

The Performance Review Pivot

Background

You are a **Lieutenant** overseeing a shift of 2 sergeants and 12 road patrol Deputies. One of your direct reports is **Sergeant Marcus Vance**, an 11-year veteran. Marcus is highly respected by his squad, loyal to the agency, and known for his exceptional tactical skills during high-stress critical incidents.

Six months ago, Marcus lost his wife to breast cancer after a courageous battle that lasted two years. Since returning to duty three months ago, his performance has changed significantly. While he still handles major emergencies flawlessly, he has completely checked out of his administrative and supervisory duties.

Your shift is currently facing a massive backlog of unapproved case reports because Marcus leaves them sitting in the queue. There have been two "close calls" of morning court arraignments where the prosecutor called the records department looking for case reports. Luckily another supervisor was able to approve them and push them through the system before a suspect was released from custody due to a technicality of a missing report. You have also heard from Deputies that Marcus is moody, irritable and unapproachable. He almost never leaves the station unless there is an emergency. You have documented these issues and had two informal "coffee chats" with Marcus to offer support and remind him of expectations. He promised to catch up, but nothing changed.

The Dilemma

Today is the deadline for annual performance evaluations. Agency policy dictates that supervisors must be rated accurately based on the entire year's performance. Ratings directly impact promotional eligibility, specialized unit assignments, and merit-based pay. You submitted your eval. for Marcus up the chain yesterday.

An hour ago, your boss **Captain Reynolds** called you into his office. The Captain is a close personal friend of Marcus. He handed you back Marcus's evaluation and said:

"Look, Marcus is going through hell right now, but he is a great cop and this agency owes him for a decade of great service. If you give him the 'Unsatisfactory' rating that he technically deserves, according to HR policy it will trigger a mandatory Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). That PIP will disqualify him from being eligible to take the upcoming Lieutenant's exam next month, and it will kill his morale completely. Do me a favor - just give him a 'Meets Expectations' this time. Call it a compassionate pass. I know he'll bounce back, and the Deputies need to see that we look out for our own. Why don't you think about it at least and get back to me before the end of the shift today. I'd really appreciate it, and I know Marcus will too"

You know that giving Marcus a passing grade is not deserved, and just not right. It's unfair to other Sergeants who worked hard all year, and the Deputies he supervises all know the truth. However, writing an accurate evaluation will devastate a grieving colleague, alienate your Captain, and likely cause others to view you as a heartless, bureaucratic manager who doesn't support his people.

POLICE - What would you do?