BEST PRACTICES

Communication
When we send and receive a message, a lot can happen. It’s like the old game of telephone. If everyone stands in a circle and a message is whispered into the ear of the first person, the message rarely comes out the same after being repeated over and over.

Why is this?
• Because the filters between the sender and receiver change the message. Filters can include the individual’s life experiences, culture as well as verbal or non-verbal cues. Each type of filter can change the way a message is received and interpreted.
  o In the example below, was the sender angry (!) or just frustrated? Do they come from an environment where people yell to make a point, not because they are angry? Did they have their hands on their hips? Were they speaking loudly?
  o Was the receiver someone who knows that the sender is just “a yeller” or is this someone they have not worked with and now they are offended? Do they come from a very quiet family who doesn’t speak directly or confront? If so, is the Sender confronting them? In public?

The issues of how we translate what is being said is compounded by understanding the speed that we speak versus process speech.

- Speaking – We can speak 100-150 words per minute
- Listening – Can process over 400 words per minutes

As a BEST PRACTICE, both the Supervisor and Employee should consider the following Communication Tips:
• Spend more time listening than talking
• Do not finish a sentence, fill in the blank
• Do not plan your response or formulate a decision while the other person is speaking
• Provide feedback but do not interrupt
• Ask open ended questions
• Consider working from notes or taking brief notes – helps to concentrate on what is being said
• Seek clarification and summarize
• Be respectful and authentic
Collaboration relates to the entire process and is an underpinning of how a supervisor can be successful in working with employees

- **Think Win-Win**
  - Foster a collaborative attitude
  - Encourage employees to work together to achieve an outcome rather than to “win”
- **Be Authentic**
  - “Say what you mean...mean what you say”
  - Create a safe environment for employees to share their intentions, observation and feelings with candor
- **Accountability**
  - Encourage people to take responsibility for their performance and working relationships
  - Foster solution orientation – ask the employee how THEY would change things to work better
- **Lessons Learned**
  - Any work challenge can create pressure – focus on solutions that mutually benefit everyone to meet a deadline or complete a project

Finally, **Coaching** is a Best Practice encouraged by the College as both a communicative & collaborative Improvement Tool. Coaching is helpful in that it can:

- Help shape or improve performance
- Increase employee understanding of expectations
- Provide an opportunity to discuss challenges, opportunities, project progress
- Only focuses on one or two aspects of performance
- Is NOT a performance appraisal, but a tool
- Is initiated for a REASON resulting in an ACTION PLAN

A sample Coaching Model is below. In this model the Supervisor should schedule a meeting, preparing the employee by stating the meeting purpose and preparing him/herself by gathering any notes, work samples, etc. During the meeting the Supervise starts by stating the purpose and what he/she has observed. Using the BEST PRACTICES of communication the Supervisor then asks for input, listens without interruption and asks open ended questions. As the Supervisor and Employee arrive at the decision that improvement needs to occur they should discuss an action plan. The BEST PRACTICE of collaboration should be applied to encourage the employee to provide solutions, summarize the key points and suggest a plan for monitoring the progress of the solution.

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<th>Before</th>
<th>Schedule and Prepare</th>
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| During                      | Agree on agenda – purpose of meeting  
|                             | Ask first – what’s going well? What steps for improvement?  
|                             | Share your thoughts – ask for employee reaction, offer information and assistance, summarize key strengths  
|                             | Agree on action plan – express confidence and ask employee to summarize next steps  
| Follow-Up                   | Observe  
|                             | Praise and guide  
|                             | Coach  

Using these Best Practices should create a work place environment of trust and high performing Supervisors and Employees. In this situation the next and final phase of Performance Management would be Evaluation. In other cases, additional steps are needed to help an employee improve their performance. This is called Progressive Discipline.