GIVING FEEDBACK – SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

This checklist has been written to provide practical pointers for reviewers when preparing to give effective feedback, both positive and negative in an SRDS meeting.

Giving both positive and negative feedback enables others to fully understand the impact of what it is they are doing, so that they can continue the effective and correct the ineffective. Feedback is intended to improve an individual's contribution and develop better staff morale.

How do people commonly react to feedback?

When feedback is given constructively, people will often respond positively. After all, most people are keen to improve. However, because feedback can be seen as criticism, they sometimes react by:

- trying to defend themselves

- choosing not to hear what is said – selective reception

- doubting the motives of the person giving feedback

- denying the validity of the feedback

- rationalising why they behaved the way they did

- making excuses for their behaviour

Because of this, careful consideration needs to be given to how feedback is delivered, making it positive and helpful. The following tips and hints are given to help you provide feedback which will be received constructively.

Concentrate on the positives

One of the main success indicators of an effective SRDS meeting is a motivated and inspired employee. Recognition is a basic human need and a powerful motivator. Praise can also get people to relax.

- In any feedback session, always begin with the positives.

- Make sure that any praise given is judicious, sincere and deserved.

- Where outstanding performance is brought to your attention by others, make sure that you let the person responsible know.

- You can even create something positive out of employees who present you with problems. Try and think of the flipside of the situation, e.g. they are so slow with the paperwork; yes but they are accurate.

Focus feedback on observations

- The temptation can sometimes be to feedback your interpretation or conclusion from what you observe, e.g. "your work is slow".

- Instead, focus feedback on what you can see or hear in their behaviour. Keep it factual and objective, e.g. "In the last week you have produced around four reports a day. The average is around eight. Let's look at how this can be raised in line with the average".

- It can be valuable to share inferences or conclusions, but when doing so it is important to identify them appropriately, perhaps posing them as a question and making sure you give the reviewee the opportunity to put forward their view.

Keep feedback non-judgemental

- Word your feedback so that it is a description of what occurred, e.g. "the customer was left for 20 minutes before you dealt with their request".

- Keep your feedback neutral and try not to make an evaluation in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, nice or not nice. For example, "it is terrible that you left a customer unattended" implies a judgement.

- Leave out judgement-loaded words that imply blame, fault, mistake and incompetence, e.g. "you are the reason we did badly in the mystery shopping exercise".

- Avoid emotive or critical terminology that could be interpreted as a personal attack, e.g. avoid statements such as, "this just highlights your inability to deal with customer complaints".

Make criticism constructive

- Treat the criticism as an abstract problem, not as a character defect. For example, "the quality of service delivery seems to be declining", rather than "you are bad at service delivery".

- Refer to what a person does rather than comment on what you imagine they do. You will then avoid jumping to conclusions such as, "well it must be you because …".

- Describe actions or behaviours rather then qualities. So, you might say a person, "talked a lot in the meeting" rather than say they are "a chatterbox".

- Ensure you allow individuals to put their point of view across and take note of explanations or mitigating circumstances.

- Above all, concentrate on what the individual can do about the criticism and how they can improve.

Focus feedback on the value it may have to the recipient

- Provide feedback which serves the needs of the recipient rather than your own.

- Phrase any help or support as an offer, not an imposition.

- Whenever possible, treat mistakes as a learning opportunity.

- Focus feedback on the amount of information that the person receiving it can use.