

Coach to Improve Performance: Providing Constructive Feedback

Providing constructive feedback can be a daunting task even for the most experienced supervisors. While supervisors may be inclined to shy away from this responsibility, constructive feedback is one of the most critical components of effective performance management. When approached correctly, with a focus on the specific behavior and/or performance issue and not the individual personally, constructive feedback can be a win for both the supervisor and the employee.

Constructive feedback should not be confrontational, combative or accusatory. Its purpose is to make the employee aware of a specific behavior or performance concern, communicate clear expectations, and provide direction for moving forward. Done effectively, constructive feedback demonstrates both the supervisor's engagement and commitment to the employee's success.

For effective constructive feedback to occur, timing is everything. Constructive feedback should be provided in a timely manner as behavioral or performance issues occur. It is never appropriate for employees to first learn of a behavioral or performance concern during the annual performance review process.

Following are a few tips for providing constructive feedback:

Before the meeting:

- Identify the behavior or performance concern that needs improvement. Consider and note how improvements will positively impact the employee and the department;
- Anticipate questions and potential emotions. An employee may become defensive, angry or emotional. Prepare yourself to respond in a calm and rationale manner.

During the meeting:

- Open the conversation with positive feedback (e.g. what are the employee's strengths, what do they do well?);
- Allow for a two-way conversation, but keep the conversation focused and productive;
- After describing a positive attribute, move the conversation to the area needing improvement;
- Be clear and specific when describing the behavior or performance concern needing improvement;
- Communicate how the improvements will positively impact the employee and the department;
- Find a solution together. Give the employee a chance to respond. Ask the employee for suggestions or recommendations to correct the behavior or performance concerns. If the employee is unable to offer a solution, problem-solve together;
- Identify any training or professional development needs;
- Clarify expectations and determine next steps;
- Summarize the discussion and express your support;
- Commit to follow-up feedback to ensure the employee remains on track.

Post meeting:

- Document the conversation;
- Follow-up as needed. When improvement is demonstrated provide positive feedback and continued encouragement.

Additional Resources:

[UA Performance Evaluation Guidelines](#)

[10 Steps for Conducting Successful Performance Evaluations](#)

[Supervisor TIPS for Completing the Performance Evaluation](#)

[Setting SMART Goals](#)