Helping Employees Be Their Best: The Importance of Feedback and Coaching

Washington State Pharmacy Association
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
May 31, 2013

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Learning Objectives

• Explain the importance of feedback and coaching.
• Distinguish between coaching and giving direction.
• Outline the steps in the coaching process.
• Apply principles of performance management to conduct a feedback and coaching meeting.
• Identify the role of feedback and coaching in the performance management and discipline processes.

Self-Assessment Questions

• Which of the following is true about coaching?
  a) The manager is responsible for identifying the steps necessary for improving employee performance.
  b) The focus is on correcting and maintaining performance.
  c) It draws on employees’ talents for future development.
  d) It communicates the importance of the organization’s rules and procedures.
Self-Assessment Questions

• Coaching may not be appropriate for which of the following situations?
  a) The employee doesn’t have the necessary knowledge, skills, or abilities.
  b) The employee intentionally violated the rules or code of conduct.
  c) The employee doesn’t understand what is expected of them.
  d) The employee doesn’t see the link between their performance and their pay.

Self-Assessment Questions

• In employee coaching, if the employee is meeting organizational expectations, the supervisor should:
  a) Assign additional tasks
  b) Increase the level of expectations
  c) Ask the successful employee to mentor other employees
  d) Praise the employee and consider opportunities for further development

Self-Assessment Questions

• When coaching an employee, the supervisor should:
  a) Allow the employee to determine how to reach their goals.
  b) Only provide feedback on behaviors or performance the employee has requested.
  c) Reinforce the organization’s rules and procedures.
  d) Provide general information about desired outcomes.
Self-Assessment Questions

• Which of the following is **not** a reason why feedback and coaching are part of a legally defensible performance management system?
  a) They clarify expectations.
  b) They help employees know what to do to improve performance.
  c) They provide information about the link between pay and performance.
  d) None of the above.

Importance of Feedback

• Clarifies what the organization expects
• Can let employees know what should do differently in order to improve performance
• Contributes to employees’ understanding
• Supportive feedback can lead to greater motivation
• Feedback discussions about pay and advancement opportunities can lead to greater satisfaction with the performance management process

Coaching

**Feedback**

• Provides information about employees’ job performance
• Guides behavior and helps monitor progress towards goal attainment
• Helps address under-performing employees
• Recognizes good performance

**Coaching**

• Involves giving feedback and instructions with the intention of improving job performance
• Draws on employees’ talents for future development
• Emphasizes learning versus giving direction
Critical Managerial Skills

Observe
- Behavior and performance

Analyze
- Identify opportunities for employees to develop skills
- Determine when coaching is necessary

Interview
- Ask questions the right way
- Listen actively and with empathy
- Give feedback
- Relate to expectations and performance goals
- Be descriptive and specific
- Provide at timely and regular intervals

The Coaching Process

1. Observe employee’s performance.
2. Is the employee meeting expectations?
   - No: Describe the problem.
   - Yes: Praise employee.
3. Decide with the employee how to correct the problem.
4. Consider opportunities for future development.


Diagnosing Performance

Identify the reason why the employee is not meeting expectations or performing up to potential.

- If ability is the issue, it may be related to:
  - resources
  - training
  - aptitude

- If motivation is the issue, it may be related to:
  - expectations
  - rewards
Feedback & Coaching Exercise (Part 1)

Organize into groups of 3-4 people.

For each scenario, take 2-3 minutes to describe the potential causes of the performance issue.

Giving Performance Feedback

• Giving performance feedback should be a regular, ongoing activity.
• Preparing for a feedback session
  • Plan in advance
  • Enable the employee to be well prepared
  • Conduct in a neutral location, free from distractions
  • Take a problem-solving approach to communicating feedback

Communicating Feedback

• Describe the current behavior or performance that needs to change.
  • Give immediately after an event happens
  • Be specific about what behaviors or results were effective or ineffective
• Focus on the performance, rather than making value judgments about the employee
  • Don’t say “You are very slow with your work” Say “You did not get the prescription filled by the deadline”
  • Don’t say “You are filling prescriptions wrong” Say “There is a more effective way to fill prescriptions”
• Focus negative feedback on behaviors that are within the employee’s control
Supervisor-as-Coach

• Empower employees to improve their performance
  • Ask for their perspective on what could have been done differently
  • Be specific about desired outcomes but enable them to determine how to reach their goals
• Offer support and provide resources
  • Provide immediate feedback
  • Eliminate unnecessary rules, procedures, and other constraints
• Be sure to follow up

Feedback & Coaching Exercise (Part 2)

In your same groups of 3-4 people, take 10 minutes to plan your feedback and coaching sessions with John, Terri, and Amber.

• How would you describe to them their current performance?
• How would you get their commitment to improving their performance?
• What would you do if their performance didn't improve?

Performance Management

Organizational Strategy, Goals, and Objectives

Formal Performance Appraisal
Motivation Performance Rewards
On-going regular communication, coaching and feedback

Job Descriptions
Expectations and Standards
Legal Issues in Performance Management

- Performance management processes are often scrutinized in cases of discrimination or dismissal.
- A legally defensible performance management system:
  - Is based on valid job analysis
  - Communicates expectations
  - Evaluates behaviors and results (not traits)
  - Consists of multiple reviewers and upper-level approval
  - Includes an appeals process
  - Provides feedback, coaching, and training

Counseling and Discipline

- If motivational coaching does not work, discipline may be appropriate
- Types of problem employees:
  - Employees who lack ability to meet performance standards
  - Employees who do not have the motivation to meet performance standards
  - Employees who intentionally violate the rules or the code of conduct
  - Employees with personal problems

Administering and Managing Discipline

- Basics of an effective (in terms of discouraging unwanted behavior) and fair disciplinary process:
  - Clear rules and regulations
  - A system of progressive penalties
    - Progressive discipline - relies on punishment to prevent and correct behavior
    - Positive discipline - relies on counseling skills to motivate the employee to change
  - A formal appeals process
  - The "hot stove rule"
Documenting Misconduct

• Good documentation is crucial to discipline.
• Need not be extensive but should include
  • Date, time, location of incident.
  • Behavior exhibited by employee and consequences of their actions.
  • Identification of any witnesses and all parties involved.
  • Information on prior discussions regarding problem behaviors.
  • Identification of disciplinary action to be taken and improved expected.
  • Employee reaction to disciplinary intervention.

Grounds for Dismissal

- Unsatisfactory performance
  • Persistent failure to perform assigned duties or to meet prescribed standards.
- Misconduct
  • Deliberate and willful violation of the employer’s rules.
- Lack of qualifications
  • Employee’s inability to do the assigned work although he or she makes every attempt to do so.
- Changed requirements of the job
  • Employee’s inability to do the assigned work after the employer changed the nature of the job.

Additional Methods for Intervention

- Alternative dispute resolution (ADR)
  • A method for resolving work-related issues by bringing in a partial outsider but not the court system.
- Employee assistance program (EAP)
  • A referral service that employees can use to seek professional treatment for personal issues impacting their job performance.
- Outplacement counseling
  • A service in which professionals try to help dismissed employees manage the transition from one job to another.
Key Points

- Constructive feedback guides behavior, helps underperforming employees, recognizes good performance, and is perceived as fair.
- Coaching is about improving performance, not just correcting or maintaining performance.
- When coaching employees,
  - one of the most important things a manager can do is ask questions and listen to the answers.
  - managers should work collaboratively with the employee to identify steps for addressing developmental needs.
- An effective and legally defensible performance management process involves ongoing and regular communication, feedback, and coaching.
- A fair and effective disciplinary process requires clear rules and regulations, an appeals process, and a system of progressive penalties.

References


Management & HR Skills for Pharmacists. Oregon State University eCampus. [https://pne.oregonstate.edu/catalog/management-hr-skills-pharmacists]
