

## ACCOUNTABILITY TIP SHEET

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- Make it your goal to discuss issues of unsatisfactory performance on the day that they occur.
- If you don't have time to give feedback on the day that it occurs, make an appointment to discuss it with the individual as soon as possible.
- Ideally, you'll have first-hand information about unsatisfactory performance so that you can provide the person with your own observations. If you haven't observed it yourself, be careful about jumping to conclusions. Make sure you have all of the relevant information before intervening.
- Watch out for perfectionism. If you are someone who possesses standards that are unattainable, then nitpicking is likely to be demotivating. Before providing feedback, make sure that the mistake is worth addressing.
- It is more effective to provide corrective feedback as it happens than to save it all up to communicate in one sitting or during a performance review. This is important for three reasons. First, people are unlikely to remember specific instances that occurred in the distant past. Second, it can be difficult to listen to feedback, and so, providing a lot at once could be overwhelming. Third, by waiting to provide feedback you deprive the individual of the ability to correct it quickly.
- If the person has received a great deal of feedback from you about the issue without correcting it, then you will need to move into problem-solving mode:
  - Describe the ongoing trend, prior feedback you have given him or her, and the impact the feedback has on the work product and/or others.
  - Listen to the other person's explanation. While you shouldn't let him or her rationalize it away, do be open to his or her perspective in order to try to get at the root of the problem.
  - Restate your expectations and consequences going forward.
  - Discuss next steps and the specifics of how the person will address the issues.
- While the meeting will likely have some tension, try to focus on problem-solving. The more relaxed and open the other person can be, the better the odds of being able to address the problems.

- If the other person is unwilling to own the problem, restate your expectations. You might also encourage the individual to seek feedback from others (either in-person or via a 360) in order to provide additional confirmation of the problem.
- As you discuss the problem area, consider the possible causes of the problem. Some examples might include blind spots, skill gaps, developmental needs, a mismatch between the position and that person's abilities.
- Collaboratively come up with solutions to address the problem. Including the individual in determining the best approach to move forward to help to increase buy-in. Make sure that as the manager, you are included in the process (e.g. by providing ongoing feedback, making changes in the job, assisting with additional resources, etc.)
- Make sure you are both on the same page in terms of what improvement will look like. Make sure expectations are clear.
- Get the other person's verbal commitment.
- Express your hope and confidence in the person's ability to make the changes. For example, you could say, "I'm looking forward to seeing you handle this." or "I'm confident you can do this."