



## Performance Pro brings meaningful results to historic city government employee performance program

*Improved efficiency and communications lead list of key benefits*



Since its founding in 1639, one of America's oldest and renowned cities, Newport, Rhode Island, has bustled with civic pride built upon diversity, liberty and freedom.

Today, the operation of this historic and picturesque city is administered by a full time staff of 350 employees. Michael Coury is the Human Resources Administrator for the City of Newport and is responsible for all HR functions including employee development, performance management and compensation planning.

Mr. Coury explains, "Employee performance evaluations are the single most important document in each employee file. Because of the inherent differences between union and non union performance evaluation methodologies, we were not being consistent in our documentation by capturing meaningful employee performance data over time. The result was a system that had no relevance or definable evaluation rating structure."

Up until 2003, all City of Newport employee performance appraisals were documented using pen and paper selective choice, and narrative forms. The system was time consuming to both document and administer—and the results were not a good indicator of performance since words alone can often be misconstrued and cannot be measured.

Mr. Coury recalled, "We were constantly checking status, reminding people of due dates, making copies, and chasing down late or missing

evaluations. Employees felt reviews were opinionated and inconsistent from one manager to another."

### Time for Change

Prior to conducting research and evaluating new systems, the City of Newport identified their core needs. In addition to being fiscally prudent, the system had to provide:

- Fair and systematic measurement
- Relevant content and rating metrics
- Online access that is easy to use
- Absolute data security

### Why Performance Pro?

During this time period a new city manager was hired who, in a previous position with another city, used and highly recommended a performance management tool called Performance Pro. Subsequently Mr. Coury conducted an evaluation of several tools including Performance Pro.

He stated, "I approached this process by taking a step back and adopting the viewpoint of the employee. How would I want to be evaluated and what kind of measurement and feedback would be meaningful? With this approach in mind, I took advantage of a free Performance Pro 30 day trial. Once I saw and used the product—and did a survey of competing products—nothing came close to the level of Performance Pro in the areas of ease-of-use, cost, and overall functionality."

Once Mr. Coury had decided upon Performance Pro, the next step was to make a presentation to the city

administration for funding approval. Funding limitations at that time required Mr. Coury to present a limited implementation rollout plan. He was successful in obtaining funding approval for Performance Pro to the city's executive management team.

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Michael Coury,  
Human Resources Administrator  
City of Newport, RI

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### Implementation Plan

Performance Pro is a hosted ASP solution, meaning no new hardware, software, or IT staff resources are required by the customer. This allowed the implementation to focus solely on content customization, training, and deployment. The only customer system requirement that had to be accommodated was that some City of Newport computers needed to be updated with current versions of standard web browser software.

The City of Newport determined from the start that they would utilize the self-appraisal feature of Performance Pro.<sup>1</sup> All staff of the initial launch group were required to attend an interactive half day onsite training session. Next the HRN customer support team worked with Mr. Coury to import and set up all the employee data and reporting structures. The City of Newport readily

customized their own position templates, performance factors and weighting criteria. Once complete, the system was ready to launch.

### Efficiency and Relevance

Since implementing Performance Pro in 2003, the City of Newport has noted significant key benefits—most notably improved efficiency and relevance of appraisals. The consuming task of chasing down late appraisals has all but been eliminated. E-mail notification combined with administrative user status reporting emerged as enormous time savers. Most importantly, Performance Pro enhanced communication by eliminating ambiguity and subjectivity through the use of pre-defined and mutually agreed upon performance expectations.

Mr. Coury commented about the success of the implementation to date. “From the very beginning, we never heard any negative comments. The absence of negatives is a strong positive. Performance Pro is a key component of our staff development culture. Each new supervisory

employee, or supervisory employee new to a position, has a six-month probationary period where they are evaluated at the 3 month and 5 month mark. After this they are evaluated annually. So we have put Performance Pro to a good test and it has exceeded all our expectations.”

“For example, with the click of a button an individual is moved to a new supervisor along with his or her entire performance history. Or, having the ability to access the system online from work, home, or the road has been a big benefit to the staff taking much of the stress out of the process.”

The City of Newport managers highly value the ‘language check’ and ‘comment coaching’ features of Performance Pro. Managers appreciate the help when struggling with how to express something without it being perceived negatively, and employees appreciate constructive and tangible comments about their performance.

With agreed upon and clearly defined rating criteria for each job position the evaluation is viewed as relevant and

equitable across different departments and appraisers. Employees can see how ratings were calculated and what criteria were factors in the overall assessment.<sup>2</sup>

### Exceptional Customer Support

Further bolstering the overall Performance Pro value proposition is expert and knowledgeable customer support at no additional cost. Mr. Coury commented, “HRN customer support is phenomenal. The system is so easy to use but sometimes we need help with various aspects of administration. The support is always friendly and the turn around time to receive an answer or actual solution is either immediate or under 30 minutes. HRN understands that their users are not product experts and explain things in a friendly, easy to understand manner.”

In conclusion, Mr. Coury stated, “Everything about Performance Pro makes my job easier and improves the development and effectiveness of our workforce. I can’t say enough about it. It keeps improving, which continually adds value and makes the City of Newport a better place to work.”

## Performance Pro Customer Benefit Summary

Customer requirement	Performance Pro capability	Result	Customer benefit
1. Fair and systematic measurement	Customizable factor vs goal weighting Consistent rating definitions & criteria Employee self appraisal	Success is defined Tangible ratings tied to compensation Eliminates subjectivity	Performance-based culture Increased relevance and acceptance Manager/employee accountability
2. Relevant content and ratings metrics	Clear, uncluttered interface Simple, intuitive instructions/flow Company/position specific content	Fast implementation and deployment Individual performance supports company objectives	Improved manager efficiency and employee communication Increased productivity
3. Online access and ease of use	Customizable features readily deployed by client administrator Real-time data update/availability	Anytime, anywhere, secure online access and convenience Minimal training and user documentation	Reduced administrative cost Usage and rating report data Fast, worry-free implementation
4. Absolute data security	Secure hosted 24/7 HRN server Daily data backup Off site remote data co-location	Centralized data storage and real-time revision updates Secure employee performance history	No customer IT administration Individual password protection 3 <sup>rd</sup> party security audits

<sup>1</sup> Self appraisal feature is standard with Performance Pro. Use is optional.

<sup>2</sup> Numerical rating feature is standard with Performance Pro. Use is optional and can be configured at the administrative user level.



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