Tips for Employees: Building a Self-Review

VCU’s performance management process is focused on the employee; therefore, it is very important for employees to be engaged in the entire process. The self review is the foundation of a successful performance review. It is an opportunity for employees to objectively reflect on their performance and showcase their accomplishments.

**Time.** Allow enough time to complete the self-review. That includes time you may need to review documentation that you’ve kept throughout the year relating to your goals and competencies.

**Quiet.** Complete the self-review in a quiet place without interruptions so you can devote your full attention and reflection to the process.

**Relax.** Try to relax and reflect upon individual goals, experiences, and incidents. No one is perfect, and it is very likely that you will recall both good and bad experiences. The purpose of the review process is to highlight strengths, correct performance challenges, and develop unused skills and abilities. In order to do this, you must be willing to recognize areas that need improvement or development.

**Highlight the highlights.** Don't be shy about letting your manager know where you excelled during the review period. The self-review is the place to boast with grace and diplomacy and, naturally, without putting any of your colleagues down. Don't be modest; state your accomplishments objectively and accurately.

**Don't forget about achievements made early on in the performance period.** Your manager cannot possibly remember all of your projects and your participation throughout the year. Go back over documents and emails to help you remember your earlier accomplishments.

**Don't be stuffy.** One of the benefits of a self-review is its tendency to lead to constructive dialogue between you and your manager. Therefore, try to write in a conversational style, one that is as natural as the verbal back-and-forth that occurs throughout the year.

**Be objective.** It's sometimes tempting to give yourself high marks across the board, but it's a little unlikely that you've performed every goal and/or competency at the highest level. Instead of evaluating yourself based on how you wish you had performed, offer the results and quantify them as much as possible by using facts, figures, and specific dates. The more you can point to the tangible benefits you offer the University, the more invaluable you will be. Ask yourself some specific questions: What difference did my efforts make to VCU? What did I do to contribute to my school/unit’s goals and success? Did my efforts further the University’s mission? Did I take a leadership role when the opportunity arose?

**Don't use the self-review as a bargaining chip.** This is the time to show, not tell. So, it's not the time to talk about your compensation. Be clear about your accomplishments and save salary discussions for later.

**Use appropriate language.** Choose words that demonstrate some objectivity and distance. Yes,
you're writing about yourself, but you can still stand back and offer a little perspective. For example, instead of mentioning your sparkling personality, document specific behaviors like your ability to get along well with others. Rather than saying how much you like your job, include the ways that you have grown and improved during the review period.

**Suggest specific improvements.** The self-review is a good opportunity to identify specific ways to improve your performance. Don't be afraid to mention ways that you can do your job more effectively. Making suggestions like this is not the same as admitting weakness. Indeed, it is a mark of strength and professional maturity for employees to identify ways to grow and improve.

**Complete the Career Development Plan.** Choose, complete, and apply knowledge you gain from development activities to support your performance goals, your competency development and your career direction.

**Write more than one draft.** The self-review is part of your employment record so you'll want to “get it right”. Make certain you are thorough and professional in your approach and language. And, that you write, review, and revise your self-review to ensure you send forward your best work.