Conducting an Effective Performance Feedback Session

Feedback should be given frequently, not once a year
- Managers have a responsibility to correct performance deficiencies as soon as they become aware of the issue. Subpar performance in September could mean eight months of poor performance and associated issues.
- A major determinant of the effectiveness of a feedback session is the degree to which staff is not surprised by the feedback.
- An easy rule is to follow is that employees should receive frequent feedback so that they know what they will hear before the feedback session.

Create the right context for the discussion
- Choose a neutral location for the feedback session (not the manager's office)
- Present the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the role of the employee, role of the manager, and the relationship between them.
- Acknowledge that you would like the meeting to be an open dialogue.

Ask the employee to complete a Self-evaluation before the session
- Self-evaluations require an employee to think about their strengths and weaknesses in advance.
- The self-evaluation can lead to a more balanced discussion about areas where differences exit.
- Although self-evaluations used for administrative purposes are often inflated, evidence suggests that they may be lower than the supervisor's rating when done for development purposes.

Encourage the employee to participate in the session
- Employee participation leads to a greater sense of fairness, willingness to listen and satisfaction with feedback. Allow employees to voice their opinion and discuss performance goals.
- 3 approaches to providing performance
  - "tell and sell" – managers tell the employee how they have been rated and the justification to support it
  - "tell and listen" – managers tell employees how they have rated them and then let employees tell their side of the story
  - "problem-solving" – managers and employees work together to solve problems in an atmosphere of respect and encouragement (most difficult yet most productive)

Recognize effective performance through praise
- The purpose of the session is to give accurate performance feedback which entails recognizing effective performance as well as poor performance.
- Recognizing effective performance provides reinforcement for that behavior and adds credibility to the feedback by making it clear that the manager is not just identifying or looking for problems.

Source: Human Resources Management, Gaining a Competitive Advantage 8E
Focus on solving problems
- Work with the employee to determine the actual cause and then agree on how to solve it. Without a problem solving approach, the correct solution may never be identified.
- Using the feedback session to only tell the employee about poor performance reduces self-esteem and increases defensiveness.

Focus feedback on behavior or results, not on the person
- One of the most important things to do when giving negative feedback is to avoid questioning the employee’s worth as a person.
- Be specific about the behavior or result, i.e., “You did not meet the deadline because you spent too much time on other activities” vs. “You messed up” or “You’re not motivated”.

Minimize criticism
- If an employee’s performance is subpar some criticism is needed, but resist the temptation to list off a litany of offenses as the employee will only become defensive.
- Once the employee has been presented with the performance issue, the employee will often agree that a change is in order.

Agree to specific goals and set a date to review progress
- Goal setting is one of the most effective motivators of performance.
- Setting specific follow-up dates to review performance is an added incentive to take the goal seriously and work towards achieving it.

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