



Management & Supervisory NOTES

Human Resources
Helping U Succeed

APR 2015

No Surprises

FACE is all about the conversations between supervisors and employees. At the very heart of the conversations is ongoing feedback and coaching. The supervisor provides continuous feedback, meaningful recognition, and coaching throughout the year. When this takes place, there are 'no surprises.'

'No surprises' means that supervisors have an obligation to provide feedback as soon as they have any concerns about performance or when an employee is doing something well. Nobody wants to be surprised by their supervisor. When something happens, the supervisor needs to say something to the employee; it cannot be months later. These conversations then become part of the day-to-day performance conversations between employees and supervisors.

The ongoing feedback should be guided by the following principles:

- **Make it regular.** Most performance conversations can be informal; no need to wait for a perfect moment or just once a year. See an employee doing something good today? Tell them. See an area where it could be just a little bit better? Tell them. Make sure you are providing feedback on a regular and ongoing basis.
- **Do it immediately.** Feedback is enhanced when it is given as close as possible to the event. Want to hear about the great job you did six months ago? Probably not. Want to hear about the great job earlier this week? Sure. Providing immediate feedback has the added benefit of being able to recall the details of the event and make the feedback specific.
- **Be specific.** Feedback should not be general. *Great job today!* On what? Employees want to

hear about their specific contributions and the effect it had. *Great job today on the presentation. The way you prepared and delivered the message really made a difference in our customer understanding a complex topic.* The same is true when the feedback is corrective.

- **Location is important.** While feedback can be informal and on-the-go, make sure you pick an appropriate place based on the type of feedback. Sometimes you may need to set aside time and remove distractions. This will provide time and space to make the conversation meaningful.
- **Positive before negative.** Need to deliver feedback about when something didn't go right? It may be helpful to acknowledge what went right, before talking about areas of improvement. Remember, it's a conversation. Ask the employee for his or her view and suggestions.
- **Practice makes perfect.** It can be easy to overlook all the good things that employees do or take it for granted. Also, it may be hard to provide feedback when performance is not on track. The easiest way to overcome both challenges is to practice.

Supervisors who provide feedback and coaching help to improve their employees' performance and create an environment of 'no surprises.' Remember, it's the conversations that take place, most of the time informally, that help employees know what they are doing well and where they need to improve. Supervisors shouldn't keep their employees in the dark, just waiting to jump out and scream '*Surprise.*' Following these guidelines can help improve your performance conversations and lead to better outcomes.