processes may be required, or wellbeing concerns are involved.
- 8. Maintain professional boundaries**
You can show care without becoming the employee's counsellor. Keep the focus on work expectations, support options and next steps.

How to Respond

1. Address concerns early

Small issues are often easier to resolve before frustration and resentment build.

2. Stay neutral

Focus on understanding what is happening rather than deciding who is right or wrong.

3. Listen to all perspectives

Give employees an opportunity to explain their experience and the impact the situation is having on their work.

4. Focus on behaviour and impact

Keep discussions centred on observable behaviour, workplace expectations and practical solutions.

5. Set clear expectations

Remind employees that respectful communication and professional behaviour are expected, even when people disagree.

6. Facilitate constructive conversations

Where appropriate, help employees discuss concerns respectfully and identify practical next steps.

7. Know when to escalate

If concerns involve bullying, harassment, discrimination, threats, safety issues or formal complaints, follow organisational processes and seek advice promptly.

8. Seek guidance when needed

If the situation becomes complex or you are unsure how to proceed, access the Manager Assistance Program for support.

How Manager Assistance Can Help

Manager Assistance provides confidential guidance from a qualified psychologist to help managers:

- prepare for performance conversations
- respond appropriately when wellbeing concerns are raised
- maintain professional boundaries
- consider practical workplace support options
- navigate situations where performance, wellbeing or conflict overlap
- identify when HR or other support pathways should be involved

Manager Assist can also help managers consider communication style, team dynamics and workplace stressors that may be contributing to the situation.



Reaching out early makes a real difference.
Contact PeopleSense to book a confidential
appointment with a qualified psychologist.

If you are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide, seek urgent support immediately.
Call 000, Lifeline on 13 11 14.

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