

Communication

Bulletin TM for Managers & Supervisors

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

February 1, 2022



If you haven't been to our website recently, here's exclusive online content you've been missing:

www.CommunicationBulletin.com



Management Skills Center

Improve your skills and manage better



Professional Writing Center

Hundreds of tips to get writing right

4 keys to give feedback that'll help employees grow in 2022

After two years of 'survive mode,' it's time for 'thrive mode' again

Most leaders want to give feedback that helps employees do better.

Unfortunately, many give feedback that makes employees feel worse about themselves and their work.

In fact, feedback – even if you call it “constructive” – almost always reduces employee engagement, according to Peter Bregman and Howie Jacobson, coauthors of *You Can Change Other People*.

It's understandable, considering leaders have to point out shortcomings and weaknesses. That naturally puts employees in an uncomfortable, defensive position.

“Telling people they are missing the mark is not the same as helping them hit

the mark,” the authors said.

But there are ways to deliver feedback that removes the uncomfortable barriers and helps employees grow. Here are the research-proven strategies.

Shift from critic to ally

An ally in improvement is far better than a critic of performance. So it's important to step into employee feedback as an ally.

Step 1: Empathize. If employees are struggling, acknowledge that it must be difficult or frustrating to face that every day.

Step 2: Build confidence. Tell employees you

Please see Feedback ... on Page 2.

Sharpen Your Judgment

‘Won’t mix with customers’ or bias?

“I have a really promising candidate coming in later today for an interview,” said Manager Vernon Roberts.

“I knew there would be some winners in that batch of resumes I forwarded you,” said HR Manager Louise Vanderpool.

“He looks great on paper,” said Vernon. “Has some experience in the industry and even took a certification class.

“Plus, we had a great phone interview,” Vernon said. “Looking forward to meeting him.”

But the meeting didn't go as well as hoped. The candidate, Kyle Smith, wasn't exactly what Vernon expected.

So when they were done going through the

usual questions, Vernon told Kyle, “I don't think you'll mix well with customers.”

Questions come later

“Why would you say that?” Louise asked Vernon months later. She'd just received a notice that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed a suit for Kyle, a transgender, accusing the company of gender identity discrimination.

“Because he wouldn't,” said Vernon. “I could just see it.”

“After all the glowing reviews you gave,” Louise said, “and one meeting changes your mind?”

Still, the company fought the case. Did it win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.

The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The Bulletin helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

Feedback ...

(continued from Page 1)

believe they have the ability to handle the situation.

Step 3: Get permission. Ask if they are willing to think with you about the situation and what to do.

Go straight to the outcome

When employees give permission to look at the situation and explore fixes, you might be tempted to review the “problem.” Don’t!

The authors say that’s just getting back into bad feedback. Instead, focus on the “energizing future” they can create.

Ask, “What’s the outcome you’re going for here?”

Then give them the space and time to explain what they’re trying to achieve or overcome for themselves, and the organization. Help them turn that into an outcome that’s positive, clear and meaningful.

Look for hidden opportunities

Once you’ve hashed out the ultimate outcome, you can go back to the problem. But you don’t have to address it as something that needs to be solved.

Instead, now you can frame it as

the thing that might help them reach the energizing outcome. Perhaps it offers an opportunity to practice a new behavior. Or maybe it points to a larger (or even smaller) underlying issue that needs attention – and that attention will dissolve issues.

Create a ‘Level-10 Plan’

With a “problem” in the rear view and sights set on the solution, you can work together on a plan of action to reach it.

You might set up steps, goals and regular check-ins that gradually move the employee toward the goal.

And you can gain commitment to the plan by asking, “On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that you’ll execute the plan successfully?”

The answer will likely be a resounding “10” because the employee helped create the plan and imagine the future. And that’s where you get the term “Level-10 Plan.”

While it’s important for the employees to successfully change or adapt, it’s also critical they follow through on the plan, assess the results and continually move forward.

Source: “Feedback Isn’t Enough to Help Your Employees Grow,” by Peter Bregman and Howie Jacobson, Harvard Business Review, tinyurl.com/feedback517

TECH CORNER

Tech tips so easy you won’t believe you didn’t know them

Some technology is intimidating.

And some of it is so easy, you want to kick yourself for not knowing how to handle it.

Never too late to learn

These tips fall into that category – and you’ll be glad you know them now:

- Save any Google image: Hit *Alt* and click on the image to automatically save it to your computer.
- Download a YouTube video: Add “ss” to the URL between “www.” and “YouTube” to

downloaded it right away.

- Copy text from Mozilla Firefox and prevent it from formatting: Hit *Ctrl+shift+v* to paste.
- Avoid virus-ridden PDFs. If you see “.exe” in the end, delete it immediately.
- To regain a Word file you closed without saving, type “.asd” in the search box under “My PC.”
- Make copy all caps. Highlight all the selected words and press *shift+F3* to make lowercase into uppercase.

Source: Medium, tinyurl.com/techtips517

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

■ Better work conversations with just 2 words

You know that awkward moment when an employee or colleague tells you something important and you don’t know how to respond?

Then you stammer for the right words of encouragement, consolation, correction, insight, etc. You can improve the quality of conversations – and make the awkward moments disappear – with two little words: “Say more.”

Those two words will help you have rich conversations, encourage deep thinking, and support profound insights, progress and development, according to Julie Winkle Giulioni, author of *Promotions Are So Yesterday: Redefine Career Development – Help Employees Thrive*.

Source: tinyurl.com/2words517

■ Set better goals to increase odds you’ll hit them

When employees don’t understand goals and priorities, they won’t be engaged in the work.

Employees who are fully aware of clear goals and expectations are almost three times more likely to be engaged than those who aren’t, according to research from Quantum.

To set better goals:

- **Work with employees** to set goals so they can determine feasibility, bottlenecks and deadlines
- **Align employees’ professional goals to organizational goals** so they have personal interest in overall success
- **Establish clear expectations** around processes, time lines, feedback, rewards for execution and consequences for fails, and
- **Require regular goal monitoring**, progress reports and coaching, as needed.

Source: HRMorning.com, tinyurl.com/engage515

Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

1 Better hiring ends with these questions

Like most companies, we wanted to get hiring right every time.

We hoped to hire people who would work well in our culture, and we hoped they'd feel the same and flourish in their new jobs.

It didn't always happen, though. So we changed our approach to hiring.

Look for fit after skills

When we liked candidates early in the process, we invited them to a few interviews and asked them to do skills assessment tests. Some tests were general. Others were specific-job-related.

If they did well, and everything seemed to be meshing, we'd check on culture fit with these questions:

- What's one thing you believe most people would disagree with you on?
- When did you put yourself in someone else's shoes to help you accomplish a task or resolve an issue?
- If I talked to your last boss, what would they say they wish they knew about you at the beginning of your working relationship that they didn't know until six months later?

(Taylor Smith, CEO and Co-founder, Blueboard, San Francisco)

2 How I learned more about DEI

I'll be the first to admit, I didn't understand when I saw a client's email signature that included "she/her." Not long after, a contractor told me about her impending transition and change of pronouns.

Things were changing in workplaces – and across society – and I wanted to learn so I could continue to encourage Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in our workplace.

Learn more

Here's how I did it. I followed a diverse group of people on social media to increase the diversity in my feed. I also made a point to spend more time with new people who were outside of my normal crowd.

I also started to ask colleagues what names and pronouns they preferred, and I included my pronouns in my signatures.

I still have more to learn – and I welcome the opportunities.

(Becky Robinson, Founder and CEO, Weaving Influence, shared this success on SmartBrief, Lambertville, MI)

3 How to fix our diluted culture

In a remote or hybrid work environment, many company cultures have become diluted. Ours was headed that way.

Since we worked in a remote-first environment, we noticed employees feeling dissociated from our mission and values.

To fix that, we ramped up culture initiatives with a regular cadence of messages, including reminders of our values, where they came from and why they're important.

Top it with collaboration

We also improved our culture of collaboration, creating opportunities for employees to work across job functions and with different groups.

We equipped employees with several apps so they could seamlessly communicate across the organization. It created a sense of togetherness and helped people feel more connected to our mission and values.

(Ken Schnee, General Manager, Sterling's Technology, Media, Entertainment and Hospitality Group, New York)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

■ Can we ban unvaccinated staff from social events?

Question: We have outside-of-work events throughout the year for team building. Can we stop unvaccinated employees from attending?

Answer: You can have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement to attend, but you might want to offer accommodations, says employment law attorney Nicholas McKinney of Littler Mendelson PC.

Missed opportunities

You don't want to ban unvaccinated employees because those events are work-adjacent. Important conversations and team-building happen there. People who are banned could miss those opportunities and later claim discrimination.

Better ideas: Offer the option to wear masks, or ask unvaccinated employees to provide a negative test right before the event. Maybe you can host a virtual event or make the party outdoors, McKinney suggests.

Source: tinyurl.com/party517

LIGHTER SIDE

■ Things you never thought you'd see on a cover letter

In The Great Resignation, you've probably read lots of interesting cover letters and résumés. So has Coburg Bank, and they've shared these:

- *Please disregard the attached résumé; it's totally outdated.*
- *I have guts, drive, ambition and heart, which is probably more than a lot of the drones that you have working for you.*
- *I have a lot of integrity so I promise not to steal office supplies and take them home.*
- *I would be prepared to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss what I can do to your company.*
- *Why should you employ me? I'll bring doughnuts on Friday.*

COMMUNICATION NEWS

What's important to employees in 2022

To engage and retain employees this year, double down on their experience.

The keys: communication, flexibility, relationships and culture, according to the Conference Board's study, "Reshaping Employee Experience and Organizational Culture: Lessons From the Tumultuous Events of 2020 and 2021."

We're focusing on each in this space over four issues.

Up second: Flexibility

Find out what employees want in their work experience – and get flexible to make it happen. Ask these questions to dig down:

- On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your well-being right now? What do you think influences that score?
 - How do you feel about your workload at the moment? Tell me more.
 - What can be done to improve things when it comes to your well-being at work? How can I help?
 - What worries you the most with work?
 - When are you at your best at work? What are you doing?
 - Compared to when you started in this role, how would you say your mental health is?
- Source: tinyurl.com/wants517

Words matter most in critical situation

When an individual employee, a team or the whole company faces a crisis, what's most important – what you say or what you do?

Words matter most, according to research by the University of Georgia Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Researchers looked at how people reacted when company leaders explained and addressed a difficult situation.

"This research showed that words trump behavior," said David Clementson, co-author of the research and assistant professor of

public relations at Grady College. People "will lock into verbal sincerity and will not be as easily led astray by nonverbal impressions."

Be sincere

When you must address a difficult situation:

- **Be sincere.** Use clear, relevant language, and
- **Acknowledges the problem,** apologize for the damage and explain what's being done to avoid it in the future.

Source: tinyurl.com/words517

Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

No. The company settled the suit, agreeing to pay the job candidate \$60,000. It also agreed to implement an anti-discrimination policy, provide training and report future discrimination complaints to the EEOC.

The attorney representing the EEOC and the job candidate claimed he was a victim of gender identity discrimination because the hiring manager thought he was great ... until he met him and realized he was a transgender. Then the hiring manager made up an excuse – won't mix well with customers – as a reason to not hire him.

The company's attorney claimed that was the exact reason: The candidate didn't seem to be someone who could work with customers.

But eventually, the company settled because the evidence pointed to the manager's bias.

Use data, metrics for hiring

The company also agreed to adopt more objective criteria for hiring decisions. For instance, they'll rely on a scoring matrix for all candidates' job interviews.

That's good advice for all companies. Take bias out of interviews with data and metrics so every candidate is evaluated equally.

(Based on *EEOC v. Frizzell Furniture*. Dramatized for effect.)

Quotes

Winning doesn't always mean being first. Winning means you're doing better than you've done before.

– Bonnie Blair

Positive anything is better than negative nothing.

– Elbert Hubbard

The struggle you're in today is developing the strength you need tomorrow.

– Robert Tew

EDITOR
MICHELE MCGOVERN
mmcgovern@pbp.com

MANAGING EDITOR:
RENEE COCCHI
rcocchi@pbp.com

PRODUCTION EDITOR:
P.J. FRONZEO

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR:
CURT BROWN

Subscriptions: 800-220-5000

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional services. If legal or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought. — From a declaration of principles jointly adopted by a committee of the American Bar Association and a committee of publishers.

♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

Copyright © 2022 Progressive Business Publications. Please respect our copyright: Reproduction of this material is prohibited without prior permission. All rights reserved in all countries.

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors (ISSN 1523-4290), issue date February 1, 2022, Vol. 24 No. 517, is published semi-monthly, (24 times a year) by Progressive Business Publications, 384 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355; PHONE: 800-220-5000. FAX: 610-647-8089. Periodicals Postage Paid at West Chester, PA 19380. Postmaster: Send address changes to Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors, 384 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355.