

Increasing Workforce Productivity

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Communication Begins with Listening

When listening to, friends, family, employees, and co-workers; what percentage of the time do you listen:

Pay little or no attention.

Listen but you are also thinking about or doing other things.

Listen but you are also thinking about how you are going to respond to what is being said.

Listen with nothing else in your mind. Only after he/she has finished speaking do you begin thinking about how to respond.

 100%

Establish a realistic goal for the percentage of the time you will listen with nothing else in your mind. Only after he/she has finished speaking do you begin thinking about how to respond.

Goal _____%

Become a Better Listener

1. Pause 1-2 seconds before replying
 - Show you are carefully listening
 - Avoid risk of interrupting
 - Hear the other person better

2. Ask questions for clarification
 - "What do you mean?"
 - "Tell me more?"

Relationships -- The Foundation

Unique Attributes of People

- People – employees -- can think and make decisions.
- People – employees – can speak so they can ask questions and provide input.
- People – employees – can feel and thus have emotional responses.

Modern supervision best practices recognize these uniqueness of people compared to things – crops, trees, machines

Creating Trusting Relationships

The purpose of every interpersonal interaction is:

1. To accomplish the purpose of the interaction
2. Improve the relationship – increase trust

Building Trust – Fairness is the Key

- “Nice” is not sufficient or always effective
- “Just being nice:” a common approach but not effective

Workforce Productivity

= competence + a "chalked field" (clarity) + motivation

Competence

- Hiring
- Skills
- Self-confidence

A "chalked field" (clarity)

- Clarity
- Structure

Motivation

- Shared Meaning/vision/mission
- Relationships
- Autonomy

Encouragement

Competence = Skill + Self-confidence

Self-confidence

- Think about the importance of self-confidence for a field goal kicker.
- We expect ourselves and our employees to master the tasks required to fulfill their key responsibilities. Unfortunately, we often equate learning a new task with mastering that task. Research shows that conclusion to be false. Just learning a task usually does not provide the self-confidence required to master the task so it is executed correctly every time.
- Attaining the self-confidence required to move from learning to mastery is greatly fostered by encouragement and positive feedback.

Encouragement Exercise: You have completed training a new employee on a new task. What do you say to him to increase his confidence?

Other ideas:

Positive Performance Feedback

Why positive feedback:

- To Motivate:
 - Positive feedback is motivating. “Feelings of personal accomplishment” and “recognition for achievement” are two of Herzberg’s motivators.
- To Improve Performance:
 - Positive feedback focuses the recipient on success.
 - Positive feedback builds confidence.
 - Excellent, specific positive feedback engages the employee in their performance.

Use Positive Feedback to Coach the Development of Personal Capabilities

- A. “Catch your employees doing something right.” - Ken Blanchard
- B. Give four compliments for every constructive criticism.
- C. Practice Appreciative Inquiry - The process of asking questions about what is going well, rather than what is going badly.

Providing Excellent Positive Feedback

Step 1: Observe good behavior.

Step 2: Compliment the employee on the positive behavior or performance you desire.

Step 3: State the specific current behavior or performance you are complimenting.

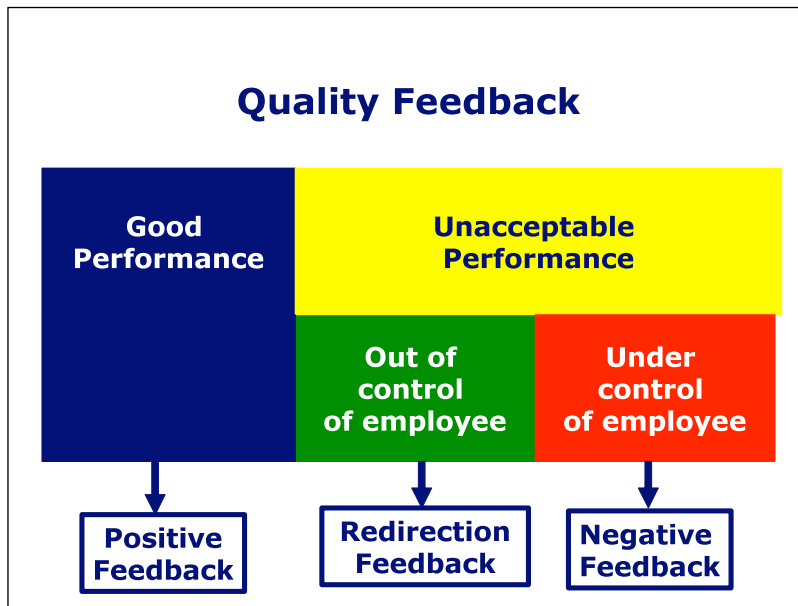
An Example

Step 1: You have been stressing the importance of attention to detail. You observe an example of attention to detail.

Step 2: “Jack, thank you for following through on our emphasis on attention to detail.”

Step 3: “I noticed you going out of your way to remove the leaves that had blown into the alleyway.”

Performance Feedback – Inadequate Performance



Responding to inappropriate behavior or inadequate performance

- **Redirection:** Failure to perform was caused by the situation or the context of the performance – lack of training, ineffective supervision, unpredictable circumstances, unreasonable expectations.
- **Negative:** The situation cannot explain the failure; the failure to perform can only be explained by the employee's personal characteristics -- motivation, effort, commitment
- The choice between redirection and negative is instrumental to successful supervision.
- Our goal should be to minimize if not eliminate the need for negative feedback

NOTES

Redirection Feedback

Redirection feedback is like learning from game film

- Employees rarely if even intentionally make mistakes.
- Redirection feedback allows employees to learn from their mistakes without the damage to the relationship and to self-confidence that occurs with negative feedback.

Providing redirection feedback

- Begin with and include throughout positive feedback on positive efforts, and expectations met or exceeded.
- Communicate that performance is not acceptable. Often difficult to communicate.
- He or she is not at fault. Often difficult to convey that this is not a reprimand.
- The required changes in the situation – skills learned, knowledge gained, behaviors changed, actions taken, resources provided, expectations adjusted -- to enable “successful” performance.
- Redirect to succeed.

Providing Redirection Feedback

Outline a recent situation where you were not satisfied with the behavior or performance of an employee, colleague, or trusted advisor (or family member) where you now can see that redirection feedback would have been productive.

Given what we have learned today, outline how you would provide redirection feedback if this situation were to occur again in the future.

Clarity or “Chalking the Field”

Uncertainty about expectations is one of the greatest sources of frustration for employees

Dr. Bob’s Four Characteristics of complete clarity

1. Every detail clearly explained
2. Explained why the expectation is important and/or needed
3. There are opportunities to ask questions and, where appropriate, provide input (engagement)
4. The detailed description can be accessed by the employee (employee manual, job description, policy manual, etc.)

Each employee then requires clarity in three areas:

- Vision, mission, values (meaningful work)
- Behavior & performance expectations
- Daily tasks

In what areas can you improve the clarity of behavioral expectations, business policies, team operating rules, and job responsibilities for those you supervise?

Dr. Bob Milligan's Reading List

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What about “The Vision Thing”

In the late 1980s we in the PRO-DAIRY Program (Cornell Cooperative Extension) assisted several hundred dairy farms each year in writing a mission statement for their dairy farm business. From that experience, I acquired the description as “the vision guy.” Ten years ago, when I left academia to become a consultant, I know that many of my colleagues thought “In the real world he’ll find out that vision isn’t as important as he thinks it is.”

The reality is that my ten years in “the real world” have convinced me that “the vision thing” is even more important than I originally thought. Its importance comes from the value of vision, mission and values in providing meaning to our work and in decision-making. Let’s look at each.

We in agriculture have great pride in the history of our farms – our legacy. Why is that? It comes from the meaning the farm has had to the members of our families often over several generations. That meaning has been incredibly strong even though it has often not been articulated in a vision or mission statement! That meaning has given our family farm businesses a common purpose!

So what is different today? The importance of meaning has only become more important! Young people today, often referred to as the Gen X and Millennial generations, place an even higher importance on meaningful work than did their parents’ generations.

The big difference is that our farms now involve many more people. We have employees and often multiple families. The importance of a common purpose that is meaningful to every member of the workforce remains as or more important; however, the only way to communicate that common purpose to the larger number of workforce members is to thoughtfully and clearly articulate the common purpose as a vision/mission statement.

This statement need not be long or glowing. In fact in my favorite book on vision/mission the authors (Full Steam Ahead by Ken Blanchard and Jesse Stoner) argue that it must be short. At Dairy Strategies, our significant purpose (a Full Steam Ahead descriptor of mission) is “We deliver insight.” The most crucial part of vision/mission is that it is communicated and used in making and explaining decisions and actions.

But just how do we use a vision/mission statement in decision-making? Take a look at the chart below.

Milligan Widget Store Alternative Plans		
Item	Plan A	Plan B
Total sales – units	2500	2200
Total Revenue	\$650,000	\$620,000
Total expenses	\$600,000	\$560,000
Net return (profit)	\$50,000	\$60,000

For now, you are a member of the Board of Directors of the Milligan Widget Store; the Board has to decide on the annual business plan for the coming year. The economic projections for the two alternative plans are in the table above.

I am pretty certain that when you look at the plans, you will plan to vote in favor of Plan B. We in agriculture are very efficiency and profit focused. In the sales world, however, maximizing total sales can be justified on the basis of building the customer base to generate future profits. If total sales was the goal, the Board would choose Plan A.

Let’s look at the situation where the Board has not clarified their goal. Some are profit driven and choose Plan A; others think sales are more important and advocate for Plan B. Not only do we have a disagreement, but more importantly, we have no way – no criteria – for settling the disagreement. There is no framework to use to guide the discussion to lead to a collaborative Board decision.

This rather simple example illustrates the situation a farm or other business is in when the vision/mission has not been clarified. The owners have no framework for collaboratively making decisions; the employees also have no basis for making decisions. I often comment that in the absence of a common vision, almost every decision becomes a battle over the common vision because each person is advocating their solution based on their often very different vision for the farm.

“The Vision Thing” is real!! The challenge is to make it concrete – real – for everyone in the business so A) everyone can use it as the framework to make decisions in the best interest of the farm and B) it provides meaning to each person. For this to happen, farm owners and leaders must clearly articulate the vision/mission, continually communicate it to everyone, and use it in making and explaining actions and decisions.

Leadership Lesson: Joining the journey to the farm vision provides the meaning that motivates owners, family members and employees to excel.