

WIN 5.1 - Open Communication

Lesson 6 - Feedback Overview

Gord:
Hi Amisi. Do you have a minute?

Amisi:
Of course!

Gord:
This is Mr. Rose. Mr. Rose has been a patient here since it opened 25 years ago, isn't that right?

Amisi:
Hello, Mr. Rose.

Gord:
So we've been doing some stretches - Mr. Rose is here for his rheumatoid arthritis. But he's not quite as steady on his feet this week as compared to last, isn't that right? He's been stumbling a bit, and he seems dizzy. Wouldn't you say?

Mr. Rose:
I'm fine. Honestly! All this fuss.

Gord:
Well, you started on a new medication this last week, remember?

Mr. Rose:
I did? I don't remember. I don't remember anything. I think I'm just fighting something.

Gord:
Well, just to be on the safe side, Amisi, do you mind giving Mr. Rose a good looking-over?

Amisi:
Of course!

Gord:
Thanks Amisi. Okay - is your daughter coming to pick you up today?

Mr. Rose:
Yes, she should be here soon.

Gord:
Okay. Well, I'll see you next week, and don't forget to do your stretches, okay?

Mr. Rose:
I won't.

Gord:
Okay.

Mr. Rose:
Thank you, Gord.

Gord:
You're welcome.

Amisi:
Alright Mr. Rose. Let's make sure you're okay before we send you home.

Mr. Rose:
Okay.

Amisi:
There we go. You are comfortable?

Mr. Rose:
Yes. Yes, thank you.

Amisi:
Alright. Everything seems fine. Your blood pressure is a little lower than last time, but it's still within a normal range.

Mr. Rose:
Honestly I'm fine. I'll just go home and rest. My daughter's probably waiting for me outside. I'm just fighting a bug or something.

Amisi:
Alright. Well we'll help you find your daughter.

Mr. Rose:
Okay.

Amisi:
Let's go.

Mr. Rose:
Thank you.

Amisi:
After you.

Mr. Rose:
Thank you.

Narrator:
When it happens as it should, feedback can be a powerful tool. It provides employees with vital information, setting the stage for improvement so they can perform at their best. Quality feedback allows employees to improve in ways that can't be addressed through written reports or evaluations.

What's more, research shows that employees actually want to receive feedback from their managers. They even tend to find corrective feedback more valuable than praise. Of course, studies have also found that employees like to hear praise more than criticism—the ideal ratio for praise to constructive criticism is five to one.

Managers, on the other hand, dislike giving negative feedback, and tend to avoid it altogether.

Why is this? In his classic work "Feedback in Clinical Medical Education", Dr. Jack Ende identified a number of reasons why ongoing feedback doesn't occur often enough in a healthcare setting—reasons that still hold true.

Giving feedback is often mistaken for giving an evaluation, yet the two are different. Feedback informs and teaches. It allows a goal to be reached. Evaluation takes place at the end of the journey. Assesses whether or not the goal was reached and offers a judgement. Feedback avoids any sense of judgement.

Feedback can fail when it's not provided by the person directly observing an employee. As Dr. Ende writes, "Observations are the currency of feedback and without them the process becomes 'feedback' in name only."

Many managers also fear that feedback will have more negative effects than positive, and damage the relationship. This can happen when emotions get stirred up because feedback wasn't skillfully provided.

Sometimes, feedback doesn't work because an employee is not open to hearing and accepting it. Then the manager, worried about the employee's reaction, talks around the problem so much the employee doesn't learn a thing. And the employee, afraid of getting a negative evaluation, reinforces the manager's avoidance. Feedback becomes "feeding," then eventually, nothing at all.

And what a loss that is. Without constructive feedback, mistakes go uncorrected and performance goes unnoticed.