



Documentation – 1, 2, 3 Easy As Can Be!

HR folks love to throw out the words “document that!” don’t we? Here are some simple definitions and guidelines on documentation that I hope you feel are useful.

Who needs to document? Anyone who supervises others.

Why? It shows how effective you are as a supervisor and helps you instill fairness amongst your team.

It’s also important for employees to understand when they are making a mistake so that they have the opportunity to correct it (they may not even realize they are making mistakes). When you supervise others, one of your responsibilities is to help employees continually to grow, evolve, and improve themselves.

When? The sooner the behavior is pointed out, the sooner the employee can correct it. Sometimes difficult employees are able to turn their performance/attitude around just by having a direct conversation with them. Don’t let things brew as this may affect other members of your team. Fast and immediate feedback works!

What needs to be documented? Employee performance issues which include things such as attendance/tardiness, not following policies or procedures, and even attitude. *refer to specific policies in the Employee Handbook, do you know where to find them?

How

1. Stick to the facts, don’t use words like “I feel” or “I believe” (those are your opinions).
2. Emphasize behavior – include examples of what the employee is not doing correctly, describe proof of misconduct.
3. Include the specific policy in the Employee Handbook that is not being followed
4. Refer to past behavior if applicable – this shows a pattern
5. Identify and present consequences – if further training is needed, document here. Also set expectations – map out how they can change.
6. Meet in person and get signature – beyond verbal warnings, before meeting with the employee, written warnings must be reviewed by HR and HR will need to be in attendance when meeting with the employee.

Other suggestions:

- Keep an employee log, documenting any type of conversation/warning with your team. You can use an Excel spreadsheet and have a tab for each of your team members. Include the date and, topic of discussion and whether it was verbal or written. This will help if any further discussions or disciplinary action is needed.
- Documents that can be used to address performance issues include reports and emails along with any previous discussions. Make copies to give to the employee when addressing those issues.

Examples:

Attendance/Tardiness

Bad – “I am aware that you have been late a lot lately, please improve this.”

Better – “It’s been brought to my attention that you are not arriving at your scheduled start time. Looks like you were late every Monday and Thursday for the past month. Can you tell me how you will improve this?”

Best – “Hi Employee, can we talk about your schedule? So I ran a tardiness report and noticed a pattern of absences every week on Monday and Thursday for the past month, here let me show you the report. Your lateness affects others within the department and tasks are not being completed on time. Let’s talk about why you are late and what commitment you can make in order to get here on time for your shifts.”

Job Performance

Bad – “Why can’t you just do your job? I feel like you are failing.”

Better – “I noticed that you have missed some important deadlines such as” Can you tell me what’s going on?”

Best – “Hi Employee, I am sure you are aware of missed deadlines and other duties you are responsible for that are not getting done. I’d like to talk to you about what is going on as your performance is also affecting others. Let’s review what your current workload looks like and I would like to hear some suggestions on how you can improve your performance.

Attitude –

Bad – “Your attitude has been bad lately, you’re going to need to change that.”

Better – “I have noticed you have said some negative comments and others have come to me as well. I wanted you aware to be aware that your comments are making others uneasy and I need you to stop.

Best – “Hi Employee, I wanted to discuss some negative comments you have made and clarify some information you are telling others. Moving forward, instead of making your co-workers uncomfortable with your comments, please schedule some time with me so that I can get the correct information to you.

Discussion for the team – what type of “employee file” should managers keep in their offices? Let’s review what goes where, including medical/doctor’s notes/Covid doctor’s notes or test results.