Giving Effective Feedback at Any Time of the Year!

Feedback is the key to nurturing excellent performance and it is something we all benefit from. Praise for a job well done can drive continued success while constructive criticism for poor performance can result in necessary improvements, and reduction and/or elimination of mistakes.

Try following these steps for giving effective feedback when you meet face to face with your employee – but be sure to give consideration to the employee’s response and behavior after receiving feedback.

1. Preparation
   - How is the feedback likely to affect the employee?
   - What exact words will you use?
   - How would you feel if someone said that to you?
   - What can you say and how can you say it to help maintain the employee’s self-esteem?
   - How can you prioritize the feedback or limit it to a few salient points?
   - Is the timing right, or if not, is it better left unsaid?

2. Check your invitation
   - Feedback is most effective when the employee has asked for it.
   - Encourage employees to ask for feedback themselves.
   - Ask for feedback yourself on a regular basis.

3. Watch carefully
   - How is your employee taking the feedback?
   - Watch for changes of expression and position.
   - Are there changes in eye contact, or sideways glances?
   - Avoid making judgments/statements such as, “You should...”

4. Small doses
   - Small doses are best – soon after an event requiring feedback.
   - Give positive feedback first to encourage the employee to change.
   - Limit negative feedback to two or three prioritized items.
   - End with something positive – it lifts self-esteem.

5. Be specific
   - Describe what you have observed, not why you think it may have happened.
   - Focus on behavior, not personality.
   - Help the employee envision the change – “Here’s what it could be like if you make the requested changes...”

6. Improve your evidence
   - Remember your data reflects your prejudices and agendas
   - Strive to build up a more complete pictures of events
   - Whenever possible, get third party evidence – e.g. internal and external customers
   - If the employee rejects your feedback, it is just possible that (s)he may be right.
   - Do not become defensive: go and collect more information

7. Offer support
   - Offer your support in any changes you have discussed
   - Focus on the employee’s strengths
   - Leave the employee feeling (s)he can rely on you.