

## Getting Employee Feedback

*When we begin a conversation by respecting the wishes of the other person, we start to generate some of the goodwill needed for creative problem solving and productive business communication.*

**E**mployee morale problems can be the result of any number of workplace problems. If employees don't like a particular supervisor, or feel that their work isn't appreciated, results will suffer. Getting to the root of the problem is sometimes a challenge. In many instances, the only way to get at it is to ask your employees to tell you.

This can be a difficult situation for you and for them. On the one hand, you can gain valuable information about how to increase your employees' job satisfaction. On the other, you might have to face the fact that something that you do is a source of problems. An employee is faced with similar concerns. Should they offer honest criticism and risk retaliation, or keep silent?

### Sample Feedback Script

This sample script is designed to help you obtain useful feedback from your employees. It suggests what to say to assure employees that their input is valued, and a variety of issues that might be of concern. It also offers options to use when a meeting doesn't go quite as planned. Open the discussion by saying something like:

*Thanks for coming to talk with me. What I'd like to talk about is employee morale. I want to make this job as fulfilling and satisfying for you as I can. Before I can do that, though, I need to know how you feel your job could be made more fulfilling or what other steps we can take to make you feel satisfied in your job.*

At this point, if the employee has definite comments or feedback, let the employee talk. Maintain eye contact, take good notes and occasionally nod or smile to let the employee know that you're listening. If the employee doesn't seem to have anything to say right off the bat, or seems hesitant to comment, you might say something like:

*I want you to know that I'm really interested in what you have to say, and I don't want you to feel uncomfortable giving criticism, if that's what's necessary. This isn't a trap, and I'm not going to get angry or retaliate for any criticism you might make. This is really a team process and we're on the same side. If it's OK with you, I'd like to go through some specific questions, and get your thoughts. If you'd rather not do this now, let me know. We can reschedule a time to meet or you can jot some thoughts down on paper if you'd rather.*

If the employee seems really uncomfortable or uninterested, you might conclude the session now. If the employee seems to want to continue participating, you could then go through a list of questions or topics and ask the employee to comment about them.

Here's a sample of some topics that might get your discussion going:

- The good and bad habits of supervisors and coworkers
- The employee's future at the company and how he or she feels about it
- The employee's workload and the distribution of work in general
- The employee's feelings about the importance of the work he or she does
- How employees get along with each other
- The condition of the equipment with which the employee must work
- The pay and benefits the employee receives and how they compare with other companies
- The consistency and fairness of the way employees are treated and disciplined
- The potential for growth/advancement
- The employee's experiences with and feelings about coaching and feedback
- The usefulness and appropriateness of instructions and training received
- The attitude of the managers/owners toward the employees

You might ask the employee to respond to each of these topics. Be sure to take good notes.

After the discussion, sum up by saying:

*Thanks very much for taking the time to let me know how you feel. I appreciate your honesty, and I hope you'll feel free to come and talk to me if you have questions, suggestions, or additional comments.*

Let the employee know what to expect:

*After I conduct some more meetings with other employees, I'm going to look at this information and try to figure out ways that we can change things to make your job even more fulfilling and rewarding. I hope to have some information back to you within two weeks that will tell you where we'll go from here.*

*Thanks again.*

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