

# OUCH! THAT HURTS!

## 15 EVALUATION PAIN KILLERS

*"Most conversations are simply monologues delivered in the presence of a witness." — Margaret Miller*

*"Two monologues do not make a dialogue." — Jeff Daly*

**B**et most of you never had an evaluation you liked. Well, that's not true, I'm sure if it praised you as you deserved you liked it. *Let's say you never had an evaluation you could honestly say was deeply meaningful, greatly insightful, and guided you towards greater mastery in your work.* Ha, there I got you didn't I.

Can an evaluation do all that? Yes. The information on that is an entire book, but for this limited publication lets begin with how YOU can make an evaluation much more meaningful for others with some simple suggestions.

1) Begin with general conversation to connect — you doing most of the listening, but you also share something personal about your day, or some other

feeling that allows the person to relax.

- 2) Find out the employee's view of things first, ask "How are things going as far as work." Then listen. If the answer is 'Fine' probe deeper by saying, "Fine is so general, can you talk more about what is fine, and maybe what is not fine?" Then listen. People generally do not like silence and will fill in the blanks (including you) so be patient, let them think. Remember they are probably cautious about what they say so in order to build trust for the future — simply do not react to what they say in any way. Just nod, look directly at them in a softened way and listen. Don't ask questions or offer



input. Simply say, thank you when they are done. Then proceed to your next step.

- 3) Begin with praise. Give examples of work that you found to be good. Give examples of why you feel they are honest, loyal, responsible, good attitude. Give actual events or evidence, "You have not been late this last six months — and it's appreciated." Of course, you have been watchful for good things to say as part of your ongoing evaluation duties.
- 4) Focus on a small number of areas that are really important to the job. Expand on the good and list the areas you wish to talk about for improvement and ask a buy in to talk about these things. "These are the areas I would like to talk about today, is that OK with you?"
- 5) Be very clear about what the problem is. State the problem and the impact it has on the

agency or the team. Give a recent example of performance problem — play tapes, pull attendance records. Explain its impact. Give some examples of how it could have been handled differently. If you have seen the employee handle the same situation well, tell them that is what you would like to see. Do this with the utmost respect.

- 6) Be clear at the beginning of the meeting that you have concerns that need to be addressed.
- 7) After you have used evidence that improvement is needed ask the employees opinion about what you have discussed. Then listen without argument or discussion. If the employee is a difficult one and does not agree with your evidence you might take notice that this is another problem that should be explored deeper — the problem that even when faced with evidence, the employee does not recognize

poor work. Talk about the employees perception of the work and discuss without annoyance why there is a difference in perception about good work.

- 8) Make sure that the employee understands the behavior you need to see.
- 9) If there is agreement on problem areas, ask the employee how you can help the person improve his or her performance. Then listen.
- 10) Don't make promises or threats you can't keep. Be clear what the consequences will be if the problem continues. If this a problem that could result in dismissal, say so.
- 11) Be clear about how you would like things to be in the future rather than re-hashing the past. History will be explored ONE time, but an evaluation is a focus on the future. Once that event or history is explored it is

put to rest and not used in future evaluations or in the current discussion.

- 12) Once you have completed your list of 'to do' ask the employee,. "What are the issues or events you would like to discuss?" Then listen, take notes, and repeat back what you heard. Then say, "Are there particular actions or things you want to happen?"
- 13) Develop a small number of goals which will address the issues that are important to you and the employee.
- 14) Agree on how the goals will be monitored.
- 15) End the session with comments of good will and optimism or appreciation. Ask the employee how they are feeling about the evaluation. Then listen.☺

*Quiz: There is a two word sentence that has been repeated many times in this article, what is it?*

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