

2018 Sautter Award Submission:
An Online Portal for Staff Performance Evaluations

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Summary

The Department of Medicine's project team built an innovative performance evaluation (PE) portal, a web-based application to improve the overall PE experience for employees, supervisors, and managers by increasing completion rates and accountability, creating a seamless user experience, and equipping users with useful and meaningful tools. During the pilot year in 2017, more than 700 staff members from five School of Medicine (SOM) departments used the portal, with an overall PE completion rate of 97%. In the second PE cycle in 2018, about 4,500 staff members (both represented and non-represented) from 166 department IDs (representing 39 departments from the Schools of Medicine and Dentistry, and three campus units) completed their performance evaluations on the portal, with an overall completion rate of 93%. These numbers are a vast improvement from previous years for many departments. There has been tremendously positive feedback among users (including faculty supervisors), with ease of use and ability to track progress as the main factors for satisfaction.

Background and Problem Being Solved

Prior to the implementation of the PE portal, staff performance evaluations were cumbersome and difficult to track, which led to many uncompleted PEs. Required on a yearly basis, PEs were previously administered using a Word document. There were no digital tools available to facilitate the supervisor-employee dialogue beyond this Word document, leading to many hours wasted on printing, scanning, and emailing by employees, supervisors, managers, and administrative staff. There was also lack of standardized workflow, with anecdotes of employees completing their own PEs and simply forwarding them to supervisors for signature. Furthermore, managers were not able to track PEs during the "PE season" (generally Jan 1-March 15 of each year) and could only guess at which supervisors and employees had started the PE conversation and the status of each employee throughout the process. Managers were expected to follow up with employees who had not completed their PEs, but because the process was done offline they could neither target employees and supervisors who were lagging behind nor had a clear picture of their completion rates and distribution of ratings. Completion rates were low and difficult to increase; without an accurate tracking system, many employees fell through the cracks and hadn't received a performance evaluation in several years. Because there was no central repository of PEs, there was no quick and easy way to access an employee's prior PE history.

Honest, open, and constructive self-reflection and feedback from employees and supervisors are essential to a productive and engaging workplace. Performance evaluations are also tied to the UCSF annual salary program. The Department of Medicine decided to fund a home-grown application instead of purchasing out-of-the-box performance evaluation software in order to create a portal that would support UCSF's existing PE process and provide the most impactful tools to UCSF's supervisors and managers. Therefore, in the summer of 2016, the DOM project team set out to build an online tool that would solve the efficiency problems described above, facilitate the dialogue between employees and supervisors, and improve PE completion rates.

Project Goals

- Improve staff engagement and development
- Facilitate collaboration between employees and supervisors
- Increase completion rate of performance evaluations
- Streamline the PE process
- Achieve standardization and greater consistency across departments/units
- Anticipate a growing user base by creating a flexible, scalable system
- Achieve efficiencies from a web-based platform vs the paper form (no printing, scanning, emailing)

Project Timeline

The project team began brainstorming and meeting with stakeholders in July 2016, and the PE portal first launched in January 2017 with five departments in the School of Medicine (Anesthesia, Medicine, Neurology, OB/GYN & RS, and Psychiatry). More than 700 non-represented staff used the portal in this first cycle with an overall completion rate of 97%. After the success of the pilot cycle, the project team partnered with Labor

Employee Relations (LER) and bargaining units to make the PE portal available for all represented and non-represented staff. Also between cycles, the project team implemented a number of new features on the portal based on feedback from the pilot departments. During the PE portal's second cycle in early 2018, about 4,500 represented and non-represented employees from 42 departments and campus units used the portal to complete and submit their PEs. The overall completion rate was 93%.

Solution and Innovation

The project team designed an online portal that serves as a “one-stop shop” for performance evaluations for employees, supervisors, and managers. This secure portal is accessible from any internet-connected device and has not only eliminated the need for paper forms but has also standardized the PE workflow (with all users receiving the same instructions in a series of distinct steps) and equipped users with new functionalities such as a reliable tracking system, central repository of PEs, and automatic email reminders. All of these features have saved valuable resources (e.g., hours in scanning, printing, emailing, tracking and follow-up, paper and ink).

Streamlined Workflow

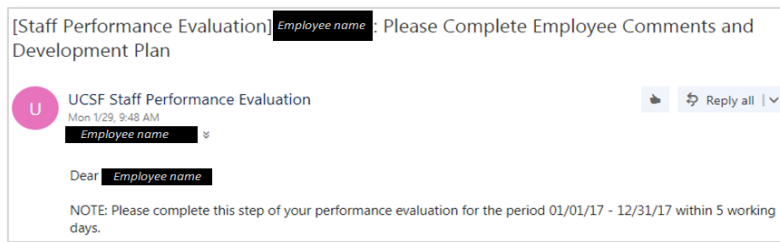
There are three major roles on the portal:

- Employee: staff employee who receives a PE
- Supervisor: someone who has a direct staff report on the PE portal (faculty or staff)
- Manager: unit manager for each discrete unit who signs off on each PE in the unit and manages the PE process for their unit's employees
 - Managers can also assign manager delegates who have all manager permissions except the departmental authority to sign off on PEs. Delegates can help the manager track PE progress and make sure each step is being completed in a timely manner.
- Beyond these three roles, HR also has access to all submitted PEs, sortable by PE information (e.g., employee name, submitted date, department).

The portal process has five simple steps:

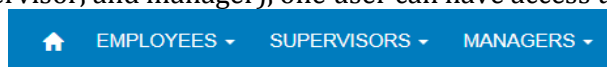
1. Employee submits optional self-assessment and/or draft of the employee development plan.
2. Supervisor completes supervisor portion of the PE and meets with the employee to discuss the PE and the employee development plan.
3. Employee completes employee section and electronically signs (or declines to sign) the PE.
4. Supervisor reviews employee section and signs the PE.
5. Unit manager reviews and finalizes the PE, automatically emailing a PDF copy to HR.

Whenever a step is triggered and an action is required of an employee, supervisor, or manager, the portal automatically sends an email (sample below) clearly describing the necessary action with a direct link to the appropriate page on the portal.



Role-Specific Dashboards

Each of the roles has a distinct dashboard that shows relevant information. As many staff overlap in roles (a single person can be an employee, supervisor, and manager), one user can have access to as many as three dashboards:



These dashboards are strictly limited to show exactly what that role needs to know – for instance, supervisors only have access to information associated with their direct reports, while managers can see all relevant information for all their employees belonging to their respective units. “Unit” is largely defined by department ID, but there is functionality in place to create a “custom unit” with its own manager, as defined by the department.

The portal is designed to promote accountability, tracking, and oversight of the PE process. Each role's dashboard makes it clear where the PE is in the process and whether any actions need to be taken. Action items are highlighted at the top of the dashboard with direct links to the appropriate page to remind users of the required action (sample below).

Actions

To initiate the performance evaluation process, click "Start PE Process" under "Actions" below. This will allow you to specify the appropriate evaluation period and send a request to the employee/s to complete a self-assessment, the first step in the process.

View Employee Comments and Approve Performance Evaluation for
Employee name

Review
Employee name
Self-Assessment Form and Complete the Performance Evaluation Form

Supervisor and manager dashboards also display a list of employees with relevant information. For instance, managers have a detailed view of each of their employees' PE progress through their dashboard:

This icon indicates that no action has been taken at this step for more than 2 weeks.

The portal can be used year-round with any PE period start and end dates.

Name	Code	Supervisor <small>(Additional Reviewers)</small>	Status	Meeting	Rating	Period	Available Actions
Employee name <small>View: History</small>		Supervisor name	SELF-ASSESSMENT □ □ □ □ □			11/15/17 - 05/15/18	<div style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px 5px; border-radius: 3px;">Edit Employee Info</div> <div style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px 5px; border-radius: 3px;">Add Reviewers</div>
name <small>View: History SA</small>	99	Supervisor name	IN PROGRESS ✓ □ □ □ □			11/06/17 - 05/06/18	<div style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px 5px; border-radius: 3px;">Edit Employee Info</div> <div style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px 5px; border-radius: 3px;">Add Reviewers</div>

The status of each employee's PE is clearly visible and updates automatically as the PE progresses through the five steps.

Clicking this button allows a manager to revise the employee's PE period dates and supervisor.

Clicking this button allows a manager to add reviewers other than the supervisor whose feedback may be significant to the employee's holistic PE.

There is also a departmental overview page for a bird's eye view of each unit. On this page, managers can drill down to find which employees are at which step, which is useful to target employees and supervisors who are lagging behind in the process:

3 = EMPLOYEE INPUT: The employee is completing the Employee Development Plan

4 = AWAITING APPROVAL: The PE is awaiting supervisor signature

5 = DEPT HEAD: The PE is awaiting unit/division manager signature

F = FINALIZED: This PE has been finalized

A manager can click on any of the blue numbers to filter the manager dashboard to only show employees at a certain step.

Department	Total	S	1	2	3	4	5	F
Department name	42	2 (5%)	-	2 (5%)	7 (17%)	-	-	31 (74%)
Department name	93	-	-	61 (66%)	10 (11%)	2 (2%)	-	20 (22%)

On this page, managers can also view the ratings breakdown of PEs submitted from their unit on the portal. Prior to this system, such information was not readily available, unless managers were manually tracking it:

Department	Total	CE	MA	M	PM	FM
Department name	16	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	4 (25%)	-	-
Department name	25	4 (16%)	6 (24%)	15 (60%)	-	-

Robust, Scalable Features

Beyond the roles and dashboards described above, the portal has a robust suite of features designed to make the PE process smoother for all users, including:

- Automatic email notifications when an action is required

- Standardized instructions and FAQs for employees, supervisors, and managers (one does not have to leave the system to be educated on the PE process)
- Ability to add one or more “additional reviewer” who can provide additional feedback on the employee’s performance to the supervisor via the portal, allowing standardized solicitation of comments and aggregation into a single page for easy review
- An optional (but very popular) self-assessment step where employees are able to start the PE dialogue by answering a series of short questions (about their successes, challenges, and obstacles during the period of evaluation) that help supervisors better understand the employees’ work experience
- Flexibility to provide a workflow for unusual or uncommon situations (e.g., if a supervisor assigns a PM “poorly meets” or FM “fails to meet” overall rating on a PE, they are advised to discuss the employee’s performance with their manager and HR)
- A forcing function to prevent submission of PEs with missing required fields, thereby reducing unnecessary back-and-forth for correction
- Easy access to an employee’s PE history (access is restricted to the appropriate parties)
- Mass-verification of employee information for larger units by cross referencing OLPPS
- Option to “suspend” an employee for the cycle if the employee does not need a PE at that time
- Weekly summary emails to supervisors if there is an outstanding action item (so supervisors do not receive multiple emails if they have multiple direct reports)
- Option for manual upload of PEs completed on the paper form (e.g., for employees who do not have access to a computer during their daily work)

Promoting Employee Development

The portal has the ability to send the employee’s development plan (if completed) to the employee 6 months after the PE cycle to remind them of their plan and encourage them discuss their plan with their supervisor.

2017 EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Employee: Employee name
 Supervisor on file: Supervisor name
 Date of submission: 03/14/2017

Please find below the Employee Development Plan you submitted during the 2017 Performance Evaluation cycle earlier this year. We highly encourage you to meet with your supervisor to discuss your progress and any changes to your development plan. Our goal is to facilitate an honest and open dialogue regarding performance and development between employees and their supervisors.

Development item/area
[REDACTED]
How will the plan be completed?
[REDACTED]

Technology

The web application was created using a custom content management system with a modern, adaptive, and web accessible design on a CentOS server. Data was stored in a MySQL database which also collected information from nightly and real-time uploads from University of California’s Online Payroll and Personnel System (OLPPS) as well as UCSF’s Enterprise Directory Services (EDS). Because this information is universal across the University, the portal is flexible and scalable to any number of departments. The underlying code was created using PHP with a minimal amount of Javascript. Emphasis was placed on quick page load times, graceful degradation, and usability even under poor latency and/or older devices. An API was written to allow data to be passed to other UCSF applications such as the School of Medicine’s STAR Portal and the Department of Medicine Equity Tool.

Project Impact and Success

In the pilot year, more than 700 employees from five departments used the PE portal, and the completion rates and feedback received were overwhelmingly positive. At the end of the cycle, ~97% of all employees on the PE portal had their PEs completed and submitted. Since there was previously no central system in place to keep track of these statistics, it is extremely difficult to get accurate completion rates prior to implementing this online tool. However, anecdotally, managers have indicated that their completion rates were much lower prior to the PE portal rollout.

“A big THANK YOU to you and your team...Overall it was a huge success for Neurology – we never ever could have gotten close to this completion rate without this tool.”

Jane Czech, department manager for Neurology

In the second year of the roll-out, bolstered by the pilot year's success, the project team invited other departments to use the portal and the response was overwhelming – a total of 166 department IDs (representing 39 departments from the Schools of Medicine and Dentistry, and three campus units). Clearly, there was a need for a solution like this on campus. About 4,500 staff (both represented and non-represented) from these units used the

“Lots of KUDOS to your PE platform from our leadership team. All thought the experience was intuitive as both a manager/supervisor and employee.”

Cathleen Stugard, Chief of Staff for Campus Life Services

PE portal and our overall completion rate is currently at **93%**, with several departments/units at 95%+, such as: Campus Life Services (619 staff, 99% completion); Cancer Center (190, 100%); Office of Environment, Health and Safety (54, 100%); Family and Community Medicine (75, 100%); Department of Medicine (719, 97%); ObGyn & RS (212, 95%); Pathology (42, 100%); Pediatrics (142, 95%); Radiology (174, 100%); SOM Dean's Unit at Fresno (79, 100%); SOM Medical Education Unit (98, 98%); SOM Dean's Unit at ZSFG (230, 100%), to name a few. 12 of the 13 department/unit managers who completed a post-cycle survey indicated that they “strongly agreed” that the PE portal provided them the ability to track PE completion in their unit(s).

While the majority of the participating units were departments in the School of Medicine, other campus units such as the School of Dentistry (two departments); Campus Life Services (comprised of 600+ employees); the Office of Sponsored Research; and the Office of Environment, Health and Safety used the portal as well. Because the data used on the PE portal is standardized across the University, the portal is very flexible and scalable to any number of units. It is reasonable to assume that the system would work for other UC campuses as well with minor adjustments.

The PE portal has dramatically increased completion rates across participating departments while also tremendously improving the operational efficiency of the PE process, considering how much time and effort was previously spent printing, scanning, and emailing the paper forms. The portal also saves HR time and effort because departments now have direct access to an employee's PE history without ever having to ask HR for a copy.

“Thanks so much for making this happen. The amount of valuable resources this saves is stunning.”

Carroll Schreibman, department manager for Anesthesia

Most importantly, the PE portal facilitates the important PE dialogue between employees and supervisors. The portal also gives supervisors and managers the ability to track each PE and understand their employees' performance to a level of detail that has never been available before. The high completion rates indicate that employees and supervisors are more likely to discuss performance in a formalized annual process, which in turn increases staff engagement and development.

Collaboration

This portal would not be as robust as it stands today without extensive collaboration with campus units and HR, as well as input from various users and leadership across the University. From the beginning, the project team was committed to creating a portal that not only functioned well enough to replace the paper form, but would also provide users (employees, supervisors, and managers) with useful and meaningful tools. After each PE cycle, the project team solicited feedback from participating departments and incorporated several new features to harness the strengths of the portal and make it as transformative as possible.

Next Steps

With the second cohort of PE portal users, there are additional feature requests that will be implemented for next year's cycle (e.g., option for employees to incorporate self-assessment text onto the PE's employee section, ability to reset the self-assessment deadline, etc.). As word has spread about the portal's success, several departments that are currently not using the portal have expressed interest in participating next year, expanding the use and scope of this project. The portal also has a wealth of potential to provide further insights into staff performance and engagement. The project team is considering analysis of data available on the portal to better understand PE rating trends and attitudes toward performance evaluations. For instance, do faculty and staff supervisors give significantly different ratings? What job families tend to receive higher/lower ratings? Which department reaches 100% completion rate the fastest? The project team hopes to contribute to UCSF's culture of continuous learning through this project by collaborating further with colleagues on campus!