

~~Don't overpraise~~

Provide positive feedback

What if someone very significant in your life, someone with the power to affect your mood and determine your future, gave you feedback on your performance only once a year, and then only on a generic evaluation form? Ridiculous, right?

And, yet, many employees work hard, day in and day out, without any meaningful feedback other than the annual performance review, which is often only a perfunctory exercise in paper shuffling.

Are you giving your employees regular, meaningful feedback on their work? If not, you're missing one of the greatest coaching opportunities and a great chance to improve employee performance.

Most of us don't miss a chance to chew our employees out and correct their errors. That seems to come naturally, and we accept it as part of our jobs as managers. But, what about the positive feed-

back for a job well done, praise for hitting or exceeding the mark?

For too many workers, feedback means criticism. But, constant criticism is seldom effective in coaching workers to peak performance. In fact, negative feedback can actually suppress performance, as workers hide their mistakes and avoid taking chances.

Feedback must include praise for work well done and for honest effort that fails to yield results through no fault of the worker.

To be effective, feedback must be timely. The further the comment becomes separated from the deed, the less emotional impact it has. (That's one reason why the annual review is such an empty exercise.)

Also follow these three hallmarks of effective positive feedback:

Recognize individuals: Employees take pride in playing on an effective team and sharing in the reflected glory of a team victory. But, that doesn't mean they don't appreciate being singled out for their contributions.

Offer specific examples: The general "nice work" isn't nearly as effective as specific praise for specific behavior. "I thought you did a great job of handling the discussion. Your patience and your willingness to hear all points of view were outstanding."

Be sincere: Empty praise is worse than no praise at all. Sincerity is equal parts speaking the truth and speaking it honestly. Your feedback must be genuine, and you must deliver it in a way that is natural and comfortable for you.

“If possible, walk around the workplace regularly, providing feedback—especially positive feedback—whenever appropriate.”