Think for a moment about a peak experience or high point in your working life…a time when you felt fully alive, engaged, and really proud of yourself and your work.

Several years ago, a small group of managers paired off to explore this question. Given that it was early in the day, conversations began with a period of hushed murmurs; then the volume in the training room quickly increased. A few people left the room to better hear one another. When time expired, the facilitator struggled to reconvene the group. Engrossed in their interviews, participants wanted to keep going.

In the full group discussion that followed paired interviews, participants excitedly shared what they had learned about their interview partners and themselves: inspirational stories from colleagues they had worked alongside for years - but had never really known. Common themes emerged. They shared stories about extraordinary successes, challenging situations that stretched their capabilities, learning experiences that transformed how they work, freedom to experiment and try new things, and working within a cohesive team with coworkers they considered friends. In sharing their peak experiences, not one participant mentioned giving or receiving performance reviews.

This article introduces a radical new model for performance management that is positive, uplifting, and focused on strengths. Inspired by a process called Appreciative Inquiry, the approach puts employees in the driver’s seat, thereby increasing commitment and forging trusting relationships between employees and their leaders. Though imperfect and still in development, the approach we share demonstrates that viable alternatives to traditional performance management exist – and should be adopted – by progressive organizations around the globe.
As you read the article, allow yourself to imagine positive performance management, and what it might look like in your organization.

**The Case for Something New**

For decades, executives and HR professionals alike have wrestled with the reality so poignantly illustrated by the story that opened this article. In his 1982 classic, *Out of the Crisis*, W. Edwards Deming identified performance appraisal as one of the “Seven Deadly Diseases of Management,”² saying, “It nourishes short-term performance, annihilates long-term planning, builds fear, demolishes teamwork, nourishes rivalry and politics.” Long-standing attempts at reforming performance management practices – streamlined processes, sleeker forms, more training – regularly fall short of desired outcomes. In February 2013, a *Washington Post* article even asserted that performance reviews literally diminish brain activity.² The evidence is mounting. Performance reviews are relics of a radically different era of organizing and employment.

Accelerating technological, demographic, socioeconomic, and political changes have produced an extraordinarily complex and continuously shifting landscape. To sustain success in rapidly changing conditions, successful organizations are continuously adapting. Those that rely on top-down decisions, tactics, and communication; detailed five-year strategic plans; and compliance with bulky policy and procedure manuals are experiencing increasing difficulty. To become more agile and resilient, successful organizations are flattening hierarchies, strengthening communication networks, fostering collaboration, and actively supporting innovation.

Traditional performance management practices are incompatible with these strategies. Indeed, organizations that claim to embrace such strategies while still conducting performance reviews alienate their employees – especially their best performers. Tom Coens and Mary Jenkins reflect on this phenomenon in their book *Abolishing Performance Appraisals*:

> Too often, appraisal destroys human spirit and, in the span of a 30-minute meeting, transforms a vibrant, highly committed employee into a demoralized, indifferent wallflower who reads the want ads on the weekend.³

By contrast, organizations that cultivate leadership strategies that enable people to thrive unleash extraordinary positive performance. Indeed, in the presence of a positive climate, relationships and communications, both individuals and teams exceed common or expected performance.⁴

> “Whenever a technological innovation is introduced, it requires upgraded system capabilities,” says Tye Deines, former Director of Human Resources for the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. “But what about changes in leadership and culture? If we want people to lead in ways that are positive and uplifting, we need to support them with positive and uplifting performance management systems.” Like outdated technology, traditional performance reviews lack the capacity, scalability, and speed to support high levels of engagement, commitment, and
Positive Performance Management

communication. They fail to foster the positive, collaborative relationships between managers and employees that are the best predictors of organizational success.

Many organizations hold onto performance reviews for lack of a viable alternative. Take Google as an example. Despite being one of the world’s most innovative and admired companies, and despite having conducted extensive research on effective management practices, they continue to conduct performance reviews – albeit quarterly instead of annually. Imagine if, instead, they were to implement a program that would incorporate the best of what they learned in their research? “What [Google] employees valued most were even-keeled bosses who made time for one-on-one meetings, who helped puzzle through problems by asking questions, not dictating answers, and who took an interest in employees’ lives and careers.”

A Bold Experiment

In 1984, a group of concerned community leaders founded the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. Early employees focused only on public policy reforms and more robust government programs; but within a year, the Coalition opened a scrappy downtown clinic, providing desperately needed medical and mental health care directly to homeless individuals and families. In the twenty-five years that followed, the Coalition evolved to provide a full continuum of medical, dental, vision, behavioral, substance treatment, housing, vocational, benefits acquisition, and case management services. Its innovative approach to creating lasting solutions to homelessness has become a celebrated model for organizations across the nation.

In response to its rapid growth, the Coalition implemented a performance management system that will appear familiar to most organizations. “Our managers were expected to have regular one-on-one meetings with their employees,” says Deines, then the Coalition’s Director of Human Resources.

But in reality, the activities of performance management—defining expectations, compiling observations and input from others, rating performance outcomes, giving feedback, and goal-setting—converged in annual reviews. Leaders drove the review process with administrative support from Human Resources. Performance ratings were tied directly to pay raises – which amplified the drama and overshadowed whatever progress had been made through regular performance updates. Indeed, upon receiving a review that did not seem to square with what had been discussed throughout the year, employees routinely reported feeling betrayed by those to their managers.

Funding cuts in 2008 led to the suspension of performance-based raises – a phenomenon that, though frustrating, removed one highly emotional component of the Coalition’s review process. Then, in 2010 – when a slightly improved fiscal picture enabled leaders to provide cost-of-living pay adjustments – Coalition leaders decided it was time to take bold action. They commissioned a standing Workforce Development Committee to recreate the performance management system, making it consistent with the organization’s cultural spirit and philosophy of service:
Positive Performance Management

- Honor people’s inherent skill and dignity
- Build strong and caring relationships
- Challenge the status quo
- Achieve excellence through innovation and professional development
- Use resources judiciously and effectively

Empowered by the Coalition’s CEO to approach the project with a “blank slate,” the committee – chaired by Deines – got to work developing foundational principles on which the new system would be based.

1. **Articulate department-level vision and goals.** We strongly urge departments to engage in annual or semiannual collaborative planning processes to articulate or revise vision, performance standards, and time-based goals.

2. **Begin with good hires.** Rather than designing processes to correct or modify employees’ performance, we will focus even more attention on hiring qualified individuals with exceptional passion for helping others and commitment to the Coalition’s mission, philosophy, and values.

3. **Regular performance updates are key.** The new system will involve frequent and positive conversations about organizational purpose and activities, employee goals, and the relationship between the two (as opposed to performance management anchored in annual reviews). This will enable employees and managers to form the strong and trusting relations that are essential to employee engagement.

4. **Employee-managed.** Under the new system, *employees will be responsible for their own performance management agenda.* With support from their manager, they will translate their team’s vision, standards, and goals into a personal “Performance and Development Plan” – a kind of journal about their work. In their Plans, employees will track progress and set performance and enrichment goals. To update their Plans, employees will determine what performance data to collect, how, and how often. At least once every 12 months, employees will generate an “Annual Update” from their Plans, and this document will be the only way of tracking employee accountability and performance. As journals, employees will never finish their Plans, unless they leave the organization.

5. **Detach individual base compensation from performance.** Base compensation decisions will be based on organizational or team performance, market conditions, and other relevant considerations, vs. individual performance.

6. **Segregate Performance Planning and Development from Progressive Discipline.** The new employee-managed *performance planning system* will address employees’ future development desires and needs. It will also address infrequent or periodic episodes of incivility, tardiness, or attendance issues, where needed.

   This employee-managed system will not deal with egregious misconduct (e.g., harassment, insubordination, ethical breaches, etc.), or repeated/ongoing rule breaking or performance lapses. These, instead, will be managed through a traditional *progressive discipline* process.
Enter Appreciative Inquiry

By early 2011, Coalition leadership had agreed to the principles, and attention had shifted to implementation. While attending an HR conference, Deines learned of a process called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Appreciative Inquiry has been defined as *the study of what gives life to human systems, when they are at their best*. In *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*, authors Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom continue:

This approach to personal change and organization change is based on the assumption that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes, and dreams are themselves transformational. In short, Appreciative Inquiry suggests that human organizing and change at its best is a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation.7

Both people and the organizations they inhabit have a demonstrated tendency to move in the direction of that which they study and talk about. Recognizing and acknowledging this phenomenon, Appreciative Inquiry guides people through structured conversations that enable them to shift their attention from problems to possibilities. This structure, known as the *4-D Cycle* (see Figure 1, below), can be used to guide everything from a one-on-one conversation to a whole system change effort.8

![Figure 1. The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle](image)

Appreciative Inquiry processes are anchored by this 4-D Cycle, combined with eight foundational principles defined below.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Constructionist Principle</td>
<td><em>Words Create Worlds</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reality as we know it is a subjective rather than</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Performance Management

objective state.
It is socially created through language and conversations.

2. The Simultaneity Principle

Inquiry Creates Change
Inquiry is intervention.
The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change.

3. The Poetic Principle

We Can Choose What We Study
Organizations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning.
What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes – even creates – the world as we know it.

4. The Anticipatory Principle

Images Inspire Action
Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future.
The more positive and hopeful the images of the future, the more positive the present day action will be.

5. The Positive Principle

Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change
Momentum for large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding.
This momentum is best generated by positive questions, which amplify the system’s positive core.

6. The Wholeness Principle

Wholeness Brings Out the Best
By engaging the whole person, we bring out the best in people and organizations.
Bringing all stakeholders together in large group forums stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity.

7. The Enactment Principle

Acting “As If” is Self-Fulfilling
To really make a change, we must “be the change we want to see.”
Positive change occurs when the process used to create the change is a living model of the ideal future.

8. The Free Choice Principle

Free Choice Liberates Power
People perform better and are more committed when they have freedom to choose how and what they contribute.
Free choice stimulates organizational excellence and positive change.
Deines recognized immediately the congruence between AI theory and practice, and the performance management program’s foundational principles. And so, he began considering how and where to marry the two.

**Performance updates: A Mini-4D Cycle**

He began by reinventing performance updates. Under the new system, each session became an abbreviated 4-D cycle. During these conversations, employees and their managers explored peak experiences, successes, and strengths (Discovery), hopes and dreams for the future (Dream), and paths forward for leveraging and amplifying strengths in service of the organization, and for fulfilling personal aspirations (Design and Destiny). When issues of concern arose for employees or managers, they dialogued with fully open minds about what the employee had learned, and what they envisioned as alternatives. Says Deines,

> Each interaction between employees and managers generated new possibilities for positive personal enrichment and change. Instead of pointing out and fixing weaknesses, managers asked fully affirmative questions that illuminated their employees’ strengths and prior successes, thus inspiring them to dream of new possibilities and design pathways to higher levels of performance.

Since the relationship between employees and their immediate managers profoundly influences all other workplace relationships (as well as the organization’s overall culture), Deines anticipated that incorporating the AI 4-D cycle into this crucial practice would be like dumping nutrients into the Coalition’s water supply. “Eventually, we would see the rhythm of the 4-D Cycle in all of our activities, including hiring, communications, inter-departmental meetings, strategic planning retreats, dispute mediations, exit interviews, and external negotiations.”

**Further Applications**

Beyond performance updates, Deines envisioned a variety of other applications of the 4-D cycle within the new performance management system. From development of department-level visions and goals, to engaging teams in profiling “ideal” new members, to transforming recruitment and hiring practices … all of these became open possibilities in Deines’ mind. “I imagined an interview experience that illuminated candidates’ strengths … that treated potential employees like valued volunteers and donors of time, talent, and passion. Appreciative Inquiry questions would make this dream a reality.”

Deines also considered how to embed AI principles in the program’s design. Looking through the lens of the Constructionist and Simultaneity Principles, he envisioned game-changing conversations between managers and staff. Contemplating the Positive
Principle, he determined that a purposeful focus on strengths would unleash passion and commitment. Finally, reflecting on the Free Choice Principle, he determined to encourage the Coalition to make implementation of the new performance management program completely voluntary. Each department could choose to continue with the old system or switch to the new program at any time.

With voluntary implementation, managers and employees saw the program as a precious gift with instant integrity. To implement the program, managers had only to complete performance management training and engage their departments in a collaborative planning process to articulate the team’s vision, performance standards, and goals.

The first training was held in August 2011. By January 2012, every leader in the organization had completed training. As it happened, nobody wanted to be left out.

Management and Supervisory Training

The training for managers and supervisors – one of the two required steps of implementation – subtly introduced participants to Appreciative Inquiry principles and practices through pre-reading, an opening interview, and a “dreaming” activity. In the latter, participants envisioned actions they might take to bring the eight principles of AI to life.

Having playfully illustrated the importance of hiring superstars through references to the story Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Deines introduced participants to a series of optional tools to support performance management discussions. He provided them with space and time to experiment with them, and to select the tools that would be most useful to them and their teams. One such tool, What I Want from Performance Updates (Appendix A) was an exhaustive list of learning and career advancement opportunities, which enabled employees to openly discuss areas of interest and concern – including uncomfortable topics such as challenging leadership decisions or a desire to leave the organization. This tool was a radical departure from the inherently threatening process of performance feedback.

Another tool, Are Performance Updates Working? (Appendix B) provided a short list of questions leaders could ask employees to identify previously veiled possibilities for strengthening their relationship. Leaders were invited to adapt the exercise for use in team meetings or to kick-off annual or semiannual retreats.

The balance of the training addressed differences between performance planning/development and progressive discipline. As dictated by the program’s foundational principles, in the case of rule breaking and incivility, employees would be invited to write their own performance improvement plans or disciplinary actions. In this way, if employees’ commitment or capability persistently fell short, the strong relationship built through performance updates would pave the way for open and honest dialogue about an exit plan. This expressed commitment to
Positive Performance Management

support departing employees in exploring possibilities for future success would enable more positive transitions for both employees and the organization.

With training complete, the real work began.

From Inspiration to Implementation

First reports from the program proved promising. Burgeoning relationships between managers and employees unleashed new levels of grassroots commitment and creativity. In particular, the transfer of performance planning responsibility to employees proved transformative. Shortly after the training, a Coalition director had to deal with an employee who was chronically tardy. Rather than preparing a written warning that would have likely resulted in a defensive response, this director invited the employee to reflect upon and document how her tardiness impacted client care and burdened her coworkers. Having written a moving apology, indicating that she would resign if she were late again for a non-emergency reason, the employee reported feeling empowered by the experience of determining for herself an appropriate disciplinary action.

When Tracy Carsten took over the Director of HR position in August 2012, she was excited about the system she was inheriting.

For over a year, I had tried convincing executives in my previous organization to move toward more frequent leader / staff encounters, and to focus on helping individual employees achieve goals that rolled up to organizational goals. It appeared to me that the model Tye had put in place at the Coalition was exactly what I had been trying to create on my own. It was employee owned and driven, rather than driven by managers. It was goal oriented, individualized and detached from compensation. Employees and managers put together a framework that worked for them rather than a cookie cutter template. It just made good sense.

Carsten began studying Appreciative Inquiry – an approach to change about which she’d had no prior knowledge.

Reading The Power of Appreciative Inquiry and reviewing Tye’s training materials was a bit like drinking from a fire hydrant. Concepts such as shifting ‘from deficit-based change to positive change’ and ‘organizations are human social systems, sources of unlimited relational capacity, created and lived in language’ fueled my desire to ensure that the program Tye had started would not fade away. Other terms related to AI principles left me scratching my head as to how these terms fit into performance management.

Having finished studying the process, Carsten polled the organization’s leaders to see how the program was doing. Nearly two-thirds of them were following at least some portion of the new performance management model, including engaging in annual planning processes with their teams and setting goals. For example, Elissa Hardy – one of the agency’s directors – used the forms to guide employee discussions, when she assumed a new position in the agency. “It helped me measure staff burnout, and identify early on the people who wanted to move up in the organization. I invited each member of my team to pick the three top things they wanted to work on, and those became the focus of their performance plans.”
Positive Performance Management

The system also helped Hardy address at least one serious disciplinary issue in a constructive fashion.

It was a very bad situation, as this woman had broken the law. When we sat down to talk about it, she acknowledged that it was time for her to go. The new performance management system helped me maintain the relationship, even to the end. It allowed her to leave with a sense of dignity.

It was evident from these and other conversations that many leaders were engaging in regular performance updates, using the forms to support the conversations, completing Annual Updates and turning those updates into HR. Subsequent polling suggested, however, that the leaders who were most committed to the process were those with a social work background (about half of the leadership population). Laural Radmore, Program Manager for Residential Services, described her experience as follows:

I was excited about the performance management process because it was familiar. It was almost like motivational interviewing: strength-based, and focused on what people do well. In essence, it mirrored the process we use with our clients. It gave me a structure and framework that was consistent with my preferred approach to management.

Implementation proved spottier in the clinic, however, where people’s leadership styles were informed by training in a deficit-based medical model. And managers who were hired after the initial training were doing nothing with the system. As a result, a handful of employees had not received any performance feedback in over two years because of the voluntary nature of the program.

Understanding how important it was for all leaders to be engaged in regular performance and career discussions with their direct reports, Carsten began exploring how to increase participation even further. She distributed a list of people who had and had not submitted performance plans: a “good reminder,” said Hardy, as it encouraged several managers to document conversations they already had. Carsten also shortened the training from two days to one, and removed some of the AI foundational materials – purely due to her lack of AI knowledge. The first of two training classes was targeted the operational departments, and focused more heavily on the features and benefits of the performance update process.

Finally, she and participating managers created an informal buddy/mentoring system among managers, in order to strengthen collegial relationships and encourage the transmission of “best practices” across teams.

Reflections – and New Frontiers

Today, the Colorado Coalition’s AI-inspired program remains a bold experiment in implementing a wholly strength-based, relational, voluntary performance management system. It has met with great success … but Coalition employees and AI scholars alike agree that could be stronger yet. Consider the following.

Pay and Performance

In 2011, anticipating the possibility of increased funding, the Workforce Development Committee advanced a proposal for a performance award program. Instead of raising base pay, managers and department heads would have discretion to give performance awards to employees and/or teams who exhibited extraordinary performance.
Positive Performance Management

The amount of the performance award would be determined by the value of the contribution, not tied to a percentage of base pay. This would enable lower paid employees to potentially receive larger awards. The committee predicted that lump sum awards would have greater emotional impact and be perceived as more fair when compared to base pay increases. In other words, base pay would only compensate employees for performing their jobs satisfactorily while performance awards would acknowledge decidedly extraordinary performance.

This system is still under consideration – as is a return to more traditional merit increases. Today’s managers agree that some policy related to pay and performance is needed. “Under the old system, we knew the rules – even if they were bad ones,” said one manager. “The new system provides us with no guidance at all. We need to be able to think together about the ‘right’ way to distribute monetary rewards.”

Increased AI “Literacy”

The Coalition’s revolutionary AI-inspired program was implemented on a purely intuitive basis. None of the organization’s leaders – including Deines – had any formal training in Appreciative Inquiry. This being the case, managers have limited understanding of the nuances of how to apply AI to the issue of performance. They understand the importance of engaging in dialogue and focusing on strengths … but are less comfortable crafting questions that enable people to learn from past successes or envision possibilities.

Carsten has supplemented her knowledge through participation in a Foundations of AI workshop; and is now working with a focus group along with the Workforce Development Committee that co-designed the current process. “I want to ensure we still agree on the original foundational principles,” says Carsten. “Then I’ll design an AI process that will enable focus group members to engage managers and staff in reflecting on what’s currently working – and on how we could amplify what’s best in the future.”

Based on what’s learned through that inquiry, she plans to design a refresher course for managers, as well as a second training program for employees, to help them understand how they can take full advantage of this employee-owned program.

Broaden the Inquiry

The current performance management system focuses almost exclusively on the one-to-one relationship between managers and employees. How much more powerful might the process be if employees conducted appreciative interviews with key stakeholders (internal and external customers, organizational counterparts, etc.), as part of their performance development processes? This would elevate people’s thinking, and turn the individual performance updates between leaders and staff into a process for organization development as well as employee development. Finally, it would increase employees’ understanding of their role in achieving organizational excellence.

Similarly, the Coalition might choose to initiate cross-departmental inquiries, as part of the team vision and goal setting process. Engaging in inquiry across the value chain would encourage departments to establish goals that would best serve internal “customers,” and that were aligned with internal “suppliers.”

Finally, an organization-wide inquiry with external customers – clients, donors, partner organizations, etc. – would strengthen crucial relationships, while enriching the agency’s vision and reach.
Positive Performance Management

So more lies ahead for the Colorado Coalition and other organizations committed to engaging, inspiring, and unleashing potential through positive performance management. May the Coalition’s first bold steps pave the way for a new generation of HR systems – and for a new normal in performance planning and development.
## APPENDIX A

### What I Want from Performance Updates

**Achieving Excellence** the Coalition’s performance management program

Team members will have widely diverse and continuously evolving ideas about what they want, need, and expect from performance updates. Factors that may contribute to a team member’s wants, needs, and expectations may include his/her: length of service, job duties, level of responsibility, prior relevant education and work experience, familiarity with coworkers, professional maturity, confidence interacting with others, and personal background, among others.

This collaborative exercise can help managers and team members clarify the purpose and content of your regular performance updates. **For the team member**, the exercise will help you explain what you would like to have happen. **For the manager**, the exercise will help you better understand the wants, needs, and expectations of your team member.

After the team member completes the exercise, the manager and team member should discuss it. Then, important discoveries and new goals should be added to the team member’s Performance and Development Plan. Although managers and team members may use this exercise at any time, it should always accompany the “Are Performance Updates Working?” exercise.

For each possibility listed below, indicate how much you would like it to be part of your regular performance updates. Do this by writing a ✓ in one of the columns. This is what the columns mean:

- **NO** means you definitely do **NOT** want or need this
- **MAYBE** means you’re **UNSURE** you want or need this
- **YES** means you **DO** want or need this
- **YES!** means you **DEFINITELY** want or need this

There’s blank space at the end for either the manager or team member to add possibilities we haven’t thought of or anticipated.

**During regular performance updates, I’d like help on…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>MAYBE</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…understanding how I advance the Mission…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…and the Philosophy of Service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…understanding/updating my job description.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…improving my productivity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…managing my time more efficiently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…prioritizing my work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…organizing my workspace and tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…tracking my progress in meeting learning goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…identifying reading materials about my work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…identifying training and development resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…setting and advancing my career goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…improving my interactions with team members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…being civil, hospitable and inclusive to others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…expressing gratitude to others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During regular performance updates, I’d like help on…

…understanding leadership decisions.
…understanding my supervisor’s job.
…improving my general computer skills.
…training on specific data systems.
…exploring new technologies.
…improving my writing skills.
…improving my presenting skills.
…understanding policies, guidelines and procedures.
…becoming an internal expert/trainer.
…understanding my program/dept’s budget.
…understanding risk management issues.
…balancing work with life outside of work.
…self-care/stress management.
…identifying and managing ethical dilemmas.
…appropriately challenging the status quo.
…clarifying and making sense of my frustrations.
…refreshing my passion for my work.
…channeling my creativity.
…expressing my need for recognition.
…deciding if it’s time to leave the team.

Blank spaces to add more possibilities:

Please rank the order (from “1” to “4”) of the following statements:

_____ I prefer a supervisor who gives detailed instructions about how work should be done, closely monitors my work, and gives immediate and specific feedback about how I perform individual tasks. S/he has extensive practical experience in the same job I do.
Positive Performance Management

_____ I prefer a supervisor who really cares about me as a person. S/he motivates me by making
time to listen and act as a sounding board. S/he understands the importance of self-awareness,
story-telling as a learning approach, and recognizing me for a job well done.

_____ I prefer a supervisor who emphasizes a concrete, goal-oriented approach and challenges
me to take the initiative to propose well defined, step-by-step action plans. S/he evaluates my
success based on meeting quantifiable objectives. S/he encourages autonomy, but sets clear
decision-making limits.

_____ I prefer a supervisor who establishes a vision and broad strategies with extensive input
from others. S/he challenges me to work independently and through others to set goals and
achieve results. S/he is “hands-off,” but accessible for coaching and support.
APPENDIX B

Are Performance Updates Working?
Achieving Excellence the Coalition’s performance management program

When team members seem to be doing well, managers typically assume performance updates are working just fine. Both the manager and team member may become complacent about these meetings, falling into a groove that inhibits new learning and growth. Managers must not rely on performance alone when deciding whether or not performance updates are working. Team members’ progress and development will fluctuate with shifts in intrinsic and external factors. Performance updates provide the best opportunity to study and address evolving supervision needs. By periodically using this exercise, managers and team members can ensure their performance updates remains vital and productive.

The Coalition’s annual staff survey is based on inquiry into the quality of performance updates across the organization. The staff survey questions are based on similar questions validated by the Gallup Organization as predictive of employee engagement and peak performance. Managers can and should use these same questions within their own team to discover new possibilities for achieving excellence.

The survey questions below include follow-up questions to gain further insight. Take note of how the follow-up questions focus on building on positive experiences rather than problems.

This exercise purposely provides no space for taking notes. This exercise should be conducted verbally as a back-and-forth dialogue between the manager and the team member. Then, important discoveries and new goals should be added to the team member’s Performance and Development Plan. Managers and team members should use the “What I Want from Performance Updates” exercise to help re-clarify the purpose and content of Regular Supervision going forward.

1. I [clearly / mostly / somewhat / don’t] understand the expectations of my job.
   • Tell me about the aspects of your job you most look forward to.
   • What inspires you to come to work each day?
   • What do you need to feel engaged and motivated?

2. I have [all / most / some / few or none] of the tools and resources I need to do my job.
   • What tools and resources have been most helpful to you?
   • What additional tools or resources do you need to be successful?
   • Are there tools or resources you no longer need?

3. I [almost always / usually / sometimes / rarely] have the opportunity to do my best work.
   • What recent accomplishments are you most proud of?
   • What caused things to work out well?
   • What has allowed you to do your best work?

4. I’ve been recognized or praised for doing a good job [in the last 2 weeks / within the last month / within the last 2 months / over 2 months ago].
   • Tell me about the last time you were recognized or praised for doing a good job.
Positive Performance Management

- What form of recognition or praise do you most value?

5. **My supervisor seems to [definitely / generally / somewhat / not] care about me as a person.**
   - Tell me something about yourself that you think makes you special or unique.

6. **I’m [strongly encouraged / encouraged / somewhat encouraged / rarely encouraged] to develop my knowledge, skills and abilities.**
   - As your supervisor, what would be the most important thing for me to do or say to support you in achieving your goals?

7. **My feedback seems to [almost always / usually / sometimes / rarely] matter to those making decisions.**
   - If you had a magic wand and could have any three wishes granted to heighten the health vitality of our team and/or the Coalition, what would they be?

8. **I feel like my work [almost always / usually / sometimes / rarely] makes a difference.**
   - Tell me about a time when you felt you did something that made a profound difference.
   - How do your accomplishments benefit or enhance the lives of others?

9. **[Almost all / Most / Some / Few] of my coworkers seem committed to doing their jobs well.**
   - Tell me about a time when you were inspired or impressed by a coworker.

10. **I can [almost always / usually / sometimes / rarely] depend on my coworkers.**
    - Tell me about a time when you asked a coworker for help or a coworker offered help to you.
    - What happened? How did that experience change your relationship with the coworker?

11. **My supervisor and I meet [often enough / not often enough] to discuss my progress.**
    *Use the “What I Want from Performance Updates” exercise to explore this further.*

12. **I feel like I have [almost daily / many / some / few] opportunities to learn and grow.**
    - To become even more successful in your work, what do you want to continue to do, do more of, do better or do differently?
    - Of all these possibilities, which are the ones you really want to focus on?
Endnotes:


6 For more information about the Colorado Coalition’s programs, services and history, go to http://www.coloradocoalition.org/who_we_are.aspx.


8 Ibid., p. 6.

9 Ibid., p. 52.

10 In this story, Willy Wonka – outgoing CEO of a candy-making empire – hires a child of extraordinary integrity, rather than an experienced adult, to succeed him.