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The IdeaBridge White Paper Series:
Performance Feedback Primer



PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK PRIMER

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Summary

One of the most overlooked business enhancement tools is to simply give candid, constructive and timely feedback to employees about their performance. Yet even the most seasoned leaders and managers can improve on their skills at providing such feedback to their people. This checklist should serve as a quick reminder about the importance of consistent employee feedback throughout the year.

- Leaders must provide their people with feedback. But the most effective feedback comes on a day-by-day, minute-by-minute basis, not just at semi-annual review time. For example, the best time to coach a junior sales person about a sales call gone awry is the moment you leave the prospect's office. The time to coach an associate about the improper way he handled a group meeting is immediately following that meeting. Waiting for the semi-annual review process to bring up either event hurts the employee and the company.
- Feedback matters. The only way for people to get better at what they do is for the people they work for to provide candid, timely performance evaluations. In today's environment, you have to evaluate what's changing and what's staying the same, what's working and what's no longer working.
- If someone isn't keeping up, a leader must quickly let them know. If they can't be trained or coached to improve, then you've got to find something else for them to do. But don't wait until review time to deal with someone's inability to adapt or keep pace; deal with it now.
- If you or one of your managers has ideas and information that will help someone perform better in their job and help them adapt at more rapid pace, it's unacceptable to withhold that advice. Ideas, information and advice that can help someone perform better in their job must be quickly shared with them.
- The most valuable kinds of feedback are the daily interactions between leaders/managers and their people – interactions that just can't be captured in a semi-annual written performance review. Many times, a manager will need to make observations that simply are not big enough to include on someone's permanent record. It's much more effective to deal with issues head-on than to wait for the appropriate review period. A simple observation over a cup of coffee or a well-placed hint may be enough to redirect a burgeoning problem and get them back on the right track. This is the role of the responsible and savvy manager.
- If you're providing feedback around an emotionally charged event, wait a day or two (but never more than a week). Sometimes you're so emotional that it just makes good sense to wait.