

Owning Your Own Performance Management:

a Guide for FAS Staff

Performance management has evolved on from one annual year-end meeting to an ongoing conversation between managers and employees throughout the year. As an individual contributor, your role in these ongoing discussions is critical. With regular guidance from your manager, you are more likely to improve your skills, find ways to tackle challenges, to share new ideas, and to explore new opportunities. Here are some suggestions for how to take an active role in performance management and be the driving force in your own career.

Requesting Feedback

- **Request time with your manager.** Regular one-on-one conversations will enable you to discuss current projects, what's working well, and where you need help.
- **Ask specific questions.** Make the most of your time. Ask about particular projects or skills—"Did X approach work well? What could I have done differently with regard to Y?"
- **Use projects as a timeline.** Don't wait to ask for feedback. Check in once you've completed a project, or tackled a particular challenge.
- **Think outside the meeting box.** You don't need to wait for one-on-one meetings to ask for guidance. Ask to have coffee or lunch with your manager for an informal conversation.
- **Check in with your peers.** Your colleagues may have insights that your manager doesn't. Ask for their perspective.

Evaluating Feedback

- **Understand your own needs.** How do *you* want to improve and grow? Keep your goals and needs in mind when processing feedback.
- **Keep track of feedback.** By taking notes, you can track progress over time. It's easier to keep track of feedback in the moment than try to remember what your manager said three months ago.
- **Identify specific gaps.** Using the feedback you've heard, find those areas where you can grow and improve. Be as specific as possible about your areas for development—"I will track data as it comes in" is more helpful than "I need to be more organized."
- **Have an action plan.** For each area in which you want to improve, come up with specific actions that will help you get there. This could mean acquiring new skills or putting more focus on specific patterns of behavior.

Hearing Difficult Feedback

- **Listen to understand, not to respond.** Receiving critical feedback can be hard, but try to use the opportunity to really hear what the other person has to say. Instead of getting anxious, try to understand their perspective. Ask for examples if needed.
- **Develop a growth mindset.** Even when you're at your best, there's always room to grow and improve. Use critical feedback as an opportunity to keep getting better.
- **Try to see things from your manager's perspective.** As yourself: "How do they see the situation and from what vantage point?"
- **Be open to another point of view.** You may receive feedback that differs from your own perspective. Increase your understanding by remembering these three words: "tell me more."
- **Find ways to make visible changes.** Make improvements based on feedback you've received, and discuss these changes at your regular one-on-one meetings.

Putting Feedback into Perspective

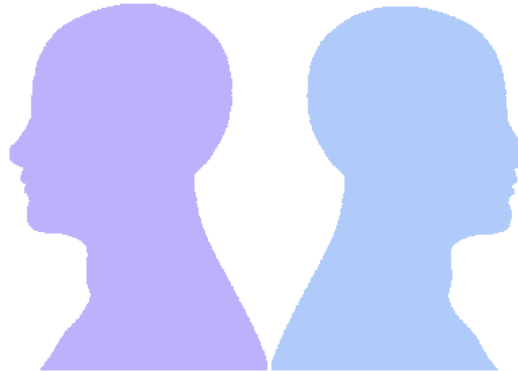
- **Connect feedback with goals.** Setting annual goals is a great motivational tool. Tying those goals to feedback you've heard will keep you on track to achieving those goals. It's also okay if your goals need to be adjusted based on what you've learned from your feedback.
- **Look for patterns.** Once you've received regular feedback over a period of time, notice if any patterns come up. Give some thought to what you hear consistently and work with your manager to find ways to adjust your behaviors as needed.
- **Find opportunities to grow.** Discuss new projects and opportunities with your manager based on feedback you've received. Bringing ideas to regular meetings is a good way to demonstrate commitment to your own professional development.

Embracing a Growth Mindset

We all have a mindset – a perception we hold about ourselves. Our mindset has a significant effect on our ability to learn and acquire new skills, to navigate change, and to be resilient. People with a growth mindset believe their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, determination, and input from others. Those with a fixed mindset see their abilities and talents as innate gifts—you either have it or you don't. Research has shown that individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to feel motivated, achieve their goals, and persist when confronted with challenges. They also see feedback as a valuable part of their growth, not as a reflection of their innate skills. Embracing a growth mindset enables staff members to use feedback as an opportunity to improve.

Fixed Mindset

- Sees basic qualities as fixed traits
- Avoids challenges
- Thinks talent alone creates success
- Sees additional effort as a waste of time and energy
- Gives up easily
- Ignores feedback
- Lacks resiliency
- Worries about looking bad



Growth Mindset

- Believes basic qualities can be developed
- Sees talent or innate abilities as a starting point
- Embraces challenges
- Persists in difficult situations
- Listens to and learns from feedback
- Puts energy into learning and improving
- Sees challenges or mistakes as opportunities for learning

Developing a Growth Mindset

As with anything else, developing a growth mindset takes practice. When you find yourself thinking along the lines of a fixed mindset, try to shift your thinking to the more “growth mindset”-oriented thoughts below.

Instead of: I'm not good at this.

Try: This is a challenging project. What skills or tools am I missing? How can I improve in those areas?

Instead of: My manager gave me some suggestions for how to do things differently next time. That means they think this project was a failure.

Try: My manager wants me to succeed, and cares about how I can improve in the future.

Instead of: That's too hard.

Try: This is a challenge, but it will help me push my boundaries and learn new skills.

Instead of: This didn't go the way I wanted it to. I'm so embarrassed.

Try: This didn't go the way I wanted it to, but I learned some useful things I can put into practice next time.

Instead of: Why should I even bother if I don't know that I'll do it perfectly?

Try: Perfection isn't a realistic goal. There's always room to grow and improve. Constructively critical feedback is what gets me to the next level.