PDS Survey results are in

Have you ever wondered whether the Performance Development System (PDS) is worth the effort? What employees think of it? Whether it has had an impact on the University? If you said yes, you’re not the only one. The Temple University Human Resources Department wanted to know, too. To find answers to those questions, in late November and December 2005, they sent a survey to 4,004 full- and part-time staff and supervisors. Of that group, 1,208 responded—more than the 1,072 employees and supervisors who participated in 2004.

“More than a year had gone by since the original baseline survey on the PDS was conducted in 2004, and we wanted to find out from staff and supervisors how the PDS was working,” said Karen Cherwony, Associate Vice President, Human Resources.

In a nutshell, the results show that most people believe the PDS has encouraged employees and supervisors to work together to improve overall job performance and customer service at Temple. Across the board, employees and supervisors agreed that more time is being devoted to managing performance, with positive outcomes.

Survey responses point to significant progress in the frequency of formal performance evaluations and annual goal setting since the launch of the PDS in 2004. “Temple is refreshing because of the [PDS] insuring that employees are in constant communication with their supervisors and performance and expectations are constantly measured. It’s wonderful!!” said an employee. Many more people also agreed that Temple supports performance excellence. This is encouraging news.

Significant progress

The PDS is more than the traditional annual performance appraisal system. It provides supervisors and employees a framework to actively engage in performance planning, development, management and evaluation throughout the year. Progress has been made in every aspect of the PDS. The greatest improvement is that formal evaluations are taking place and that goal setting is occurring. Staff recognizes the benefit of formal reviews, as reflected in the following comment: “I think the PDS is very helpful to both the employee and the supervisor so they both are aware of what is expected which eliminates any surprises [at] the end of the year.” This is essential to aligning employee goals and productivity to achieve University’s vision, mission and goals. And of course, it ensures that people are recognized for performance excellence.

Eighty-two percent (82%) of employees agreed that their supervisors conducted a formal review at least once a year, a significant increase over the 50% who agreed in 2004. Another 79% said that they set annual work goals with their supervisors, up from 64% in 2004.

A higher percentage (74%) of employees also agreed that performance excellence is supported and encouraged at the University; up from 51% in 2004.
Almost all employees (93%) said that they understand the importance of their job to their departments and the University. Another 91% said they were both clear on their job responsibilities and the level of performance expected of them. Both percentages were higher than in 2004.

Professional development
The PDS "... is helping professionals staff to fine tune their skills and broaden their knowledge in areas they wish to develop in... [Most] importantly, this program is giving non-professional staff the opportunity to develop and enhance their skills," observed another employee.

Activities such as attending classes, workshops, training, self-study and reading, can contribute to improved on-the-job performance. Most supervisors (87%) encourage their employees to take advantage of professional development opportunities, and 89% of employees confirm that they do so. Most people (83%) said that the training programs enhance their performance, although some employees wrote comments suggesting that more training courses are offered and that popular programs are offered more frequently.

Constructive and consistent feedback from supervisors is crucial to employee development. The vast majority of supervisors (95%) confirm that they do so. However, employees see it differently. Only 72% of employees say they receive feedback!

Customer service
Feedback on the success of the University's emphasis on customer service was surprising. Employees' perception ranged from comments like, "I believe customer service at the University has improved in the last 2 years," to "We have a long way to go before we are where we should be with customer service."

Looking back to the 2004 survey, more than 90% of employees said they understood the importance of customer service and were committed to going the extra mile for their customers.

Surprisingly in 2005, only 73% said that the focus on customer service has enhanced their ability to deliver high quality service. An even smaller 68% agreed that the focus on customer service has enhanced service delivery at the University.

Conclusions
There is no question; the results of the 2005 PDS survey are encouraging. According to Cherwony, "Employees and supervisors have affirmed that the PDS has had a positive effect on performance management activities, but there's room for improvement." Issues include:

- the functionality of the online PDS system.
- the need for updated job descriptions.
- the gap between employee and supervisor perceptions on the level of supervisory skills required of Temple University supervisors. While 93% of supervisors report that they have the skills required to manage and evaluate performance, only 78% of employees agree. Only 65% of employees say their supervisors provide coaching, counseling and mentoring, which are essential to performance excellence.
and last, how to achieve more gains in customer service.

Call out box:
Frequently Asked Questions

Were my responses confidential?
The survey was conducted electronically using Zoomerang. Email messages, with a link to an online survey, were sent to 4,004 employees. The survey responses were collected by a survey database separate from Temple University's systems which ensured that employee responses were completely confidential. No question responses or written comments could be traced to an individual employee.

Does Temple University do anything with employee feedback?
Yes, absolutely. Staff and supervisor opinions are essential to learning whether the PDS is working effectively. Survey results have influenced the enhancements to the PDS web system, which are in the last stages of development. These modifications will simplify the final review and rating process for 2005/06 PDPs and the creation of PDPs for 2006/07. Supervisory training programs are scheduled to begin in April on using the new web system, the revised work rules, and completing end of the year reviews. Supervisors should register for this required training on the HR on-line registration system.

Feedback from the survey has also led to changes in training offerings and the implementation of a follow-up training evaluation where participants and their supervisors are asked to assess the impact of the training on job performance.

PDS survey results are also being considered in determining salary increases for eligible employees.

What can I do to make the best use of the PDS?
According to the survey results, supervisors and employees do not always have the same view on how performance is managed.

Supervisors can maximize the value of the PDS by:
1. updating job descriptions (HR Generalists are available to assist);
2. working cooperatively with their direct reports to develop reasonable performance expectations by setting appropriate essential functions, goals, and developmental competencies,
3. providing on-going performance development, feedback, and coaching, and career counseling,
4. encouraging employees to engage in training and development and then following up with employees after training to support, reinforce, and hold them accountable for applying what they have learned,
5. addressing performance problems in a fair and timely manner so that there are no end of the year surprises with PDP ratings.
6. documenting performance with PDP progress notes,
7. accurately and equitable evaluating and rating performance, recognizing that a “4” rating is to be reserved for outstanding performance, above and beyond expectations,
8. continuing to invest in their own development including enhancing both supervisory and leadership skills.

Employees can get the most gains from the PDS by:
1. taking an active role in creating their PDP and managing their own career development and advancement,
2. participating in relevant training and development opportunities and then applying what they learned at work,
3. communicating with supervisors about their performance accomplishments and problems
4. asking their supervisors for feedback, coaching, and career guidance

(1,334 words without the charts)

Charts

2005 PDS Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Supervisors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>754</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highly Rated Items
Clear on job responsibilities

Understand my job's importance

Know the level of performance expected of me

Lower Rated Items

Coaching, counseling, etc.

Job advancement opportunities

Up-to-date job descriptions