

Teaching Managers How to Give Critical Feedback to Staff - By Ken Burgin

2008-02-18

Most managers and supervisors would rather run a mile... But senior management are tired of managers who don't handle simple discipline. And because a supervisor won't deal with incompetence, you may lose yet another good worker who says 'enough!' The ability to give honest, critical feedback is a key skill for good leaders.

How to make giving criticism less difficult and more effective:

Don't start with an apology. When it's time for the 'big talk', don't hide your nerves by saying sorry. If you were really sorry, you wouldn't be having the conversation! The offender usually knows there's a problem, and a wishy-washy start will lose you respect.

Create a productive conversation. Ask the staff member to listen, then when they speak, make sure you really listen. Take turns speaking and listening with arms unfolded, concentration, and privacy. It may not come easily...and silences are OK.

It's what they did, not who they are. Better to say 'you used the wrong margarita recipe, which caused us to lose \$400 worth of product' than say 'you're a stupid idiot and a loser - don't you ever do anything right?' But we know which expression is the most commonly used! The first one shows you're in control, and the second statement shows that both people have a problem.

Make use of Checklists: compare performance against a Job Description, the Code of Conduct, an operating procedure, logbook records, the POS printout or a profit statement. Shades of grey become black and white when there are words and numbers describing the issue.

Be specific about what needs to change. Telling me to 'lose the bad attitude' is just a rant. Explaining I need to greet fellow workers on arrival, smile at customers even when it hurts and be 5 minutes early every shift gives me a clear roadmap of how to make the team and the boss happy.

What's not done is also important. Sometimes the 'sins of omission' (things that aren't done) are harder to criticise than things done badly. A safety induction is forgotten and there's an injury. A salary review was repeatedly delayed and the worker is poached by a competitor. Dinner service is fast and efficient but the atmosphere is unfriendly.

Separate praise from criticism. When praise comes first, everyone's waiting for a giant BUT, and then they forget any good points that have been made. Offer positive feedback after the tough stuff has been dealt with. Sometimes the withdrawal of praise may be a strong rebuke: a teacher colleague says it's one of her most effective weapons. Her young students receive a lot of praise, and if the tap's turned off, they feel it acutely. If your work culture revolves around criticism, staff will be deaf to most of what you say and concentrate on survival. For some managers, giving praise is quite difficult.

The conversation may sound like parents and children. You know many of the responses: 'it's not fair', false promises, lies, blaming, denial, stony faces and tears. Some nervous managers even use a version of 'I'll tell your father when he gets home'! When you raise the conversation to 'adult-with-adult', there's the possibility of breakthrough and a fresh start. At school, young people are taught about their rights, and their outspokenness may surprise you - it's not an attack, just how it is now.

They may think they are doing it right. Or that there way is better - sometimes the misconduct or errors is quite logical to the offender - check where they're coming from.

Have the conversation in private. Never in front of others, or you can expect a walk-out or a no-show at the next shift. Rarely useful.

Some issues will need senior management. Cases of harassment, suspicion about stealing and questions of honesty need guidance and action from the top. These ones can't be delegated.

Practice handling tough situations: a young supervisor giving feedback to an older worker, a female manager disciplining a male worker, a non-native speaker correcting a local, or a new manager dealing with staff who've been around for years. Practice and rehearse the right responses with the managers - chances are you've heard every excuse and justification.

As senior management, your responsibility is to ensure managers have the confidence and skills to give criticism promptly, fairly and accurately. It's character-forming for everyone!

Profitable Hospitality offers management and cost-control systems (Manuals & CD-ROMs) for restaurants, cafes, hotels, bars and clubs. The systems are based on the extensive consulting and operating experience of CEO Ken Burgin, and enable busy owners and managers to set up complete operating and cost-control systems in minutes, not months. Profitable Hospitality also runs regular management training workshops in the areas of kitchen profit & efficiency, restaurant marketing and functions management. A free monthly e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the latest industry management issues. www.profitablehospitality.com.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article31235.html>

© 1998 - 2008 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

Distribute your news on our Network

See what all the buzz is about at:

http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html