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Creating Passion In The Workplace.

This newsletter is dedicated to Feedback: *a Key Driver of Passion at Work*

Why Managers Avoid It & Why Employees Hate Receiving It!

Part One: Where Would We Be Without Feedback?

- What if you discovered that a "favourite" Friday night activity you'd been organizing was not very popular with your family?

- Or, what if your best friend shared that your "helpfulness" and "problem-solving" often created complications that resulted in additional time and effort?

- Or, what if you thought you were doing a good job only to find out that your name was on the list for possible "head count" reductions?

We need feedback to help us make the right decisions, to take effective actions, and to assess our progress. Without feedback, it would be impossible to tell if we were on track, if our relationships were healthy, and if we were achieving our desired outcomes.

Why Avoid It?

But why is it so hard to give it and to receive it?? Basically, it's because managers don't want to feel any emotional discomfort. We often don't give feedback because we don't want to hurt people's feelings or create tension in a relationship or we don't want someone to blow up at us. Basically, we fear that something bad or really uncomfortable might happen!

On the other hand, employees aren't keen to expose weaknesses. Who wants to feel vulnerable? Or, they fear that the manager or organization will hold a mistake against them; so, better to try to cover it up. Or, past experience has shown that feedback often becomes personal with unfair conclusions being drawn; so, feedback is best avoided. Again, bad stuff might happen!

The truth is: someone might get upset; we might get upset! But, should that stop us? I want to invite you to think about feedback differently. Let's consider the examples at the beginning of this article.

Why would I want to spend my time and effort organizing an activity that people weren't really enjoying? The fact is: I wouldn't! I'd rather know so I can find something else that all would find fun. I would want my choices to be enjoyed and appreciated; otherwise, it's time to move on to another option!

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And, if I discovered that my helpfulness and problem-solving were making things more difficult for a friend, I'd much rather invest my time and energy where it could truly make a difference. Sure it might be embarrassing to learn these things; but, if I don't know, I can't make a decision that's right for me and for others involved.

Work is no different. Most of us begin a career or a job wanting to succeed. We work hard to achieve the outcomes expected of us. We bring our minds and hearts to our work but what sustains us? For most of us, it's knowing that what we do matters to someone. How do we figure this out? Usually it's from feedback from clients, or colleagues or managers.

When we receive feedback, we know we are on track and adding value to our organization. In the absence of feedback, people don't really know how they are being assessed and perceived, or, if they are achieving the results that matter most to an organization. Feedback is what keeps us grounded and keeps us orientated toward success. Without it, we're floating in space without being able to set a clear direction for ourselves or our teams.

Check out part two for tips and techniques.

Part Two: Tips for Managers and Employees

Employees: Don't Just Get Feedback on Your Output!

I recently met a woman who was achieving all her objectives; but, her manner was so abrasive the organization was considering letting her go because of the tension she was creating within the team. She thought she was untouchable because she outperformed her colleagues on key tasks. In some organizations this might be true; however, more and more someone's "fit" is assessed as much as their output.

Get feedback on three key things

1. The **product** of your time and effort. (E.g. The quality, timeliness, and value of your work.)
2. Your **approach** to getting the work done. (E.g. How you interact with others. The way you organize your tasks.)
3. The **perception** others have of you. (E.g. Do people see you as a good fit? Do you walk the talk?)

Managers: Be Disciplined About Your Approach

- **Stick to observable facts. *Don't draw conclusions or interpret things.*** "Your report was late by two days." "When you said XYZ in our meeting today, you showed disrespect to your colleague." "The format of your report was complex and made extracting data very difficult for others."

- **Always know the performance standard before you give feedback.** *Don't get blind-sided by not being able to explain yourself properly!* If the feedback is not positive, you need to be able to say what would have satisfied requirements. "We keep our time commitments." "We follow the corporate values during our team interactions." "We must document our client meetings in such a way that someone else could call the client on your behalf and continue the conversation where you left off."

- **Deal with the small stuff!** *Don't let things go that have had a negative impact.* It's not fair to the other person. They will be unaware of the "strike" against them and will assume all is fine. Small things will add up and lead to actions that will surprise people and seem severe. Make sure people are grounded in reality on a daily and weekly basis. It's the honourable thing to do!

- **Focus on the future.** *Don't belabor a point once the feedback is accepted.* Move on to an action plan. Believe in people and know that they can succeed. Be inspiring by asserting the meaning in the change and the difference it will make for them and others.