CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS:
EFFECTIVE TACTICS FOR SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTABILITY

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AGENDA

• Introduction
• Expectations
• You
• Your Employees
• Atmosphere, Attitude and Morale – Invisible Forces
• Setting, Communicating and Managing Expectations
• Confronting and Dealing with Poor Performance

YOU

• Boss, Supervisor, Leader, Responsible Person but not Buddy
• Be Self-Aware
  • Emotions
  • Reactions
  • Responses
• Set Self-Expectations
  • Real, Reasonable and Measurable
• Be Honest in Your Self-Evaluations
  • Lying to yourself = No Improvement
• Self-Improvement

YOUR EMPLOYEES

• Recognize that they are all different people and probably different than you
  • Personalities
  • Priorities
  • Purpose
• Realize that you do not know what’s going on in their lives
  • Circumstances
  • Concerns
  • Conflicts
• Respond appropriately – NO MATTER WHAT!
• React quickly to issues
• Redeem if at all possible

YOUR EMPLOYEES

Hire the right person
Train them

ATMOSPHERE

Culture, Environment and Atmosphere = Is it a “good” place to work?
• Put the right people in the right roles and give them the right tools to meet reasonable expectations
• Have clear expectations
• Take time to explain the “why”
• Everything is a team effort if every team member is important
• We “pass or fail” as a team but we are individually responsible for our performance
• Open communication and collaboration is essential
WHY DO PEOPLE DISAPPOINT ME!

ATTITUDES

- You can only control one attitude - yours
- You can influence employees attitudes
- Don’t complain
- Do not talk about one of your employees to another employee
- Always end with a positive
- Decide to be a positive influence
- Fake it till you make it

MORALE

Employee satisfaction, how the employee feels
- Praise for a job well done
- Recognition for team and individual accomplishment
- “We did it and you were a big part of it”
- “I didn’t meet expectations”
- Sorry seems to be the hardest word...
- “Yes, that’s a great idea, let’s try it”
- Be an encouragement

EXPECTATIONS

Job Description
Formal Onboarding Process
Necessary
Clear & Concise
- As much detail as needed
- Remove ambiguity
- Use pictures
- No colloquialisms
Measurable
- Comparable
- Number based
- Time based

COMMUNICATION

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.
– George Bernard Shaw
COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

- Team Meetings
  - Share your vision and goals for the team
- One on one
  - Ask 3 times
  - Read the body language (Dangerous)
- Review what is written
- Agreement and Commitment
  - Check in and provide feedback
- Day one
  - Adjust quickly
  - Are the expectations unreasonable
  - You may expect more over time
  - Ask questions

COMMUNICATION “DON’TS”

Assume
  - Knowledge
  - Ability
  - Understanding

Argue
  - Expectation setting are yours to set
  - Discuss and Decide

Accelerate
  - Putting an unprepared employee in a role
  - Shortening the training required

Avoid
  - Difficult employees
  - Difficult Situations
  - Owning your mistakes

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Manage Up
  - Push back on unrealistic or unnecessary expectations
  - Communicate the root cause for unmet expectations
  - Communicate the plan for meeting expectations
  - Use “we” not “they” in communications
  - Communicate any individual employee plans for improvement

Make sure the expectations are attainable with the available tools, time and equipment

Be Consistent
  - New employees
  - Previous experience

Anticipate Problems

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

I hate them
  - Keep notes throughout the year
  - Review the annual review quarterly

Only having performance reviews once a year doesn’t work
  - “See something, Say something”
  - Good and Bad

Performance reviews like expectations and goals must have clear guidelines
Using the same “form” for every role doesn’t work
Feedback and evaluations must be actionable
“Fuzzy” evaluations are meaningless

LEADERSHIP REVIEW

Separate reality and perception
  - I think I’m a great communicator
Helps to get the team on the same page
  - Engagement
Reveals areas for improvement
  - A great opportunity to set an example
Often reveals communication issues or communication style issues
Builds trust
Encourages employees to improve

360 REVIEW

Feedback from all viewpoints
Used successfully to reveal strengths and weaknesses
Can be a great tool for any level
Need to be anonymous
Sort out conflicts
DEALING WITH PERFORMANCE ISSUES

Houston, we’ve had a problem

DEFINITIONS

Crucial Conversations - Holding a discussion between two or more people where (1) stakes are high, (2) opinions vary, and (3) emotions run strong, seeking successful resolution and action through respectful dialogue.

Crucial Confrontations - Holding someone accountable for broken promises, violated expectations, or bad behavior through candid and respectful dialogue in a way that problems are resolved, performance improves, and relationships benefit.

CONFLICT

1. to come into collision or disagreement; be contradictory, at variance, or in opposition; clash:
2. to fight or contend; do battle.
3. a fight, battle, or struggle, esp. a prolonged struggle; strife.
4. controversy; quarrel: conflicts between parties.
5. discord of action, feeling, or effect; antagonism or opposition, as of interests or principles: a conflict of ideas.
6. a striking together; collision.

STYLES

Competitive: Often used by people with power, rank, position, or expertise.
Collaborative: Used by people trying to meet the needs of all. They cooperate effectively and bring viewpoints together.
Compromising: Used by people who want to at least partially satisfy everyone.
Accommodating: Used by people willing to meet the needs of others at the expense of their own needs.
Avoiding: Used by people who seek to evade the conflict entirely. They often delegate and accept ineffective decisions. This approach is usually ineffective.

EXAMPLES

• Behaviors
  • Tardiness
  • Absent w/o notification
  • Treatment of others
  • Attitude
• Performance Slippage
• Performance Failure
• Insubordination
• Annual Review
• Compensation

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

Deal with it
Ignore it
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Acknowledge that there is a problem

BE PREPARED

• Have confidence that you have something important to say, know the facts
• Have humility: You may not have the whole picture but can add something to the picture
• Be skillful: Seek coaching so that you can rehearse what needs to be said in the right way
  • Talk to someone who knows the person well
• Be empathetic
• What outcome are you looking for?
• Will you settle for another outcome?

OUR BRAIN WHEN WE ARE NOT PREPARED

“Fight or Flight” syndrome leaves us to deal with the most complex and challenging conversations of our lives with the same set of skills we’d use to deal with a salivating predator.

SET UP THE MEETING

• Choose a private location
• Have only the necessary parties there (No Spectators)
• Have a clear agenda
• Have a clear purpose

KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEE

• Other work issues
• Family problems
• Likes & Dislikes
• How do they typically start conversations
• How do they react to “criticism”

GETTING STARTED

Make sure that good relationships are maintained: As far as possible, make sure that you treat the other calmly and that you try to build mutual respect. Do your best to be courteous to one-another and remain constructive under pressure;

Keep people and problems separate: Recognize that in many cases the other person is not just “being difficult” – real and valid differences can lie behind conflicting positions. By separating the problem from the person, real issues can be debated without damaging working relationships;

Pay attention to the interests that are being presented: By listening carefully you’ll most-likely understand why the person is adopting his or her position;
GETTING STARTED

Listen first; talk second: To solve a problem effectively you have to understand where the other person is coming from before stating your own position;

Set out the “Facts”: Agree and establish the objective, observable elements that will have an impact on the decision; and

Explore options together: Be open to the idea that a third position may exist, and that you can get to this idea jointly.

GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

• Ask questions to get things rolling
• Confirm answers
• Paraphrase to acknowledge the story
• Prime when you are getting nowhere, conversation stalls
• Write what you are hearing for better understanding

Understanding a position does not mean you are in agreement.

DISCUSSION

Just because you’re talking it doesn’t mean you’re having the right conversation!

• Redirect the conversation if needed
• Avoid distractions, including phone calls, text and emails
• Don’t be surprised
• Look at “both sides” of the facts

SELF AWARENESS

• Be aware of your attitude – Physical and Mental
• Be aware of the impact of what you are saying has on your employee
• Be aware of the impact on you of what the employee is saying
• Know when it’s time to end the meeting
• Know how to end the meeting

DISCUSSION

• Keep emotion out of your discussion
• Avoid arguing to make your argument
• Don’t hide or make someone else the bad guy
• Use “I/We” not “you”
• Avoid emphasis on certain words
• It needs to be a win/win not win/lose
• Capture the solution or resolution and next steps and review with the employee

RESOLUTION

You and the employee agree that there is a performance problem and you develop an improvement plan
You and the employee disagree and you still develop an improvement plan without employee input
You and the employee agree that the expectations are unrealistic
You and the employee agree that the job isn’t right for him and find him a different role
You decide that termination is the only solution
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