FEED ME!!

Focus: Improve managerial skills, Motivation, Communication

Time: 15-20 minutes

Objectives:

1. Recognize the importance of positive feedback

Materials needed:

- Large bowl
- Bag of candies for each pair of individuals participating
- Writing materials (paper/pencils) for each participant

Introduction:

Complaints or negative feedback seem to outnumber compliments. In the United States it is almost a cultural expectation to analyze and evaluate products and experiences, and then complain to get better service. In the workplace giving and receiving positive feedback can be very powerful. “You get what you reward,” says Bob Nelson, author of 1001 Ways to Reward Employees. Nelson maintains that positive feedback can be a very motivating for many employees. When providing positive feedback, use “I” statements:

- I saw what you did (cite a specific action taken by employee) and felt (state specifically how this action made you feel or how it contributed to department effectiveness/productivity).
- I appreciate (state a specific example of employee behavior/performance/contribution).
- It is important when (provide a description of employee's actions or behavior) because it helps (describe how the behavior contributes to department effectiveness).

Providing immediate recognition to the individual employee is important as it validates them as members of a team; and employees also want their contributions to be acknowledged in front of their peers.

Directions:

1. Divide the group into pairs. Have each pair face each other.
2. Identify one person in the pair as the “Listener” and the other person as the “Speaker”. The Speaker holds the bowl, the Listener holds the bag of candy.
3. Ask the Listeners to write down an alphabet letter of their choice and then to conceal that letter. The Speaker’s job is to guess that letter. He or she can get clues about the letter by saying any three-word phrase aloud.

4. The Speaker begins the exchange by saying a three-word phrase. If the three-word phrase is contains the letter of the alphabet, the Listener tosses or places a piece of candy in the Speaker’s bowl; and the Speaker may then guess a letter of the alphabet.

5. If the phrase did not contain the letter of the alphabet, the Listener does not put any candy in the bowl and the Speaker cannot guess a letter, but must say another three-word phrase aloud.

6. The Speaker and Listener continue with steps 4 and 5 until the Speaker guesses the correct letter. If time permits, allow the Speaker and Listener to switch roles and play the game again.

7. Lead a discussion utilizing the questions listed below.

Discussion Questions:

1. How long did it take for the Speaker to guess the letter(s)?
2. What impact did the positive feedback (candy) have on your performance?
3. What impact did the positive feedback have on your thinking? How did it affect the Speaker’s phrases?
4. Why is positive feedback important for performance?
5. How can you increase your use of positive feedback in the workplace? In your personal life?