Ten More Tips for Productive Performance Discussions – Part II

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Whether virtual or face to face, performance coaching or feedback
is a one on one discussion

11. Follow performance management guidelines - One easy way to set a direction to the discussion is to follow the firm's performance management instruction or guideline. First, identify the performance goal, then the desired performance norm, and then your feedback on the employee's performance. When you compare the results of the employee's work to the expected norm, issues can be discussed on a more objective basis. Avoid personal criticisms or insulting remarks.

12. Praise Achievements - Recognition and praise for achievements is an important part of the performance management process. Giving credit, when due, helps the employee to know his or her efforts are recognized. Recognition is an effective motivator.

13. Identify Deficiencies - Identify performance deficiencies. Poor performance must be documented consistent with the firm's performance management policy guideline, and then discussed with the employee. Do not "beat around the bush" with vague generalities. Give specific examples of performance problems and then identify the desired level of performance. The employee will assume that performance is satisfactory unless the problems are specifically identified.

14. Sandwich Technique - A technique called the sandwich technique can be helpful when discussing performance problems. With this technique, the team leader or supervisor first compliments the employee on an aspect of good performance, then identifies a performance deficiency, and then follows up with another comment about good performance. Clearly, this technique softens the effect of discussing poor performance. Avoid overusing this technique. In cases of serious or repeated poor performance, be sure to describe the problem specifically

and specify the desired performance.

15. Maintain Professionalism - The performance discussion should be constructive - not confrontational; pleasant and professional - not a contest of personalities; with an element of empathy rather than pitched emotion. Focus on job tasks, results, and accomplishments. Personal attacks upon the individual are likely to arouse an argumentative response or result in barriers to communication.

16. Offer Improvement Suggestions - Offer specific suggestions on how to improve performance, particularly when identifying performance problems. Performance improvement is not likely to occur merely by identifying the employee's mistakes. However, performance improvement is more likely when the employee understands proper work techniques and expected performance goals.

17. Set Performance Goals - One key to improved performance is setting performance goals. By defining performance goals, the employee has a target to work towards. To be effective, goal setting should include employee input. Goals should be achievable with some extra effort. Defined goals provide a basis to evaluate performance in the next rating period.

18. Discuss Performance, Then Pay - Many firms conduct performance discussions and pay adjustment discussions together. If this is the practice at your firm, then it is best to discuss performance first, and then explain how the performance rating has influenced the pay adjustment.

19. Don't Discredit the Company - Occasionally, an inexperienced team leader or supervisor may promise a pay raise or tell the employee that a recommended pay raise was cut by management. When a team leader or supervisor discredits the company in this fashion, this action really reflects poorly on the rater. Do not fall into this trap.

20. Encourage Employee Comments - A primary objective of the performance discussion is communication between employee and team leader or supervisor. Accordingly, encourage your employees to react to performance feedback. The employee may agree, disagree, or offer reasons (sometimes excuses) for performance problems. Listen to and consider the employee's comments.

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See Part I for more information. These issues and more are answered in **"Achieving Performance Results – Boosting Performance in the Virtual Workplace," by William S. Hubbartt.** The book offers tips and ideas for business managers and team leaders on how to manage employee performance, organize virtual work teams and how to keep remote employees engaged.

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