

Feedback and Empowerment: How to Get Results

Description

I recently had the pleasure of spending time with a group of nurses who are in leadership positions at Mercy HealthË?Springfield Regional Medical Center in Springfield, Ohio. My style is to ask the person in charge of such an event/meeting to poll the attendees and ask them what they want to leave with. This way it is the attendeesâ?? agenda, not mine. The group provided several items. Two of the takeaways they wanted were â??How does a leader have those they lead be receptive to feedback?â?• and â??How can one get those they lead to be empowered?â?•

Both topics can be complex. If you have read my work over these many years, you know my goal is taking complexity to doable actions. My experience is that leaders know the *why* and the *what*; a key ingredient for great performance is the *how.*

Digging a bit deeper on the feedback question, the main concern was around giving feedback that may not be positive, and also addressing the perception that the feedback has not been followed up on. To summarize the discussion, I recommended the following: As a leader, meet one-on-one with those you lead and/or provide services to. In the room in Springfield were nurse managers who oversee patient care and leaders whose supervisory area provides services to patient care units.

In both cases, start with a foundation of â??the person wants to do well.â?• So, an example is, â??Jodi, I know you want to do well, and that is appreciated. A key part of my role is to invest in your development. To do so, I want to make sure I know the best way to provide feedback. Much of the feedback will be positive; there may be times when the feedback will involve coaching. How best would you like me to provide feedback to you?â?• The goal of the feedback is to help the person perform better. Thus, when that time comes to provide less-than-positive feedback, start with, â??Jodi, I appreciate that you wanted feedback in private and face-to-face. My goal is to be helpful. The past two assignments you had were turned in late. This is not consistent with the standards and puts your coworkers in a tough spot. What can be done to be helpful, so this does not happen again? Are there barriers that are in your way? What skills would you like help in?â?• This is a non-threatening way to open the conversation. It is non-judgmental and will lead to the personâ??s taking more responsibility for their performance.

Now, what about the person you are providing support for who is not acting on what is recommended? Ask how the person wants feedback. In this case, seeing that what has been recommended is not being implemented, start with a statement and question. â??Larry, last month when we met, you were going to adjust the process. I noticed it was not done and the results remain flat. I know you do not want the results to stay what they are. What can I do to help you implement the change?â?•

Also discuss whether new skills are skills needed and point out resources. Usually there are others in the organization who are more successful. Share what you are noticing. The key is to take away excuses and move to action. It starts with empathy and transitions to showing ownership and action. Leadership is an art and a science. These tips work in personal relationships also.

Now for the other question, â??How do I empower those I lead?â?• The key is to help those individuals acquire the needed skills. What skills does the person need to be able to act without directions? Set the stage. Often people are fearful of getting in trouble, so they feel a safe way is to not take action. Share with the staff that you want them to be comfortable acting. Discuss with the individuals what information and skills they feel they need to move forward on their own. Cover what actions they should not take on their own. These discussions will improve empowerment and uncover reasons why action may not be being taken. It can be a process issue or one of equipment needs and/or information. It can be that people need to get permission to move forward.

Next, recognize those individuals and times when someone empowered themselves to act. Be specific, for this shows others they too can act. Examples of people acting, then being recognized for it, creates ownership in the workplace.

In summary, to create a culture of empowerment, the foundation is investing in staff development. Empowerment then is taken as the person feels they can act.

I so appreciate the time the nursing leaders spent with me. Listening to their passion and desire to provide great patient care is replenishing.

A frequent question I receive is â??What is the one tip you would provide?â?• It is to be kind to yourself. Do not be so hard on yourself. I have never seen an organization list *forgiveness* as one of their values. Yet, it is such a key action in lifeâ??s journey.

My best.

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