



## **The Coaching Manager - 7**

### **Giving and Receiving Feedback**

***Last issue was dedicated to a skill that is vital if the manager is to coach effectively and that is listening. Another vital skill for managers is that of being able to give and receive quality feedback. This is an important tool if the "awareness" of the manager and employee is to be raised. Remember that "awareness" is a vital component of being an effective coach.***

How many of you who are reading this, consider themselves to be good at giving and receiving feedback? How do you feel when someone gives you feedback that perhaps you don't want to hear? Do you "switch off" thinking of you are going to respond to defend yourself? Worse, do you interrupt with the "magical" BUT....? Do you shy away from giving someone constructive feedback (sometimes called negative or developmental) because you either are not aware of the what reaction you might get, or because you know the reaction will be negative?

We are all good at giving praise (well, those that give it regularly!) and giving praise is a "nice" and essential thing to do. We all like to receive praise as well. Giving feedback that challenges people's behaviour is all together a "different kettle of fish" is that can be given in the wrong way and some people's reaction to receiving it can be, to say the least, disturbing!

I like to think of myself as someone who is able to give both praise and constructive feedback, although there are still some people that I really struggle with, either because their reaction is defensive, or worse, they nod, agree to change, and then go off, discount the feedback and continue their old ways. Meanwhile they continue to talk behind people's backs! Maybe it is the way I deliver the feedback to these people!!

If you are to be a good coaching manager then you have to be good at giving feedback AND receiving it yourself. I have seen too many managers talk behind people's back, worse still, sharing concerns about team members with other team members. Instead of getting issues out in the open, where individuals can do something about it, discussions go on behind "closed doors" and issues start to become exaggerated. Getting the feedback out in open, clears the air, and gives people the chance to improve and/or do things even better. Giving and Receiving feedback is one of the most important motivational tools a manager or coach can have.

#### **What is the purpose of feedback?**

- To enhance performance
- Aid to problem solving
- Assists in helping us to see our blind spots

- A way of learning more about ourselves and the effect our behaviour has on others
- Develops self-awareness
- To reward and provide recognition
- To motivate
- To say "Thank you"!!

### **What are the Implications of not giving feedback?**

- Less chance of behavioural change - maintains status quo
- Other person may be unaware of deficiencies (*which could be damaging to them*)
- May eventually become a confrontation
- Less opportunity for other person to learn and develop
- They may not recognise **your** achievements / successes
- They may not thank **you!!**

So how can we improve this skill?

### **The different types of Feedback**

1. Praise
2. Constructive Criticism
3. Three-Part Assertion Messages

#### **1. Praise - When someone has met/exceeded expectations**

- Give specific examples (e.g., "Thanks for passing on that information about ...")
- Mention the personal qualities that you think the person displayed (e.g., "It showed a real willingness to share information and be supportive")
- Mention the resulting benefit to you / the team / the business (e.g., "As a consequence I was able to go in to see him before he had decided...")

#### **2. Constructive Criticism - When you want to change their behaviour**

Give balanced feedback by:-

- Specifying the merits you want retained (e.g., "The way you kicked that ball was brilliant, hard and straight")
- Specify the concerns you want eliminated (e.g., "I'm a bit worried though about how close it went to Mr Squids patio")
- Explore ideas / solutions together (e.g., "Lets see if we can figure out a way together to keep the ball away from his patio")

**or**

- "You really managed to get an excellent turn-out to the meeting"

- "The speaker didn't do us any favours though with what he said about ....."
- "Why don't we work on some ideas together so we get a much more positive mention at future meetings?"

### **3. Three - Part Assertion Messages - When someone is violating my space, and I want their behaviour changed**

#### **AND**

- There is potential for the person to modify/change the behaviour (e.g., if you are frustrated that someone is taking up a lot of your time because they speak very slowly due to a Speech impediment, it might not be helpful to comment on this)
- There is a low probability that you will violate their personal space and/or diminish their self-esteem (e.g., it is totally inappropriate to give people feedback which is likely or designed to floor/demotivate/embarrass them)
- There is a low risk to damaging the relationship between you
- There is a low risk of inducing defensiveness

#### **How?**

- Describe the defending behaviour non-judgementally (e.g., "You raised your voice when you started speaking" **not** "You shouted at me / you were angry at me")
- Disclose your feelings (e.g., "and that made me feel frightened / angry / confused / disappointed")
- Describe the consequence of the behaviour (e.g., "because I didn't know what you were going to do next and that's making it difficult for me to concentrate on the task at hand" )

Giving and receiving feedback takes "guts". It is though, a vital skill for managers and coaches and indeed for anyone who wants to develop and move their capabilities forward. I have seen great shifts in people's skills and motivations when they take on giving and receiving feedback well. I have also seen, and still see, the opposite where people do not have the courage or ability to give and receive feedback. These people are "stuck"!