smart supervision™

strategies, ideas and tips for managing yourself and others

At the Front Line of Managing Change

By Richard Bevan, founder, C2K Consulting

How can first-level supervisors and mid-level managers support and guide change? These key individuals are at the front line of the organization, whether working directly with customers, handling manufacturing or support, guiding service delivery or supporting administrative functions. Yet, major changes, such as mergers, restructuring or installation of new systems, are often initiated with little or no consultation with this group. There is an assumption that supervisors will automatically embrace, guide and support the change.

Case Example: Consult and Involve those Able to Influence the Outcome

Take a look at this example: The manufacturer faced rapidly increasing health care costs. Managed care offered a solution whereby premiums would be held constant, but employees would have to select a new primary care physician from the approved network. This requirement generated concern and resistance.

But in one location, the approach was different. Before the meeting, the plant superintendent and the benefits manager sat down with a group of supervisors. They discussed the background of the change and the business need to contain costs, and they acknowledged the likely resistance. They invited questions and discussion, and asked for input about how best to handle the rollout.

Many useful ideas developed, one of which was that all the questions raised should be distributed with a detailed set of answers. Of equal value to the process was the fact that the supervisors, having been involved and consulted, now had a clear understanding of the issues and options.

Why Supervisors Should Have a Primary Role in Leading Change

Among several factors that need to be present in effectively managed change, three are perhaps the most critical: clarity, engagement and communication. Supervisors play a key role in each.

1. Clarity is the platform on which change planning and execution is built. The sponsor of change needs to express clearly and concisely what's changing, why and how it's going to be accomplished.

- The **management myth:** "It's too complex to explain to everyone."
- The **reality:** If you don't find a way to do it, people will form their own conclusions — and those conclusions may not be consistent with management's intention.

Supervisors can contribute experience and ideas that will shape the change process and support implementation — provided they are effectively informed and involved.

> "The sponsor of change needs to express clearly and concisely what's changing, why and how it's going to be accomplished."

2. Engagement of stakeholders is the process through which issues and concerns are identified, ideas are developed and questions are documented.

Stakeholders are individuals and groups involved in the change, affected by it and/or able to influence the outcome. Examples include employees, managers and supervisors, customers, local communities and

functional groups (such as human resources and information technology). Resistance to change develops from concern, uncertainty and distraction among one or more stakeholder groups.

- The **management myth:** "We know what they think."
- The **reality:** Stakeholders will have multiple questions and concerns that have not been anticipated, and ideas that can strengthen the process.

The focus of stakeholder engagement is to identify the issues in advance and have plans in place to address them. Once again, supervisors are in the right place to provide input and guidance on this area: they understand the operational details, they know the employees, and they're aware of the issues and concerns.

3. Communication means listening as well as telling, together with discussion, persuasion and feedback. Communication is a continuing process, not a single step or action. The popular "memo and conference call approach" is almost always far too limited.

- The **management myth:** "They can figure it out for themselves."
- The **reality:** "They" (typically, employees and supervisors) do indeed figure it out. And in the absence of guidance or clarity, they will often reach conclusions that aren't what leaders expect or intend.

They may, for example, decide that leaders aren't clear about the direction; that there are hidden agendas and possible costs; and that questions and issues aren't being addressed because they don't have satisfactory answers.

The Supervisor and Communication

Supervisors are at the focal point of change and communication because they are working continually with people at the front line of the organization. The research data confirms this key role.

According to TJ Larkin & Sandar Larkin, employees overwhelmingly prefer to get information from their supervisors. These opinion leaders can establish tone, credibility and receptivity.

Wilson Learning Corp. analyzed many different studies and confirmed that employee satisfaction and organizational performance are directly linked. About 70 percent of satisfaction stems from the leadership skills of managers and supervisors and about 40 percent of work force bottom-line performance can be attributed to satisfaction. The way supervisors manage their teams does much more than support a positive response to change: It's a significant factor in creating and sustaining strong organizational performance.

Change-Readiness: Preparing for Change

Change comes more readily to a team that's well-informed, has established and effective working relationships, has clear purpose and goals, and receives continuing feedback, recognition and support.

Here are some tactics for building a change-ready team: plan, build and sustain.

Plan

Lay the groundwork: Keep your team informed about possible developments and needed changes.

Engage your team in planning: Challenge team members to identify needed changes, seek opportunities and develop implementation plans.

Recognize limitations: Accept that time and energy are limited; ask people what support they need (e.g., defer projects, reassign workloads, share tasks, shift priorities, etc.).

Build

Recognize strong performance: Provide feedback and public acknowledgement of how a certain effort or achievement made a difference.

Look for feedback: Ask people how they're doing, what they think, what ideas they have and how you can help them do a better job.

Be involved and accessible: Make sure everyone knows that you're available and that you welcome discussion and input — and be sure to respond.

Sustain

Respect all input: Don't react badly to bad news or you won't hear it the next time; listen, assess and plan to address the problem or concern.

Demonstrate team behaviors: Behave as you want your team to; for example, be open and customer-focused, respect work-life balance, listen, and provide recognition and support.

Continually seek improvement: Beware of finding comfort in the status quo — never stop looking for ways to improve. ∎

about the author

After early experience in manufacturing management with Lever Brothers, Richard Bevan worked for Towers Perrin (now Towers Watson) in Europe, Australia and the U.S., including five years leading the firm's worldwide communication consulting practice. In 1995, he started his own firm, C2K Consulting. He was an external faculty member for the University of Washington Executive MBA program, where he developed and taught a course in managing change.

This article draws on material in Bevan's recent book, Changemaking: Tactics and Resources for Managing Organizational Change. *(Visit www.changemakingthebook.com to learn more).*

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Is Telecommuting Right for Your Team?

Question: Some of my employees have expressed interest in telecommuting. I'm not sure if this is a good idea. Can you offer any advice?

Answer: Many employers have found that employees can be even more productive when they work from home. They no longer have the commute and, if they were feeling torn between caring for children or aging parents and their job, they can now accomplish both tasks at the same time.

Computers and telephones make telecommuting a possibility, but it takes planning and supervision to make it a reality. The following ideas can help make telecommuting work for both you and your employees:

1. Pick the right position and the right worker. Home-based working won't succeed unless the position involves a great deal of independence. The job should be one that doesn't require a lot of unplanned meetings. As for the employees, they need to have a good record with the company and experience in the position. You don't want to put a newcomer in a telecommuting spot.

2. You must be agreeable to the arrangement. Supervisors must have experience as well, because it's harder to manage people from a distance than to manage someone who is right under your nose. You must also be supportive of the arrangement, otherwise it will be doomed from the start.

3. Maintain regular communication. Whether you choose to do it via e-mail, telephone, a weekly face-to-face meeting in the office or some combination of these, you need to make sure you stay in touch with your home-based workers. Setting up a regular schedule for communication is a good idea; it gives the employee a sense of structure and it gives you a sense of how well the worker is adhering to work plans. ■

Avoiding the Unexpected Crunch of a Short Staff

Question: One of my senior employees just quit unexpectedly. Now my department is understaffed and I don't know what to do. Do you have any tips on how to be better prepared if something like this happens again?

Answer: It is difficult enough to maintain productivity demands in the face of an anticipated staff reduction, such as mandatory layoffs. But when a staff reduction occurs because of things like surprise resignations, terminations, extended absences, etc., there is little time to plan.

Here are some general guidelines you can follow to keep from getting caught completely off-guard in the face of an unexpected reduction in staff:

1. Keep a detailed schedule of employee vacations. Require employees to make their vacation requests early in the year. Then mark them on a calendar. If there are unacceptable overlaps, you may need to ask an employee to change vacation dates. If there is resistance, make changes based on seniority. Although sticking to the schedule is important, employees will inevitably need to change a vacation day here and there. You will need to be flexible.

2. Keep a temp agency on your speed dial. If you know you are going to be short-staffed, make sure you have temporary workers lined up. Also, bring temps in early so you have adequate time to train them. Then, if you find yourself surprised by a last-minute staffing problem in the future, you'll have trained temps ready to help out.

3. Keep your employees in the loop. If you know you are going to be facing a staffing crunch, warn your workers. If nothing else, they will be able to mentally prepare. Always remember, if overtime is anticipated, a little warning goes a long way. ■

about the editor

Donna S. DeCarlo, managing editor for Smart Supervision™*, has a bachelor's degree in English from Widener University. She joined Clement Communications in 2005 and has since helped thousands of managers and supervisors improve their management style and techniques to successfully manage, motivate and inspire employees. Donna collaborates with business experts, authors and thought leaders in the management and leadership industry to bring our readers the best strategies, ideas and tips for managing themselves and others.*

If you have any questions or would like to share your ideas and/or managing tips and techniques, e-mail Donna at Donna_DeCarlo@clement.com.

Will 'Minding Your Manners' Improve Productivity?

We apply them to most areas of our lives: while dining out, socializing with friends, shopping or boarding an airplane. They're called "manners," and we often forget about the ones that befit the workplace. They are the simple actions that exhibit respect toward our employees and fellow supervisors.

Kate Elliott, a Chicago-based management consultant and self-proclaimed "etiquette expert," says that the absence of good manners in the workplace is the bane of employee-employer relationships. She feels that people in leadership positions often become too absorbed with deadlines and conflicts to bother saying "good morning" to their workers or saying "thanks" for a job well done. These leaders would benefit from occasionally bringing an employee a cup of coffee.

"Since when was it all right to check your manners at the door before starting work?" Elliot asks. "Good manners are the foundation for teamwork and getting ahead, but we often forget that fact when we get slammed with intense projects."

The Little Things Count

There are an infinite number of ways to display good manners in the workplace, says Elliott. For example, the act of offering assistance to a busy employee at little or no cost to the supervisor is a show of good manners. The acknowledgment of employee birthdays, wedding anniversaries and cultural holidays can be enough to raise civility in a sometimes uncivil work environment.

Below is a list of "do's and don'ts" that Elliott feels should be taken into account as a way of polishing up our conduct in the workplace:

Good Manners

✓ Respond to written memos and e-mails promptly.
✓ Offer assistance to employees when they have difficulty lifting heavy objects.
✓ Acknowledge broken agreements with an apology or explanation.
✓ Greet employees when they arrive and acknowledge when they leave with a friendly gesture.
✓ Introduce new employees to existing ones.
✓ Face employees when they are talking to you, as well as when you are talking to them.
✓ Say "excuse me" when distractions interrupt your conversations with workers.
✓ Allow time-restricted employees to step ahead of you in lunch lines and restrooms.

Bad Manners

✓ Littering or cluttering common work areas.
✓ Openly belching, sneezing and/or coughing without covering your mouth.
✓ Eating while offering advice or training.
✓ Telling crude or sexist jokes.
✓ Ignoring the customs of employees from different cultures.
✓ Canceling meetings with little or no notice.
✓ Wearing attire that is inappropriate for your company's environment.
✓ Failing to follow through on favors to which you committed. ∎

Win the War on Cost Control

There are always things you can do to drive costs lower. However, in cost control, it's not so much what you do, but how you do it. To get the greatest cost reductions, you need to inspire your troops and garner their support. Like any leader in combat, you don't want to send your platoon after an objective without the proper knowledge, training, resources and motivations.

Here are five steps you can take to win every cost control skirmish:

- **Identify the largest cost-savings opportunity.** It makes no sense to marshal resources and attention toward a small payoff. You and your people can only focus on a limited number of priorities effectively.
- **Focus your attention on the area.** Educate yourself on the most troublesome expense on the financial statement. Ask the person doing the best job in that area for advice. Share that knowledge with your team. Describe the big picture of the high expense and how reducing it impacts employees and their future. Establish a measuring system and post it publicly.
- **Report the results often.** The shorter your reporting periods, the quicker you'll see results.
- **Give it time.** Before moving on to another priority, make sure progress has occurred on this one.
- **Empower your people.** Give employees all the resources needed to succeed with your goal. The more "wins" you chalk up, the more likely your team is to march in the next direction. ∎

Turn Your Workers into Self-Starters

Every supervisor would love to have employees who get right down to business. You need to help your workers develop the skills they need to have this kind of confidence.

Instead of walking an employee through a new task, give him or her the chance to try it alone. Give the worker the opportunity to make mistakes, ask for help and perform the task independently. The result will be a worker who is capable of working on a new project without a lot of wasted time. ∎

Ten Things to Consider When Making Decisions

Some people are born decision-makers. Others struggle with making a simple choice. In the workplace, good decision-making skills are invaluable, especially for supervisors and managers.

The good news is that decision-making is a skill that can be learned. To start, it is important to recognize that there are two basic kinds of decisions: those generated by a specific process and those that just happen. A good decision-maker generally uses a process. Not only does this lead to better results, but it can prevent a great deal of stress.

By adhering to the following basic steps, you will find yourself making wiser decisions in both your professional and personal life:

1. Define the decision that needs to be made. Be specific and answer these questions: Is this really your decision or is it someone else's? When does the decision need to be made? Why is it important? Who will be affected by it?

2. Write down as many alternatives as you can. Brainstorm as many different solutions as possible. Let your imagination run free and try not to censor anything. This is not the time to be judgmental.

3. Consider using different resources to help you find more information about possible alternatives. If you only come up with a few alternatives, you may want to get more information. Additional information generally leads to more alternatives. Resources may include friends, family members, co-workers, state and federal agencies, professional organizations, online services, newspapers, magazines, books and so on.

4. Investigate your alternatives. Once you have a list of alternatives, use the same sources of information to find out more about the specifics of each option. You will find that the more information you gather, the more ideas will pop into your head. Be sure to write these ideas down and check them out, too.

5. Sort through your alternatives. It's time to begin evaluating your alternatives to determine which ones work for you. First, write down the values that would come into play for each alternative. Second, look for the alternatives that would allow you the greatest number of your values. Third, cross off the alternatives that do not fit into your value framework.

6. Visualize the outcome of each alternative. For each remaining alternative on your list, picture what the outcome will look like. It may help if you write down your impressions.

7. Do a reality check. Determine which of your remaining alternatives are most likely to happen. Cross off the alternatives that will most likely not happen.

8. Which alternative fits? Review your remaining options and decide which ones feel most comfortable to you. These are your wise decisions.

If you are very happy about a decision, but are not as comfortable with its possible outcome, it may not be a wise decision for you.

On the other hand, you may dislike an alternative, but be very excited about the possible outcome. This decision would probably not be wise for you, either.

If you feel you can live with both the alternative and the possible outcome, this is probably the decision you should make.

9. Get started. Once you have made your decision, get moving on it. Worrying or second-guessing yourself will only cause grief. Remember, no decision has to be carved in stone. You always have the option of changing your mind.

10. Review your decision. Are the outcomes what you had anticipated? Are you happy with the outcomes? Do you want to let the decision stand or would you like to make some adjustments?

If the decision did not come out the way you planned, go through the process again and answer the following questions: Did I have enough information? What values came into play? Were they my values or someone else's?

As much as we would like to believe that we do not have any prejudices or biases, the fact is that everyone does. The more you are aware of your own prejudices or biases, the better off you'll be.

Have you ever tried to learn 10 new things all at once? If you have, you know that it is easy to become overwhelmed and end up learning very little. This is because we need to screen and categorize information in order to understand the world around us. Failing to put things in some kind of order makes them too difficult to learn. We also get into trouble when we fail to realize that many of the perceptions we hold are based on what society teaches us, not what we actually know to be true. ■

How to Handle Employees Who Have Difficult Personalities

Since your staff is made up of a cross section of humanity, it stands to reason that you will encounter many different personalities. As a supervisor, your task is to capitalize on the strengths of each personality, while minimizing the weaknesses. Handled properly, difficult employees can become assets to your department.

Here are some descriptions of the most common types of difficult employees, as well as suggestions on how to handle them:

The Complainer

One of the most common problem employees is the complainer. Every workplace seems to have at least one complainer. This person complains no matter what you do. In fact, he or she seems to get some kind of satisfaction from complaining.

> "Handled properly, difficult employees can become assets to your department."

To handle the complainer, you must talk to him or her. Explain that you've noticed a lot of negativity and ask if there's anything you can do to help. In some cases, complainers don't even realize the extent of their complaining. Talking to them may be enough to turn them around.

The Know-it-All

Dealing with a know-it-all can be very frustrating. This type of worker tends to do his or her own thing, refusing to listen to anyone else — including you. Explaining what you want a know-it-all to do and then offering ideas about how to do it is a waste of time because know-it-alls don't listen.

One option for dealing with a know-it-all is to change your method of communication. Use written memos or e-mails. Then ask questions that could only be answered if the e-mail or memo was read. If the know-it-all fails to answer, you know the memo or e-mail was ignored. It is likely that you will get better results from written, rather than verbal, communication.

The Two-Faced Employee

One of the biggest thorns in the side of a supervisor is the two-faced employee. This worker is sweet, nice and helpful to your face. However, he or she is secretly out to get you by making you look bad in front of your boss.

Your best bet in dealing with this worker is to talk to your boss about setting a policy requiring all communication between your employees and upper management to go through you first.

The Natural-Born Leader

Having one or two leaders among your staffers can be a tremendous asset or a major disaster, depending on how you handle them.

If you have a team of employees who are not working well together, add the natural leader to the mix. Chances are he or she will get the group organized and focused, setting them on the right path and guiding them to the finish.

If you are not comfortable giving the leader a group of employees to lead, try giving him or her a project that has stalled. A good leader loves a challenge like this and will meet it successfully.

The 'Yes' Person

Some employees are so eager to please that they agree with everything you say. While the "yes" person can be a bit flattering in the beginning, such behavior quickly gets old.

What the yes person really needs is to be put in a situation in which he or she is forced to make decisions. Give this person a specific task and a deadline for completing it. Tell him or her that it is a new project in uncharted waters and, in order to complete it, he or she will have to use his or her judgment.

The Stickler

The stickler is the kind of worker who checks, double-checks and triple-checks every step or phase of every project. He or she is so concerned about getting everything done right that nothing gets done at all.

The best way to handle the stickler may be to have a casual meeting with him or her. Explain that you are thrilled with the accuracy of the employee's work, so you would like to give him or her more to do. However, tell the employee you are concerned with meeting deadlines. Talk about ways that you can help the employee get things done more efficiently.

The Overqualified Worker

Some employees never double-check anything because they know it's correct and well done. Ironically, these employees tend to be crabby and negative. Because they've been around for a long time, they can pretty much do their jobs in their sleep and they are bored. In essence, these employees are overqualified.

There are two ways to handle overqualified employees: promote them or terminate them. Overqualified workers are often bright and talented, so hanging on to them is the best plan. Give them something different to do. Promote them to a higher level or transfer them to a different department. Do whatever you can to get rid of the monotony. If left alone, this employee is likely to become more and more discontent, putting you into the position of having to consider termination. ∎
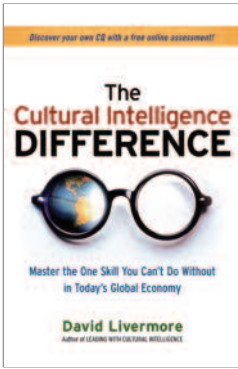
How to Thrive in Today's Multicultural Workplaces

Two decades ago, researchers confirmed what most business leaders already knew: A high IQ doesn't guarantee success. Excelling at business performance also requires common sense, intuition and people skills — in other words, emotional intelligence, or EQ.

Today, business leaders are increasingly realizing that a high EQ doesn't automatically translate into success when applied to other cultures. And trailblazing researchers like David Livermore are affirming the urgent business need for another form of intelligence: cultural intelligence, or CQ.

"Cultural intelligence isn't just a new and improved label for cultural competence," Livermore stresses. "It's a different way of approaching the multicultural challenges and opportunities of today's world, and it's rooted in research across dozens of countries around the world."

In his new book, *The Cultural Intelligence Difference: Master the One Skill You Can't Do Without in Today's Global Economy*, Livermore clearly explains what CQ is and why it is crucial to business leaders, entrepreneurs, investors, politicians and humanitarians, as well as to professionals in engineering, technology, medicine, human resources, education, sports and the arts — in short, anyone committed to a pursuit that involves interacting with and adapting to people from various cultural backgrounds.

What's more, and most important, Livermore shows the reader how to assess his or her current CQ level and how to go about raising it.

The Cultural Intelligence Difference breaks CQ into the following four core capabilities:

- **CQ Drive —** The motivation for taking on the challenges that often accompany multicultural relationships and work
- **CQ Knowledge —** A basic working understanding of cultural differences and similarities, and the will to continue learning
- **CQ Strategy —** The ability to make note of and make sense of culturally diverse experiences and use that awareness to plan effectively
- **CQ Action —** The flexibility to adapt your behavior for a variety of cross-cultural social and work settings and situations while still remaining genuine and true to yourself.

To strengthen his case, Livermore presents compelling new findings linking high CQ to strong decision-making, negotiating, networking, conflict resolution and leadership capabilities, as well as to greater enjoyment from intercultural work. He shares dozens of simple, proven strategies for developing CQ motivation, insights and effective behaviors.

The Cultural Intelligence Difference presents a new, different and deeper way of approaching both the timeless topic of cultural sensitivity and the timely imperative of cross-cultural effectiveness. For everyone with a stake in our globalized marketplace, multicultural workplaces and culturally diverse society, Livermore offers a welcome guide to more successful interactions and more satisfying relationships. "And," as he promises each reader, "it will open up a whole new world of possibilities for you."

The Cultural Intelligence Difference: Master the One Skill You Can't Do Without in Today's Global Economy by David Livermore, AMACOM, May 2011. ∎

Avoiding Ethnocentrism

One's culture is merely a collection of values, behaviors and beliefs that one learns by living and interacting in the society to which he or she belongs. Since there are many different societies existing on Earth, it is impudent to place a higher value on one culture above another or to think of one's own culture as being a more "natural" manner of doing things. This kind of viewpoint can be termed "ethnocentric" — believing all cultures should revolve around your culture. Ethnocentrism in life and politics, as well as in business, can be an enormous barrier to understanding and communicating with other people.

Don't be close-minded in your attitudes toward people from other cultures. Be aware that other people may not share your values, behaviors or beliefs, and do your best to communicate with them, regardless of this circumstance. Do whatever is necessary and take the required time to avoid situations in which other people could take offense. Be sensitive to those differences and recognize them not as barriers, but as the rich collection of diverse experiences that make our lives unique. ∎

Communication Checklist: Four Effective Steps

Good communication is an essential tool for every supervisor. To excel at your job, you need to excel at communicating. Here are some of the basics to make sure you are on the right track:

❏ **Think first.** You can't communicate something that you're not clear on yourself. Before speaking, figure out exactly what you want to say. This may not be obvious. For example, a worker may seem to be getting overconfident and making mistakes. You're not really sure what you want to say, but you know you don't want to wait for an accident to happen. If you think about the situation, maybe jotting down some phrases, you may realize that you are most concerned about preventing an accident. Instead of expressing anger, which won't get you anywhere, or being apologetic about criticizing the worker, which could be even worse, say something like: "You have made some slip-ups lately and I want to point them out to you so we can avoid an accident."

❏ **Be diplomatic.** Communication in the workplace is not the same as group therapy. This is not the place to be brutally honest or to wear your heart on your sleeve. For example, you may feel like your boss is demanding too much from your workers in terms of overall productivity. But you don't want to say, "You're working my people too hard." Instead, send a memo that could lead to a constructive resolution of the problem, such as, "We may need to make some changes on the line to accommodate the new production quotas. Here are some ideas I've outlined. Please let me know your thoughts."

❏ **Listen.** One of the most important aspects of communicating is to really listen to what is being said. Only then can you respond properly. Too many people formulate a response out of defensiveness before someone is finished talking. They miss what the speaker is saying and may end up responding to something they only imagine was said.

❏ **Be clear.** The purpose of communication is to get your point across and to resolve a situation for the improvement of the entire company. If you are vague, no one will know what you're talking about. Make sure you are specific and to the point. Ensure that you are being understood by periodically asking if anyone has any questions. ∎

How to Give Feedback that Gets Results

Do you have the feeling that your department could be producing more than it is? Do you have one or two workers who have been performing just a little under par? Have you noticed a gradual downward slide in attentiveness and energy among your staff members? Sooner or later, you're going to have to try to fix these problems. When it comes to giving feedback, the sooner the better.

For feedback to work, it must be strong and clear enough for the employee to hear it. Here are some tips for giving feedback that gets results:

❏ **Get to the point.** Sometimes supervisors are tempted to make a simple problem quite complicated. This may be partly due to the tendency to shy away from confrontation. The supervisor talks around the issue instead of saying what's really on his or her mind. It's better to deliver a message that will grab the worker's attention. The shorter and simpler the message, the better the employee will absorb it, increasing the likelihood of better results.

❏ **Keep it simple and stay focused.** Just because you are giving feedback doesn't mean that you can take advantage of the opportunity to unload every complaint you have on the employee. This will only make the worker feel overwhelmed and inadequate. It may even result in passive resistance, in which a worker refuses to improve but acts as if everything is fine. Choose the area you want to give feedback on and concentrate only on that.

❏ **Be constructive.** Often, the reason an employee is not doing well is because he or she honestly doesn't know how to approach a task. If that's the case, no amount of feedback will help unless you add in some type of training element. Find out if the worker has questions about his or her job or task, and answer them patiently. A worker who is afraid to ask questions may have a performance problem. This is either because of natural temperament or because the worker feels as though he or she is surrounded by a climate that discourages questions.

❏ **Don't forget the positive.** Feedback doesn't always have to be negative. Some of the most effective feedback is given to good workers who need a little reinforcement from time to time. If you are pleased with a worker's performance, let him or her know. All it takes is one or two sentences to make employees feel appreciated. ∎

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