

COACHING TIP

From Rex C. Houze

FREQUENT FEEDBACK PREVENTS PROBLEMS

Without feedback there is no improvement or progress. Most quality programs are based on getting feedback on how current processes work so they can be improved. Without the feedback, there would be no improvement. The same is true with human behavior; without appropriate feedback and positive reinforcement there will be no improvement in performance and results.

Effective coaches understand that giving appropriate feedback is the quickest, cheapest, and most effective method for improving performance and results.

Humans need feedback to validate their existence, enhance their self-esteem, and improve their self-image. One of the greatest forms of punishment is solitary confinement; little or no feedback. Our self-images are developed by feedback we get from experiences and/or other people. A Sunday school teacher told me I was a good reader when I was 11 years old. I believed her and have been an avid reader for the past 50 years, reading 40 plus books a year plus numerous magazines and articles. Did feedback affect my self-image and behavior? Absolutely! All of us can relate examples of how feedback has affected our behavior and performance.

As a coach, you have a unique opportunity to improve performance and shape results through the use of appropriate feedback. All feedback is important to performance improvement. Positive reinforcement is critical. People tend to act to gain a benefit or avoid a loss. People tend to gravitate toward pleasure and reward and avoid punishment and rejection. As a result, human behavior is driven by the principle that what gets rewarded, gets done.

If you want a sales person to make more calls, use positive reinforcement. If you want a sales person to open new accounts, use positive reinforcement. If you want a better safety record, or less waste or rework, or better accuracy, or on-time shipments, use positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is accomplished through feedback --- from a trusted, supportive coach.

The dilemma with feedback in business is that most people won't ask for feedback and most business coaches don't give enough of the right kind. Most people won't ask for feedback because they don't want to appear weak or perceived as "high maintenance" or they think if they have to ask for it, it isn't as valuable.

Business coaches don't give enough appropriate feedback for a myriad of reasons, including:

- They don't fully understand the value and importance.
- They don't know how.
- They don't think they have enough time; they are too busy "doing".
- They don't get enough from their coach.
- They have had poor role models in the past.

Since people are reluctant to ask for feedback, it is imperative that coaches make an extra effort to give appropriate feedback using positive reinforcement. Catch people doing things right. Focus on people's strengths and stop pointing out their weaknesses. Notice and comment on progress. When you see it, say it. When people see you are sincere about recognizing their contribution to the organization, you will be rewarded with improved performance and results, higher morale, better teamwork, and a more positive work environment.