

TIPS FOR PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK

Tips for GIVING Performance Feedback:

If you are a supervisor, you are obligated to give your employees feedback on their performance, whether they want it or not. The purpose of feedback is to enable people to make adjustments in their work so their continuing efforts will meet or exceed expectations. When you give feedback, you are doing it for a business reason.

The following tips may help you plan your approach to giving feedback:

- Give feedback often.
- Make feedback timely. Do not wait too long after observing the behavior before meeting with the employee to discuss it.
- Keep the feedback simple.
- When the feedback concerns behavior that must be corrected, meet in a private, neutral setting.
- Focus on the situation you have observed.
- Describe what the employee did. Do not try to interpret the motives behind the employee's behavior.
- Explain why the employee's behavior matters - the effect it has on the work unit or agency and on the employee's ability to meet performance expectations.
- Be prepared to offer your own suggestions as to how the employee can achieve the necessary behavior change, and offer your support.
- Anticipate unexpected information.
- Play up the employee's strengths.

Tips for RECEIVING Performance Feedback:

Feedback can only be as effective as the person on the receiving end wants to make it. In the best-run organizations, customer complaints are considered a "gift" because they point out areas of improvement, which in turn enables the organization to better meet performance goals. The same is true for individuals on the receiving end of "constructive criticism." Constructively receiving feedback can help an employee better meet their individual performance goals and increase their value.

The following guidelines may be helpful:

- Listen — Concentrate on what is being said. Try to picture the behavior in question.
- Do not defend — Do not try to explain the reason behind the behavior in question. Your task in receiving feedback is to understand the behavior from the feedback giver's perspective.
- Shake it off — Criticism often triggers an emotional response and defensiveness. Keep your emotions under control. Do not get mad. Rather, keep your cool so you can understand the feedback and figure out what to do differently in the future.

- Ask questions for clarification — If the feedback giver is being vague, ask questions. The feedback giver may be uneasy giving the criticism, so you want the person to feel comfortable about being more specific about the behavior in question.
- Explore alternatives — Suggest what you might have done differently that would have been more effective. Ask for the feedback giver's suggestions.
- Thank the feedback giver — Constructive criticism is usually helpful. You want to continue receiving it whenever it's appropriate. You do not want to cut off your sources of useful information. Show your appreciation to the feedback giver and encourage further exchanges of information.

Climate for Feedback:

Getting started giving feedback can be anxiety provoking. However, it is a supervisory obligation. Start giving feedback regularly to your employees. Be candid but constructive; level with your employees without being brutal. Let your employees know what they are doing well in addition to what needs improving. Ask for feedback from them about your performance.

Encourage them to level with you. Accept the feedback gracefully. Put to good use the feedback you receive: try to change what needs to be changed and continue doing those things they find effective.

If you do these things, you will have taken a significant step toward creating what is called a climate for feedback — an environment in which performance feedback is openly given and received all for the purpose of ensuring that everyone achieves their performance expectations and contributes to the work unit's (and the larger organization's) success.

References:

Adapted from RJ Buron and D McDonald-Mann, *Giving Feedback*