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## Encourage Good Behavior on Your Team

One of the most effective methods of developing productive attitudes in people is to give specific feedback about both effective and ineffective behavior. Even people with good attitudes do not automatically know what behaviors are appropriate. They must be taught by separate instances of feedback how to choose the most acceptable behaviors.

Providing feedback on performance is a continuous process. Feedback has a greater impact on productivity when these principles are observed:

- Give feedback as soon as possible. When praise for a specific task well done occurs promptly, it does more to encourage continued high level achievement than a good rating on a semi-annual performance review several months after the good work is first accomplished. Likewise, immediate correction of an error accompanied by positive suggestions for improvement is more likely to produce a desirable change in behavior than an unfavorable performance review at some time in the future.
- Give feedback on both positive and negative factors. Giving feedback only to correct errors causes people to become discouraged. They may believe that the only way to gain your attention is to do something wrong. Since most people crave recognition, a lack of positive feedback often encourages negative performance. Being criticized is better to some people than being ignored. Attention of any kind can be a form of reward. Be sure you are rewarding positive behavior, not just negative behavior, with attention and recognition. Watch for outstanding performance, improved performance, and continued quality performance in your team members, and mention that you have noticed it. Visibly reward positive performance when possible. Give extra compliments for work well done, for innovative ideas pursued, and for extra effort expended to meet a deadline. People who regularly receive praise and recognition for work well done are less likely to react defensively when you find it necessary to correct errors.
- Regard feedback as coaching for growth. Keep in mind that if a team member's behavior is inappropriate, avoiding confrontation usually prolongs and intensifies the negative situation. As long as the behavior continues, you, your organization, and your clients suffer from the person's less-than-effective performance. And by persisting in current habits, the person misses a valuable opportunity to reach higher levels of development and achievement. Ideally, you should give much more positive than negative feedback to your team members. But when you must address a negative situation or action, adopt an attitude that giving feedback is an opportunity to coach the other person to grow. When you coach for improved performance, you communicate that you care – about the team member, the organization, and the customer. As you confront inappropriate behavior, keep these guidelines in mind:
  - Address the situation as privately as possible.
  - Give the person the benefit of the doubt.
  - Avoid sarcasm and joking about serious issues.
  - Avoid words like always and never.
  - Confront only specific factors the person can change.
  - Give the person ideas for fixing the problem.
  - Affirm the individual as a valuable team member.
  - Make feedback specific to behavior. Effective feedback focuses on a specific situation, action, or decision and the consequences. Praise and correction alike are most effective when they are specific. Non-specific overgeneralizations, on the other hand, are confusing and counterproductive. In addressing negative situations, dealing with specifics helps separate the unacceptable behavior from the person. For example, if you tell an associate, "You're one of the sloppiest individuals in our organization," the person might wonder whether to buy new clothes, reorganize the work area, or be more meticulous with paperwork. Instead, state the unsatisfactory behavior in specific terms and give the person an opportunity to analyze the cause. You might say, "You have missed two of your deadlines in the last week, and I have noticed your desk looks disorganized. How do you see these two items being related?" Listen carefully. You may learn that the cause is beyond the person's control. But if you decide that the person's behavior is the cause, first explain why it is unacceptable. State what you expect in the way of changed behavior,

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