TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Being the recipient of performance feedback is one of the hardest and most stress inducing experiences most people encounter in their work. All employees receive some form of feedback during their work life and there are few that would say they enjoy it. Yet, most people report greater dissatisfaction with their employer when they DON’T receive regular feedback. The following are tips for how to reduce the stress of receiving feedback and for making it a collaborative and introspective process.

BE OPEN TO FEEDBACK

None of us are perfect and, therefore, none of us are perfect for our specific jobs. Each person brings to a job a particular set of knowledge, skills and abilities. Be open to the idea that you can ALWAYS improve and that your supervisor does have an opinion about your work. These tips will send a message to your supervisor that you are open to the discussion:

- Just listen, don’t quibble. Don’t defend yourself. If you want feedback, you must accept that what someone tells you is “true” from their perspective. You don’t have to believe it or act on it, but you must listen openly. Ask questions to make sure you understand.
- If you aren’t getting helpful feedback, ask specific behavioral questions that can be answered with simple facts or “yes” or “no”: Did I interrupt anyone? Whom did I interrupt the most?
- Ask how you could have handled something differently to improve.

BE PREPARED

Coming into a feedback session with some idea of the expectations that apply to your job is important. It is also important to have some idea of what your supervisor may want to discuss.

- Don’t be afraid to ask for a preview of the conversation before the meeting.
- Know what you will be evaluated on by reading your job description in advance (and periodically throughout the year).
- Know what you want to know about the view of your work of those providing feedback. What’s important to your success?
BE HONEST ABOUT PREFERENCES FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK
It is OK to let people know how much feedback you want to hear at one time. If you fail to define precisely what you want, you run the risk of hearing too much. Once that happens, it’s easy to get defensive. You might shut down and stop listening, or even lash out at someone trying to share the “truth” as they see it. Either way, it might be difficult for the person to be candid with you in the future.

BE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERSON GIVING FEEDBACK
It is often just as hard if not harder for people to give open and honest feedback. You can help by signaling you are open to it and making the process as painless for the feedback giver as you can:

• Start the session by saying you are glad to be engaging in the conversation and that you always want to know how you can do better.
• Ask “What else?” until they tell you “That’s all.”
• Assume good intentions, and that the person values and wants to improve your relationship, even if the feedback expresses temporary dissatisfaction.

BE OUTCOME ORIENTED
Accept the impact of your behavior as reality for the other person, your customers, or others. Again, you don’t necessarily have to agree with it, but you should want to address issues that are being reported to have impact on the workplace or customers.

BE SOLUTION-ORIENTED
• Ask for specific advice on what to do differently and what to repeat going forward.
• Ask what tools you might employ, or training you might receive, that could improve your performance.
• Thank your supervisor for giving feedback. Keep him/her willing to give you more.

*If you need assistance in preparing to deliver feedback to your employees, the Office of Human Resources is happy to assist you. Contact ext. 6210 or visit the office for assistance.*