

## Contracting For Success

Contracting is simply an agreement between two or more people in terms of how best they are going to work together. The aim of the discussion is to ensure that all members in the team outline what their expectations of the other team members are and also outline what their expectations are of the manager or team leader. The manager or team leader also should outline what their expectations are of the individual team members.

The challenge is that in today's society we still live in a very hierarchical way in that it is usual for the managers to outline what they expect of the team but very rarely do they make it a two way process and ask the team members what they expect of and from the manager.

By keeping it very much 'one way' (manager to team member) the manager misses out on using one of the most powerful motivational techniques - that of inclusion and valuing the team member by making it a two way process.

A good team leader or manager will sit the team down and lead the way by asking the team what they specifically expect from them as a manager or leader. They would ask about what behaviours they expected, what sort of communication they needed; how frequent; what methods? What sort of support did they expect from the manager? All this information is useful for the manager in order that they understand the team its members better. They can also use this discussion to manage expectations in that it maybe that some expectations cannot be realised due to work or environment pressures.

The manager would then outline his or her expectations of the team and a discussion would follow around these expectations with a view to ensuring agreement and an increased understanding of each team member and their needs and motivations etc.

I wrote in an earlier article about the need for the team to discuss values and behaviours. This will start the 'contracting' process but the manager should always realise that this team discussion will only 'scratch the surface' of a proper 1:1 and team contract. The manager should always ensure that the expectations of his or her team are discussed openly alongside what he or she expects. In many ways this team discussion will test whether the values and behaviours that they agreed at the team start up are being demonstrated!

In Summary:

- Once the values and behaviours are agreed then hold a contracting session with the team.
- Focus on each team members' expectations of you as a manager and you should outline what your expectations are of them.
- Concentrate on behaviours, motivations and processes such as communication, support and reporting,
- Manage any misunderstandings and be clear on ensuring agreement and clarity.
- When you hold a progress review session (objectives, values etc) review how the contract is being maintained.