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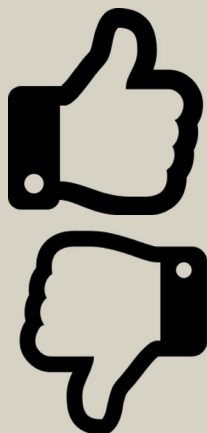
SUPERVISORY NEWSLETTER July 2022 | Issue 05

What's hard to give, harder to receive, and hardest to forget?

FEEDBACK! It doesn't matter if you receive it sandwiched between two compliments or packaged as "constructive." Research shows that feedback, specifically critical feedback, rarely improves performance and more often than not has the opposite effect. According to neuroscientists, "criticism provokes our fight-or-flight response and inhibits learning." Think about the last time you felt critiqued. Can you honestly say it didn't make you feel even just a bit defensive or deflated?

Feedback is a gift but, for it to be received as such, the giver has to be mindful of how it's packaged and delivered. According to the article "The Feedback Fallacy," written by Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall, if we "spend our time identifying failure as we see it and giving people feedback about how to avoid it, we'll languish in the business of adequacy." When our focus becomes filling in performance gaps we destroy opportunities to nurture growth and excellence.

Feedback can be delivered in ways to help individuals excel. One way is to look for outcomes. This means you should recognize wins, large and small, to help people identify positive patterns within themselves they can recognize, anchor, recreate and refine. We are conditioned to bring things to people's attention immediately when they do something wrong but what if instead, we focused on doing this when they do something right? Focusing on people's strengths vs. their weaknesses can disarm yet empower people to do their best.

When addressing specific situations, a good recommendation is to ask questions that explore the current, past and future state.

1. What's going well for you right now?
    - When you start conversations by having people think about their wins (related to the issue at hand or

not) you are priming them with oxytocin which aids in the creative process.

2. Think of a time when you faced something similar. What worked for you then?
   - Life happens in patterns. It is likely that they've encountered a similar issue in the in the past and therefore could draw upon this experience to carve a way forward.

3. What do you already know you need to do? Or, what do you want to have happen and what are some actions you could take right now?
   - These types of questions yield options people will accept and act upon immediately.

Unfortunately, there isn't one formula to give and receive feedback that works for everyone. Feedback is personal and therefore must be tailored according to each individual. This month, we challenge you to examine not only how you give, but also how you receive feedback. We can't expect our staff to accept our feedback with grace if we are not open to hearing their feedback of us.

Until next month!

UNI-HRS Employee Relations

This newsletter is for YOU, so feel free to reach out with any questions, comments, suggestions, thoughts or concerns you may have that we can address in upcoming issues.

STARTER BITES

"Failure is constructive feedback that tells you to try a different approach to accomplish what you want."

- Idowu Koyenikan

"Feedback is the breakfast of champions."

- Ken Blanchard

"There is a difference between giving feedback and being critical. The former persuades and the latter dissuades."

- C.W.

FEATURE BITE

Phrases /Words to Avoid When Giving Feedback

1. **To be honest...**
   - This phrase tends to be used as an introductory filler to give ourselves permission when sharing personal opinions. It doesn't make you more credible by saying you are being honest; however, it could imply there are times when you are not. Avoid it!

2. **Actually...**
   - This word carries a condescending tone and sends a message to the receiver that they are wrong. Using it could force them to get defensive. Instead, we suggest saying "It was my understanding that...etc." We also recommend following it up with, "What was your take on that?" or any other question to solicit their input.

3. **But...**
   - Avoid the use of this word when giving feedback that is both positive and negative. Doing so will instantly cause the listener amnesia and they'll only remember what they perceived to be critical. Also, you should never give positive feedback if your only purpose is to minimize the impact of negative feedback. There is a time and place for both.

4. **Everyone thinks...**
   - Unless you are a mind reader, this phrase should not be a part of your vocabulary. When faced with situations where every team member feels the same way about a certain individual (because you've been told), it is better to state how their behavior impacts the team instead. That way, you don't unwittingly drag other staff into conversations they aren't prepared to have.

5. **No offense...**
   - If you are having to say this you have probably shifted from feedback to criticism. When having uncomfortable conversations your default may be to start off by saying, "I don't mean to offend you..." which is also problematic. Why? Because what you're basically saying is that what you are about to say IS offensive. When you bring these types of issues to someone's attention your intent should be to helpful, not offensive. What could that look like?
     - "Do you have two minutes to chat? Great. This is a little difficult for me to say, but I care about you and would like your permission to tell you. I have noticed that...(X). We work with a lot of students and I would hate for them to not want to engage with you because of it. Have you noticed or has anyone else shared that with you?" Then, let them speak. Depending on what they say, be sure you end the conversation with a plan for action and be sure to thank them for letting you share that with them.

6. **I'm sure you...**

- The only thing we can ever be sure of is what we think, what we know and how we feel. Using this phrase can assign motive or intent to someone's actions. The only way to know that is to ask them.

7. **You should...**
   - This is a surefire way to break down creativity and problem-solving. Start by asking them what they think they should have done or what they think they could do differently the next time. Then, you can guide them to the appropriate answer through thoughtful, directed questions. If you let them arrive to the answer on their own you'll help to build up their confidence!

8. **This has been a problem for several months...**
   - If you've waited all this time to provide feedback, then "you've done the feedback receiver a disservice."

9. **Why did you...**
   - This can seem accusatory. Although our intent may be to understand what they may have been thinking this can come across the wrong way. Instead, we suggest using something such as, "Tell me about how you arrived at that conclusion."

10. **Never/Always**
    - Although we don't normally use these words literally, our credibility can be compromised when speaking in absolutes. Instead, try focusing on specifics (such as listing dates) or use words like "regularly" or "rarely."

Adapted from [12 Words and Phrases to Avoid When Giving Feedback](#).

We want to feature YOU! Do you have any supervisory tips/tricks you'd like to share? Burning questions about supervision you'd like to ask? Are you a new UNI supervisor? Do you have a cool or unique workspace? If so, reach out to be featured in our upcoming issues.

SMALL BITES

The Secret to Giving Great Feedback

ARTICLE OTM

Seven Things I Wish I'd Known About Receiving Feedback

LinkedIn Learning

Give Feedback As a Coach
WATCH this video by Sara Canaday

To access this video, click on the purple button above and enter your UNI email address when prompted. If your personal email address populates, please ensure you click on the "change" link first to update your email address. Once entered, click on "Continue to the University of Northern Iowa LinkedIn Learning account" to access content.

How to Use Situation-Behavior-Impact (SBI)™ to Explore Intent vs. Impact When Giving Feedback

When somebody disappoints you, fails to deliver what you expected, or lets you down in some way, what do you do? If you're like most people, you make assumptions that are usually not positive: *That guy is not a team player...he's lazy...doesn't care...just doesn't get it.* And then you take action: *I'll just find a workaround...get somebody else to do the work...rethink responsibilities...talk about him to someone else...initiate discipline.*
We often don't even realize that we create stories about people in our heads, especially when they disappoint us. This happens all the time. We see behavior, assume we know why the other person acted a certain way, and react based on those assumptions. Many difficulties can be avoided by having a clarifying discussion. Though people usually *intend* to do the right thing, sometimes something gets scrambled or misinterpreted along the way, and the impact is far from what they intended.

Continue Reading »

BIG BITE

Book Club

Mastering the Challenges of Leading Change: Inspire the People and Succeed Where Others Fail by H. James Dallas.

Part IV (Chapters 10-12) focuses on persevering through change and all the things that could and will go wrong. Small problems can affect morale as "teams tire and frustrations rise." It is imperative to address these head on which means preparing for the worst. When things don't go as planned, a leader's role is to do everything in their power to get back on track. Understand that ultimately it's your responsibility and don't blow it by making it all about you!

Even when you've done everything right, not everyone may be happy with the changes you've implemented. Some may even go as far as stirring people up and spread their discontent to others. Don't wait to address this with that individual. You can't control everything, so take control where you are able. This also means that you should seek out and welcome feedback so you can redirect accordingly.

When processes, functions or divisions are siloed, collaboration is stifled and people flows are interrupted. Remove as many barriers as you can. You'll notice that by doing so you encourage trust and that is where change is leveraged most effectively. Finally, invest in people and help them build their confidence by awakening their potential as leaders.

Part IV in Tweets:
 - In crisis, don't ever make it about you.
 - As a leader, you've got to be proactive in managing morale.
 - We can disagree but not be disagreeable.
 - The best change leaders prepare for worst-case scenarios.
 - A handwritten thank-you note is a powerful tool for change.

Favorite Quotes:
"Ego, that infantile part of you that wants to make it all about you, clouds your ability to make good decisions."

"It's satisfying when you realize that by investing in one person, you're in fact impacting many."

We hope you enjoyed reading along with us! If you have any suggestions for our next read, please be sure to email your recommendations to <ins>hrs-performance.uni.edu</ins>.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Supervisor Development Series: Fundamentals of Supervision
September 13th - Registration Opening in August

Supervisor Development Series: Leaves, FMLA & Workplace Accommodations
Coming Soon!

Supervisor Development Series: FLSA/Time Reporting
<ins>Recommended for supervisors with non-exempt (overtime eligible) staff.</ins>

September 20th from 1:30pm-3:00pm
October 18th from 10:30am-12:00pm

Click HERE to register for upcoming trainings.

027 Gilchrist **Cedar Falls, IA 50613**	**hrs-performance@uni.edu**	**(319) 273-6219**

Our Vision

All employees will be positively engaged in achieving their greatest potential while contributing to the success of the university.

Our Mission

Human Resource Services fosters an environment of integrity and collaboration through innovative solutions and communications contributing to the successful recruitment, development, and retention of university employees.