

Creating High Performance Employees: No Time to Wait!

Part 2 of 2

By Jim Kimberly, Principal, Sapphire Consulting

We sometimes employ the “Wait and See” management strategy to see if an underperforming employee will improve magically on their own. We hope the struggling employee can turn things around and get more in tune with our business objectives. It can be frustrating not knowing what will happen and we ask ourselves:

- Is it worth waiting for?
- What can I do to help?
- Surely I have done nothing to contribute to the poor performance, right?

Constructive Feedback is the Answer

Coaching the employee by giving constructive feedback is the only way to see if things will work out. If we follow these simple but often hard to implement rules we can be an active participant with our team members in enhancing their performance:

Establish a positive relationship –show appreciation, get to know them personally, understand what motivates them, this step is critical for you to make deposits into the “trust” bank of employee goodwill. This becomes the foundational support on which critical feedback stands.

Observe behavior – Be prepared to notice specific examples of employee behaviors (effective and not so effective) in the workplace. Your “radar” needs to be up!

Prepare before giving feedback – Take a few minutes to think through what you want to say and how you will say it. A few minutes here may help you begin with the right words and not get the employee on the defensive.

State your intention to help – If your intentions are to criticize, don’t bother with the feedback because the employee won’t hear it.

Share your perceptions of behaviors and their organizational impact – Describe your views and how it affects you, customers and co-workers.

Ask questions and create dialogue - Adopt an attitude of “inquiry” vs. giving a “soliloquy” and you might learn more about the situation. Don’t assume your view is the gospel - have a dialogue about the situation.

Solicit suggestions for improvement before stating your ideas – What employees can figure out on the own gets implemented faster and with more buy-in.

Agree on the action plan – Who will do what by when? Write it down in your pocket size notepad for reference later if needed.

Offer support –Be prepared to offer and deliver support when needed.

Follow up – This step is often forgotten because we lose track of the action plan. Consult your notes and set up regular weekly check-in times.

A wait and see attitude may work but it will take more time and take a more difficult path. Supporting high performance in your employees demand your dialogue and feedback so start planning those performance discussions today!

Jim Kimberly is the founder of Sapphire Consulting, an organizational growth and executive development consulting firm serving clients throughout New England. Jim can be reached at jim@consultsapphire.com or (603) 889-1099. Please visit us at www.consultsapphire.com.