Employee Feedback That Works: 
*What Managers Need to Know*

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Success Seminar Series
Feedback Is Part of Your Job

• Providing feedback to employees – positive and negative – is a vital part of every supervisor’s job.
  ▫ Let employees know when they’re doing a good job
  ▫ Let employees know when improvement is needed
• Remember: It’s just as important to let your employees know how to improve as it is to let them know when they are doing something wrong.
Feedback Is Part of Your Job

• It’s also important to seek/pay attention to feedback from your team members.
  ▫ Pay attention to what they tell you through words and actions
  ▫ Actively seek feedback from team members
8 Performance Feedback Steps

1. Describe the situation.
2. Ask for the employee’s view of the situation.
3. Reach an understanding of the situation.
4. Develop an action plan to resolve the situation.
5. Verify the employee’s understanding of how to resolve the situation.
6. Agree to follow up later to make certain the situation has been resolved.
7. Follow up with the employee.
8. Provide feedback – positive or negative.
9 Effective Feedback Tips

1. Be Proactive
   - Don’t wait until something goes really wrong to provide feedback.
   - Don’t wait for employees to come to you to ask for feedback.
   - Recognize that many problem behaviors result from a lack of feedback.
   - Look for opportunities to provide substantive praise.
   - Don’t put off or avoid dealing with problems.
9 Effective Feedback Tips

2. Be Open Minded
   ▫ Remember that people rarely do things wrong on purpose.
   ▫ Most performance problems are training issues or the result of miscommunication.
   ▫ Ask for input from employees before making assumptions, blaming or demanding.
   ▫ Realize that you may not have all of the information necessary to make a fair assessment of the situation.
9 Effective Feedback Tips

3. Prepare
  ▫ Take the time to plan what you want to say before giving feedback.
  ▫ Gather your thoughts and clarify what you want to accomplish.
    • What do you want to say?
    • What do you want to accomplish?
4. Be Specific

- Provide **specific** feedback so employees know exactly what you are praising or what needs improvement.
  - Focus on **what** needs to be improved and **how** it can be done.
  - Verify that employees know what to do and how.
9 Effective Feedback Tips

5. Be Honest

- Honest feedback is essential to performance management and improvement.
- While taking the other person’s feelings into consideration is important, it’s not a reason/excuse to avoid the truth.
- You can be honest with someone about a performance/behavior issue while still treating the person with respect.
6. Build Employee Confidence

- When employees make mistakes, it is natural for them to doubt their knowledge or skills.
- Reassure as appropriate.
- Find out what employees need from you in order to succeed.
- Make sure that employees know how to do their jobs.
  - Solicit feedback
  - Follow up
9 Effective Feedback Tips

7. Establish a Progress Plan
   ▫ When working with an employee who needs to improve, agree upon a “progress plan” detailing expectations.
   ▫ Have the employee verbalize the actions he or she is going to take to begin the progress plan.
   ▫ Follow up throughout the plan to ensure progress is taking place as it should.
   ▫ Provide and solicit feedback throughout the process.
9 Effective Feedback Tips

- **8. Appropriate Setting**
  - Praise in public, criticize in private.
  - Don’t rely on group settings to address individual issues.

- **9. Develop a Feedback Habit**
  - Take care of performance feedback situations immediately as they occur.
  - Get in the habit of providing positive employee feedback to each member of your team at least once each week.
Develop a Feedback Habit

- **How?**
  - Pay close enough attention to what is going on with your team members to find something specific to provide individualized feedback on to every person, every week.

- **Why?**
  - Opens the lines of communication with employees
  - Lets employees know supervisors are “tuned in”
  - Increases the chances positive behaviors will continue
  - Introduces recognition & appreciation into the culture
  - Makes it easier to have negative conversations
  - Can positively impact engagement and productivity
Finding Ways to Praise

- What are some things that employees do that we sometimes take for granted, but that would be good to praise them for?
  - Helping train new employees
  - Consistently meeting deadlines
  - Providing quality work that is correct the first time
  - Referring contacts to come to work for the company
  - Being reliable
  - Offering creative suggestions
  - ________________________________
  - ________________________________
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

1. Waiting too Long/Allowing Problems to Worsen
   ▫ **Feedback should immediate.**
     • When employees do things wrong, if the behaviors aren’t corrected, the problems quickly become habits.
     • Employees who are doing a good job but who don’t hear about it may (a) stop or (b) feel unappreciated and become demoralized and demotivated.
   ▫ **Avoid thinking “the next time this happens, I’ll do something about it”**.
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

2. Being too Vague

- “Good job” and “do better” are not effective feedback statements as they do not let employees know what you are praising or criticizing.
- Focus instead on the exact performance that you want to praise or criticize.
  - I appreciate the fact that you turned in your last report before the deadline.
  - I noticed you sending text messages during the staff meeting yesterday. That is not acceptable. Please do not do that in the future.
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

3. Assuming Employees Know
   ▫ Do not assume that employees know that you recognize or appreciate their efforts or problems.
   ▫ Don’t presume that when you say, “doing X doesn’t seem like a good idea” that employees will realize you are telling them that they cannot do X.

4. “Saving Up” for Performance Review Time
   ▫ While formal performance evaluations typically occur yearly, regular feedback is necessary. Don’t “save up” for evaluation time.
5. Thinking Feedback Doesn’t Matter

- Employees need to know how they are doing whether they let you know they do or not.
- If employees act like it’s no big deal when you praise them, that doesn’t mean that they don’t appreciate it.

6. Thinking Employees Will Come to You

- If your employees have to come to you before you offer feedback, they already feel unappreciated and like you don’t care about them or their performance.
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

6. Offering Criticism Publicly
   ▫ Requests for improvement should be handled as privately as possible.

7. Offering Criticism that is Not Constructive
   ▫ Recognize that most people do not do things wrong on purpose.
   ▫ To give constructive criticism, you must point out the problem and provide suggestions/assistance for improvement.
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

8. Unwillingness to Listen to Feedback
   ▫ Effective managers should be open to hearing feedback from the people they are tasked with supervising as well as from their peers and superiors. Be willing to listen to what others have to say and even ask for their input when it is appropriate to do so.
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

9. Giving Feedback that is Not Meaningful
   ▫ Don’t force yourself to say positive things if there is nothing to praise.
   ▫ Don’t look for reasons to criticize if there aren’t substantive problems.

10. Failing to Verify Understanding
   ▫ When asking employees to change something, how can you be sure they understand? Asking and having them say “yes” is not sufficient.
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

11. Expecting Perfection
   ▫ Don’t be so much of a perfectionist that employees come to feel that they can never meet your expectations.

12. Giving the Idea that Things Are Never “Good Enough”
   ▫ If every, “you did a great job with X” is followed by a “but...” employees won’t feel praised. They will feel criticized or punished.
15 Common Feedback Mistakes

- 13. Bad News Only
  - Avoid becoming managers who only provide feedback when things are wrong. Get in the habit of providing positive feedback to all team members on a regular basis.

- I’m Just the Messenger
  - Don’t fail to take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings and reactions. "This comes straight from the boss” is not appropriate.

- 15. Lack of Follow Up
  - It’s always important to follow up performance improvement feedback to be sure that the desired actions are being taken.
Get in the Feedback Habit

• Remember that giving feedback isn’t something that you can check off your to-do list. Providing feedback to employees it is an ongoing process.
• Effective managers recognize that they must stay aware of what is going on and how workers are doing, being certain to provide praise when warranted and to step in and offer criticism when warranted.
About the Trainer

• Contact Mary at mgwhite@mtibusiness.com.
• Mary Gormandy White, M.A., SPHR is managing director of MTI Business Solutions, a leading corporate training/talent development working with clients throughout the United States to build better workplaces. She specializes in training and consulting services related to HR, management, leadership, communication, teambuilding, Everything DiSC, Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team, PXT Select and more.
• She also teaches online certification prep courses for SHRM –CP and SCP certification.
• Mary holds graduate and undergraduate degrees in Communication. Her certifications include Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR), SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP), Everything DiSC Certified Trainer/Accredited Workplace Facilitator and PXT Select Certified Professional.
• Her professional background includes extensive experience in management, HR, instructional design and communication. She is a frequent keynote speaker at conferences and association meetings nationwide.
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