

# RECOMMENDED PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

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*for the Golf Course Superintendent*



# RECOMMENDED PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

## FOR THE GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT

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### GENERAL OVERVIEW

Performance appraisal is a key to higher productivity, overall effectiveness and employee development. It should support and reflect the business strategy, goals, objectives, systems, and organizational style of the golf course.

Performance appraisals work best when the top executive (general manager, green chairman, owner, director of golf courses, etc.) at the golf course believes in the importance of evaluations and communicates that belief.

Performance appraisals go beyond telling employees, "You're doing fine" and patting them on the back, or much worse, telling employees they are being transferred or fired for poor performance or circumstances beyond their control. Instead, performance appraisals are daily conversations, weekly one-to-one meetings, general staff meetings, and other encounters in which superintendents receive feedback about their work performance. It may also be appropriate to gather feedback from peers and others who often interact with the golf course superintendent to gain other's perspectives of his/her performance.

The performance appraisal program should accomplish the following objectives:

- Identify critical job elements, expectations, and performance objectives.
- Establish agreement on the job's objectives and the criteria that will be used for evaluation.
- Provide feedback on job performance, including strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify a means (for example, training) for improving performance.
- Identify realistic job and career opportunities.
- Provide valid information for personnel decisions that will affect the employee.

When implementing a performance appraisal system, the process should fit the primary need of the golf course to manage its human assets effectively. The appraisal system taken as a whole should be technically defensible and generate useful information. Evaluations should be based on identifiable (valid and measurable) criteria.

Begin with an analysis of the job description. Performance standards and appraisal format are developed from the job description. Job analysis will indicate whether the format is based upon objective or subjective data or a combination of both.

It is critical that the criteria are based on the essential functions and the qualifications required for the golf course superintendent position. The criteria used to assess the performance of the superintendent should be stated in measurable, observable, and/or behavioral terms. The appraisal instrument should address each of the essential functions found in the job description and the outcomes desired for the period of time in question.

To be effective, a performance appraisal program should be appropriate for the environment in which it is used. There are two major environments – external and internal. An understanding of essential internal and external factors is critical to the success of your program.

Internal factors unique to each golf course play a more direct role in shaping a performance appraisal program. Factors may include golf course strategies and goals, quantity of resources, golf course hierarchical structure, the nature of the jobs themselves, the golf course reward system, organizational culture, managerial roles and group dynamics.

Federal laws, state laws, and court decisions provide much of the external environment for appraisal. Performance appraisal systems that are invalid by the courts include such systems that have used undefined or ambiguous dimensions. No attempt was made to define effective job behavior, leaving requirements vague or impossible to measure. Invalid systems permitted managers to observe behavior infrequently and provided no written guidelines for appraisal.

Training is a vital component to your appraisal system and can help to avoid common rating errors. Supervisor training is both essential and effective in order to provide feedback in a supportive climate where the emphasis is on constructive discussion. A supervisor should be familiar with the superintendent's job duties and actual performance. The superintendent can also benefit from training because he/she is an active participant, not a bystander, in the review process.

Once your performance appraisal program is in place, it requires management to monitor the current procedures and make modifications as necessary. Elements of both the internal and external environments may alter the original purposes or objectives of a system.

To the extent that the level of performance, competitiveness, and innovation for individuals and groups continue to grow in importance, the performance appraisal will remain one of the most critical management processes that a golf course can undertake.

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*NOTE: It is recommended that your labor attorney review the performance appraisal system you use since state employment laws vary.*

## THE JOB DESCRIPTION

The job description identifies primary duties, responsibilities and accountability. It also identifies the minimum skills, knowledge, abilities, and physical requirements needed to perform the work. The job description should be detailed enough to give a clear picture of the job, but it should not represent an exhaustive listing of all job tasks that a position might perform. Preferably, the final document is a concise, formatted, narrative description of the job.

Consider the following five-part format for preparing job descriptions.

1. **Major function.** Describe the main purpose of the position and the latitude to carry out assigned duties and responsibilities.
2. **Major duties and responsibilities.** Begin each duty or responsibility statement with an action verb that most accurately describes the assigned work tasks. Write each statement in the present tense. List them in order of importance, with the most important job responsibility at the top of the list.
3. **Working relationships.** Describe with whom the position interacts, both inside and outside the golf course. Identify the reason for these interactions -- how they are necessary to perform the assigned duties and responsibilities.
4. **Minimum work requirements.** Describe the type and level of knowledge needed to successfully perform the work. Identify the minimum amount of previous work experience (expressed in years), the level of education, and the primary skills and abilities (technical and general) required.
5. **Dimensions.** Describe the type of supervisory responsibilities, such as work direction, project management, or administrative. Indicate the financial accountability of the position.

A sample job description for the golf course superintendent can be found on pages 9-11. Use this description as a guide in developing a job description specific for your golf course superintendent.

Review job descriptions on a periodic basis and bring them up to date. Although job descriptions are based on the position and not the particular person filling it, positions have a way of changing over time.

To address the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, divide a position's list of primary duties and responsibilities into essential and nonessential functions. Essential functions are defined as those the employee must be able to perform without assistance other than "reasonable accommodation."

## COMPENSATION AND REWARD SYSTEM

An important element of management is fostering an environment in which he/she can flourish in the role of golf course superintendent, and be a professional in his/her area of expertise.

Job satisfaction comes from having the opportunity for growth, being involved in work decisions, and receiving recognition for achievements. It also means receiving cash compensation for services rendered – direct pay – to satisfy essential physiological needs and economic necessities. Direct pay generally means one of three forms.

1. **Base salary.** This includes fixed amounts in equal installments. Base pay usually occurs only once a year.
2. **Variable cash compensation.** This is paid in addition to base salary that is contingent and can vary. Examples include discretionary cash bonuses paid at year end, incentive pay tied to achieving goals, spot awards typically paid in cash after completion of a specific task or project, and various types of productivity or cost-savings rewards (also known as gain sharing).
3. **Deferred compensation.** In addition to base salary, a certain amount of money is deferred to some future date and contingent on the performance of future services. This is different from contributions to a qualified retirement plan – it is direct pay typically referred to as nonqualified deferred compensation.

To be effective, cash compensation must be paid according to set rules and procedures. A system for setting, adjusting and delivering cash compensation in the form of periodic and regular payment is typically referred to as *salary administration*. A formal salary administration plan ensures fair, competitive and consistent pay practices over time.

To avoid haphazard and arbitrary pay practices, define the role compensation plays with respect to your golf course's day-to-day operations and long-term strategies – i.e. develop a compensation philosophy. Your philosophy should address three areas – external parity, internal equity, and pay for performance.

Once the job descriptions are complete, the process of analyzing the job to the golf course can begin. A systematic approach in securing information about each specific job to ensure an accurate definition of the work content must be used. A compensation professional, human resources manager or other appropriate personnel administers this system. To ensure credibility of your pay system program, use current marketplace data that reflect the wages paid by a large number of golf courses for benchmarking. GCSAA's Compensation and Benefits Report is published bi-annually and provides information on salary and benefits by state. It is a good place to start when attempting to set a salary range for a position. For ordering information, please contact the Service Center at (800) 472-7878.

Once the philosophy is in place, translate it into management guidelines and a written policy. It is important to document the guidelines on how decisions are based.

The golf course superintendent, as well as all employees, should know:

- the minimum and maximum of their salary range;
- basis on which positions are assigned to salary ranges including job pricing and evaluation, frequency and reasons for adjusting compensation including merit budget, criteria used to appraise performance and opportunities for promotion; and
- how changes to the pay program might affect their compensation now or in the future.

Beyond their personal circumstances, supervisors clearly need to know how compensation decisions are made so they can answer the questions that arise. Supervisors should receive communication skills training to increase the effectiveness of their performance appraisals and general management techniques. Communication is very important in managing direct pay and the superintendent's/staff understanding of the golf course's expectations.

A well-structured program can support the goals of the broader human resource function. A fair reward system will encourage your staff's sense of mission, their motivation to serve, and their desire to excel.

## **PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS**

The performance appraisal process begins with the supervisor and superintendent meeting at the beginning of the performance year to establish objectives and performance standards or factors. Scheduling this meeting, several weeks prior will mentally prepare both parties.

Objectives tie directly to the job description and are described in quantitative terms. This requires more time and effort at the beginning of the appraisal, but the analysis is easy; there are no surprises about the criteria used. Using the job description, develop performance goals – what the superintendent plans to accomplish during the evaluation period. The objectives should be challenging yet obtainable.

The performance standards or factors represent measurable and observable kinds of behaviors. A clear understanding of the expectations between the supervisor and the superintendent is established.

The formal appraisal process cannot stand-alone. Evaluating and discussing performance at six month to yearly intervals fails to correct inadequate performance. The most effective time is when the inappropriate action or behavior occurs.

Immediate feedback is the most effective method of managing performance, through coaching and counseling. Feedback to the golf course superintendent should occur on a day to day basis and be integrated with coaching as part of the training and development program. The day to day feedback on how to improve performance is critical in obtaining improvement.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

Documentation – of both positive and negative – is important so that useful data is available at review time. A “supervisor’s” file can house this data and should be kept in a safe and confidential location.

The superintendent and the golf course maintenance staff should also document incidents, events and issues that affect the golf course. This information should be made available to all levels within the golf course. The superintendents’ supervisor and the superintendent him/herself will use this information within the performance appraisal system.

Documentation can include but is not limited to the following items.

- Oral and/or written commendations on the golf course’s condition.
- Golfers’ concerns about the playability of a particular bunker or green.
- Steps taken to prevent and/or remedy an outbreak of turfgrass disease on the course.
- Any ideas that would benefit the condition of the golf course.

## **IMPLEMENTING A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROGRAM**

Since it is impossible to design and implement a perfect program, it should be recognized that limitations will always occur. However, it is possible to create an environment in which a reasonably well-conceived program can succeed.

Probably the most important factor is the presence of an overall climate of trust between the supervisor and superintendent. Trust can overcome many weaknesses. At the golf course level, this translates into instituting procedures and policies that establish and protect the rights of individuals. General trust in management needs to exist throughout the golf course.

A performance appraisal program is just one part of an overall effective management process. There must be a strong, consistent commitment to the performance appraisal process on the part of the golf course. It must become part of the golf course culture. This involves a clear, strong commitment to training at all levels and providing many related skills. It is crucial that everyone understand performance appraisal principles.

Modifications must be made, where needed, to work within the golf course environment. The program must be clearly associated with the golf course's overall strategy and needs. Since these change over time, the performance appraisal process must allow for change as well.

## **PERFORMANCE CYCLE**

Beginning of Performance Year – Supervisor and superintendent meet to review the performance standards and job description and mutually set objectives to accomplish during the performance year. *The performance year can be based on a calendar year, a fiscal year, or at the completion of a task cycle.*

Midway through the Performance Year – Supervisor and superintendent meet and discuss any changes that need to be made to performance standards, job description or objectives. Duties and golf course focus may have changed and if so, need to be documented and appropriate changes made within the performance system – example, change in objectives.

## **WRITING THE REVIEW**

Review the performance standards before you begin to write. Check your supervisors' file to reflect on the superintendent's performance over the entire performance period or review a list of accomplishments prepared by the superintendent. Gather information from other sources.

Throughout the appraisal, use result-oriented terms rather than personality traits. For example, instead of characterizing the superintendent as disorganized, describe behavior such as "has missed three out of the past five deadlines."

Depending on the golf course structure, the completed written review should be reviewed by a human resource manager or higher authority. This can help avoid errors on the part of the rater.

## **THE APPRAISAL MEETING OR PERFORMANCE INTERVIEW**

Choose a meeting format consistent with your personal style. This will make you feel more comfortable. The meeting should be scheduled in advance and at a time and place convenient to both parties. Ensure you have a quiet and calm environment in which to meet.

The meeting between the supervisor and superintendent should accomplish the following objectives:

- ◆ Acknowledge work done during the performance period.
- ◆ Reach a mutual understanding of any problems to overcome or skills to enhance.
- ◆ Explore methods for addressing problems or skills shortcomings.
- ◆ Establish goals for the next evaluation period.

Rather than a monologue by the supervisor, the appraisal becomes an interview – a vehicle for exchanging information, solving problems, and setting goals for the next period. Several opening questions include:

- ◆ Ask superintendent where they would like to begin or to start the discussion.
- ◆ How would you like this appraisal to work for you?
- ◆ Of the objectives we agreed to, which one would you like to start with?

Keep the tone of the meeting open and friendly. If the meeting deteriorates, stop and set another time for discussion. Use the time not only to discuss issues but to devise a plan. This may include identifying educational opportunities or skill training.

Keep in mind you are evaluating performance, not personality traits. Use phrases such as "Your performance..." rather than "You are..." Use specific examples from your own observations, documentation or first hand knowledge when discussing performance standards that are not met.

**SAMPLE POSITION DESCRIPTION**

**SUPERVISOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ANNUAL SALARY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**MAJOR FUNCTION**

The Golf Course Superintendent is entrusted with the maintenance, operation and management of a golf course. He or she is responsible for the following.

- Supervising the construction and maintenance of the golf course(s).
- Supervising the maintenance and report of construction and maintenance equipment.
- Rendering professional advice, opinions, assistance and services to the facility's board of directors or managing body as required.
- Participating in all long-range planning meetings.

The Golf Course Superintendent reports directly to one (and only one) of the following individuals.

- General Manager
- Green Chairman
- Owner
- Director of Golf/Director of Parks and Recreation

In clubs organized such that the Superintendent reports to the Green Chairman, any committee members and/or club members who have comments, complaints or suggestions about course maintenance or conditioning should present them *in writing* to the Green Chairman, who will discuss these matters with the Superintendent.

In all instances, the Golf Course Superintendent coordinates operations with the Club Manager and Golf Professional. In membership club organizations, the Golf Course Superintendent also communicates and coordinates with all relevant membership groups and committees.

**MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Golf Course Superintendent assumes responsibility for managing and maintaining properties, which may include:

- Golf course(s) and practice areas
- Maintenance equipment
- Golf car fleet

**MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (CONTINUED)**

- Clubhouse grounds and landscaping.
- Tennis courts, swimming pool and other recreational facilities.
- Restrooms and potable water on course.
- Open spaces, wooded areas, unused acreage and areas outside the perimeter fence.
- Sod farm and nursery.
- Other properties as specified in writing by the Superintendent's supervisor.
- Construction, renovation and/or reconstruction of such properties, whether performed by maintenance staff or outside contractors. In private club organizations, the Superintendent must submit written plans for course construction, reconstruction or renovation projects to the Green Committee. Projects approved by the Green Committee will be forwarded to the Board of Directors for final approval.

**WORKING RELATIONSHIPS**

- Communicates regularly with other members of the organization's top management group to discuss activities, goals, plans and member/customer input.
- Plays golf regularly with these individuals, and in private clubs, with the Green Chairman. In a private club organization, the Superintendent attends all Green Committee and Board meetings.

**MINIMUM WORK REQUIREMENTS**

- Requires advanced knowledge of agronomy and turfgrass management practices; a working knowledge of golf facility construction principles, practices and methods; and a thorough understanding of the rules and strategies of the game of golf.
- Requires a high degree of administrative and executive ability, especially in terms of problem solving and decision making. Requires excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Requires knowledge of current federal, state and local laws and regulations affecting management of golf course operations – including, but not limited to, employment, safety and environmental stewardship standards, laws and regulations. May require current state certification or licensing as a pesticide applicator.
- Requires participation in continuing education opportunities such as seminars, workshops, correspondence courses, field days and trade shows.

**DIMENSIONS**

- Prepare the annual budgets for the maintenance and capital improvement of course properties.
- Formulate the annual maintenance and capital budgets so as to implement Board policies established in accordance with the course's long-range plan and defined maintenance standards.
- Interview, hire, train, direct, and supervise a staff of employees for maintaining club properties. The Superintendent has authority to terminate employment of subordinates
- Plan all maintenance and project work, applying his/her agronomic and administrative expertise to achieve the course's maintenance standards and long-range goals.
- Oversee the scheduling and routing of personnel and equipment to accomplish the work. The Superintendent frequently inspects the golf course and related areas to evaluate how well management standards are being achieved and to effect changes in management programs.
- Acquire equipment and purchase necessary supplies to maintain course properties.
- Responsible for inventory control and oversees the equipment maintenance programs.
- Approve all expenditures and exercise cost control measures to keep, as nearly as possible, operating and capital expenses in line with the approved budgets.
- Keep an accurate and complete record on payroll, inventory, weather data, maintenance procedures, pesticide applications, etc.

## **Objective Setting**

This area of the performance appraisal is used to document the objectives, measures, progress, and final assessment associated with the objectives set for the golf course superintendent.

The golf course superintendent shares in the responsibility to develop their objectives each year. The superintendent should receive a copy of the golf course strategic plan, if applicable, and identify objectives that will support the achievement of the plan. The supervisor and the superintendent will jointly determine the objectives for the coming year.

It is recommended that no more than six objectives are established during a performance year.

## **Factors**

While objectives are used to describe the functions an employee performs in a certain position, factors describe “how” an employee performs the functions of a position.

Factors illustrate the behavior and activities applied in performing the duties of one’s position. One way to think of the difference between objectives and factors is to consider objectives as the duties necessary to be performed in a position and factors as the way in which an individual performs those duties.

## **Rating System/Scoring**

The following system is used for rating/scoring the performance appraisal:

- 1            Performance not met.
- 2            Performance not fully met, inconsistent in meeting performance standards.
- 3            Performance fully met.
- 4            Performance fully met and exceeded in several areas.
- 5            Performance far exceeded in all areas.

**Personal and Confidential**

**PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL FORM**  
*For the*  
**GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT**

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**As prepared by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America**

**Course/Facility Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Review Period:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Employee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Review:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## Objective Review

	% of Job	Method	Target	Results		
Objectives	Weight	How Will Accomplishment Be Measured?	Scheduled Completion	Actual Completion	Level of Accomplishment	Rating
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

## Factor Review

<b>Planning and Organizational Ability</b> Maintains a smooth operation, establishes and/or adheres to realistic work plans and time-tables, works within budgetary, policy and/or authority constraints.	<b>Evaluation</b>	1	2	3	4	5
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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<b>Independent Judgement/ Decision Making</b> Makes sound decisions in a timely manner. Utilizes appropriate resources, policies, procedures, and feedback from others to make decisions.	<b>Evaluation</b>	1	2	3	4	5
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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<b>Problem Solving</b> Proactively identifies potential problems and recommends or implements solutions. Maintains professionalism when resolving problems in a difficult situation. Involves others appropriately to resolve problems in a timely manner.	<b>Evaluation</b>	1	2	3	4	5
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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<b>Interpersonal Skills</b> Adjusts to changes in work assignment or golf course direction. Clearly communicates work information in a positive manner (e.g. status of work, projects, etc.). Maintains positive relations with internal and external constituents. Responds appropriately to feedback from constituents.	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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<b>Team Skills and Cooperation</b> Seeks and utilizes input and ideas regarding methods, programs, etc. that may affect other areas of the golf course. demonstrates cooperation and teamwork among members of team/department. Functions effectively as part of a team when asked.	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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<b>Quality of Work</b> Consistently follows golf course standards for quality and accuracy. Meets established timelines for areas of responsibility.	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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<b>Professional Development And Application of Acquired Skills</b> Attends appropriate professional meetings at all levels. Continues to develop and implement necessary skills, including technical skills; engages in activities such as professional reading, attending appropriate workshops, seminars or tradeshow.	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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<b>Leadership</b> Demonstrates ability to guide others to successfully accomplish plans/goals. Delegates responsibility appropriately and effectively. Establishes and communicates measurable and meaningful standards/goals/objectives for monitoring performance/progress. Communicates effectively with others regarding feedback on performance and other work related issues.	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Comments:</b>					

**Employee Comments:**

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## Scoring

### Objective Scores

Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5	Objective 6

<b>Total Objective Score Divided by Number of Objectives Scored</b>	
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### Factors

### Score

Planning and Organizational Ability	
Independent Judgment/Decision Making	
Problem Solving	
Interpersonal Skills	
Team Skills/Cooperation	
Quality of Work	
Professional Development and Application of Applied Skills	
Leadership	
<b>Total Factor Evaluation Score</b>	

<b>Total Objective Score Divided by Number of Objectives Scored</b>	
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<b>Total Performance Appraisal Score</b> (Factor and Objective Scores Divided by Two)	
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Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

1421 Research Park Drive

Lawrence, Kansas 66049-3859

800/472-7878 · 785/841-2240

FAX: 785/832-3673

[www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org)