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Department of  
Environment and Conservation

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# EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (EPDP)

## SUPERVISORS / MANAGERS SESSION

2008



**Presented by**



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# EPDP WORKSHOP

## OUTCOMES:

As a result of this session supervisors / managers will:

- Define the manager's role in the EPDP process
- Practise key skills required to manage the EPDP process including giving and receiving feedback, active listening and facilitating effective EPDP meetings
- Understand the process involved in dealing with difficult performance situations

## AGENDA

1.15 Building the foundations for a successful EPDP process.

Facilitating the planning meeting

- Actively listening to your staff

Facilitating the review meetings

- Giving and receiving feedback

2.45 BREAK

Handling difficult performance situations

- Case studies

Questions / Individual Planning / Evaluation

4.30 Close.

## BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

It is critical that line managers connect the role of performance planning and review to other workplace processes and functions to maximise effectiveness and efficiency.

Time must be invested to ensure that all expectations and goals are communicated and understood, prior to the process beginning.

However this can be easily lost in the volume of functional tasks that can consume time for thinking, planning and communicating with the team.

Relationships are also critical to the quality of the EPDP process and once again if commitment to building strong workplace relationships has been overlooked, problems will begin to surface.

Therefore just as task and maintenance functions are critical to effective teams they also serve as points of analysis in dealing with the foundations of a healthy performance planning and review process.

### Reflection Opportunity

#### ***Task Role***

Consider your business plan and team goals. When and in what ways have you interacted with your staff in the last 6 months to communicate and ensure understanding of, and commitment to those goals and individual responsibilities?

#### ***Maintenance Role***

Consider the individuals in your team. What strategies have you employed to ensure you are building a relationship where you can comfortably and legitimately give and receive performance feedback?

## FACILITATING AN EFFECTIVE EPDP MEETING

### 1. ACTIVE LISTENING

Active Listening is the skill of demonstrating that you are really listening to another person and that you understand what they are saying. It is a basic facilitation skill.

Active Listening can be particularly useful in the following situations:

- INFORMATION - to get a clear picture.
- AFFIRMATION - affirming, acknowledging or exploring a problem.
- INFLAMMATION - responding to a complaint or an attack on you.

#### SKILLS OF ACTIVE LISTENING

- **Show the staff member you are interested in them and what they are saying** by using positive, attentive body language. This could include: good eye contact, nodding at appropriate moments, leaning forward and moving out from behind your desk. It could also mean that you find a suitable place to have the meeting, which is non-threatening and non-distracting.
- **Listen - don't talk.** Use open-ended questions that encourage the staff member to talk. Use minimal responses and sometimes even silence can be appropriate.
- **Find concrete ways of demonstrating to the staff member that you are actually listening and that you do understand.** Generally you can do this by paraphrasing back information and reflecting back feelings that you have picked up. Reflecting back implications of what has been said can be useful in furthering the staff member's thinking through of an issue. Summative reflections can also be helpful when listening actively.

### 2. BOOMERANG

Don't get caught in a ping-pong match having to defend your position. Throw it back.  
e.g. "So what experiences have you had that leads you to that conclusion?"

### 3. CHECK FOR AGREEMENT

e.g. "So that's what I'm proposing for the agenda of our meeting – are you happy with that? Do you want to add anything?"

### 4. ENCOURAGE AND STAY POSITIVE

### 5. ACKNOWLEDGE/LEGITIMIZE

e.g. "You've obviously found it difficult to come up with ideas that you think are worthwhile. It's hard isn't it?"

## PRACTICE OPPORTUNITY

### TASK:

Form into groups of three. Assign roles of Line Manager, Staff Member and Observer. You will then discuss the staff member's development needs for no longer than 5 minutes.

In order to prepare for this activity, each of you will need to refer back to the activity you completed before lunch related to your personal development or learning need.

#### **Line Manager / Supervisor role:**

You will ask the staff member to share their thoughts on what they have identified as a personal development or learning need and to listen actively to ensure you have a clear understanding of what the staff member has identified as relevant for themselves.

#### **Staff Member role:**

You will share with the line manager / supervisor role your thoughts on a relevant development or learning need for yourself, and the actions that may help its achievement.

#### **Observer role:**

You will need to observe the person who is the line manager for behaviours that are consistent with effective active listening. Please record specific things that you saw the line manager say or do. You will also need to record behaviours that were not as helpful in terms of their effectiveness as a listener.

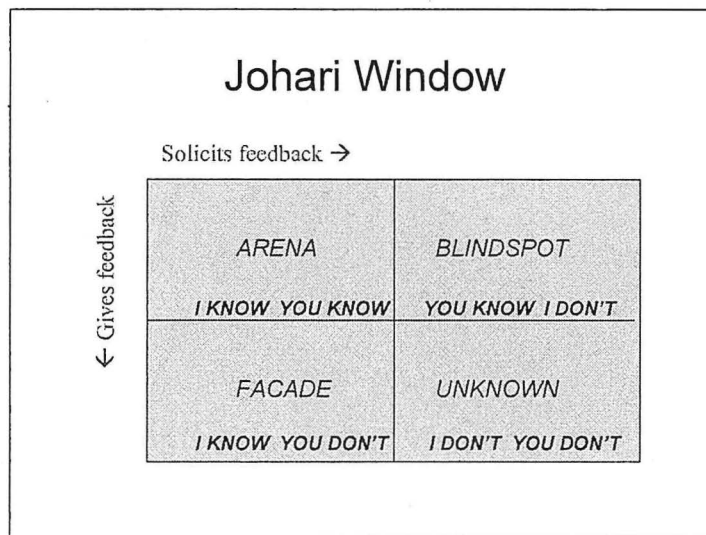
At the end of 5 minutes, please signal to the others that the practice is concluded and then lead the discussion in the following way (and in this order):

1. Ask the line manager to review his or her own listening performance by:
  - a) Describing what went well; and
  - b) Identifying one thing that could be done differently.
2. Give your feedback on what you observed was done well (use your notes in order to be specific).
3. Make one suggestion that the listener may like to try.

**Please swap roles and repeat until all members of the group have had a chance to practise their listening behaviours.**

## GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

- Offer feedback on observed behaviour, not on perceived attitudes.
- Offer a description of what you saw and how you felt, rather than a judgement.
- Focus on behaviour that can be changed.
- Choose which aspects are most critical and limit yourself to those.
- Ask questions rather than make statements.
- Set the groundrules in advance.
- Give positive affirmation of appropriate current behaviour and then areas for change.
- Observe everyone's personal limit.
- Before offering feedback consider its value to the receiver.



Throughout the process, feedback is critical to both motivating and refining staff performance. Feedback needs to be specific, timely, meaningful and balanced to have a positive effect on performance.

### **Specific**

Feedback needs to focus on specific work based behaviours, not vague labels or personalities.

### **Timely**

Feedback needs to follow very closely to the behaviours to be reinforced or modified.

### **Balanced**

If the only feedback received by staff is negative, it will not only have a negative effect on performance, but impact negatively on your credibility and influence as the team leader. Feedback needs to highlight firstly the positive contributions that are influencing the Team Business Plans and if necessary followed by constructive feedback that outlines behaviours that might improve performance.

## WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF FEEDBACK?

When giving feedback we need to consider its role in performance change and the level of impact it needs to have. Too often it is easy to give a vague generalised piece of feedback that while generating an impact on *general motivation* may not provide the depth to impact on *skill*.



Feedback can be categorised into four broad areas and they have varying impact on motivation and skill development.

### **Generalised Positive**

Applies to the person and is not directed at any particular behaviour.

It is necessary for self esteem, self confidence, creativity and risk taking. It has a fairly high level of impact in terms of motivation, but because it is not specific, does not impact on skill.

(Motivation impact: +100)

### **Specific Positive**

Applies to a direct task or action the person has done and is essential when supporting the development of new skills and behaviours. It impacts on both motivation and skill development.

(Motivation impact: +50)

### **Specific Negative**

Negative feedback that clearly points out specific aspects of poor performance. It can impact on shaping skill development, but is clearly demotivating.

(Motivation impact: - 200)

### **Generalised Negative**

Statements like "You're impossible to work with", "Your attitude is appalling", apply to the whole person and as such have a huge impact on performance. It can scare individuals into short term improvement or compliance, but tends to cause demoralisation and reduced productivity.

(Motivation impact: - 1000)

Carlopio and Andrewartha 1997



## SAMPLES OF LEVELS OF FEEDBACK

<b>Generalised Positive</b>	Your teamwork is sensational – I would be pleased to have you on my team anytime.
<b>Specific Positive</b>	Your work in supporting Kim coming into the team, building her professional knowledge and her confidence is really effective.
<b>Specific Negative</b>	When you ignore Kim's requests for assistance it gets in the way of her being able to contribute effectively to the team. As her appointed buddy this is a key part of your role.
<b>Generalised Negative</b>	You are the most selfish team member we have ever had.

### TASK:

Consider an employee that you currently supervise or manage. Think of an aspect of their work on which you could provide feedback.

- Working with your partner design
  - A generalised positive
  - A specific positive
  - A specific negative
- Practise giving that feedback to your partner

#### *A generalised positive*

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#### *A specific positive*

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#### *A specific negative*

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## HANDLING THE DIFFICULT SITUATION

While there may be different types of difficult situations emerge, the following may be some general strategies that could be useful.

- Try to work hard at building up a good relationship with the staff member over time. Try to always communicate with them about what is going on that may impact on them. Treat them with respect.
- When there is a problem – first listen, listen, listen. Try to see things from the other person's perspective and acknowledge their point of view. This does not mean that you have to agree with their position.
- State problems you see from your perspective. Being assertive means always talking from the "I" perspective.
- When you are clear about where they are "coming from" and they are clear about where you are "coming from" then try to create a climate where you work collaboratively to an agreed position. Part of principled negotiation means that some things may not be negotiable.
- Stay calm and stay focussed on the problem – don't attack the person and don't retaliate against attacks on you.

## POOR PERFORMANCE

Deal with any performance issues as they arise, rather than allowing things to "drift". In an EPDP meeting, if there are specific performance issues, then they need to be recorded and addressed.

Managers should not wait until the next scheduled EPDP meeting before raising a performance issue with a staff member. Every effort should be made to facilitate improvement of a staff member's performance at an early stage, before implementing a formal sub-standard performance process.

If performance issues have not been raised with a staff member and formally documented, then staff members have the right to assume that there is no issue of concern.

People Services Branch can provide separate information on how to implement a formal sub-standard process if it is required.

## PERFORMANCE PROBLEM SOLVING CASE STUDIES

**What's the performance problem?**

**What is the desired outcome?** (What will it look like if performance has improved? What will the person actually be doing / saying?)

**What are some probable causes?** (Are your expectations clear? Do they have the required competence? Do they have the appropriate resources? Are they committed? Are there any other constraints?)

**What can be done to resolve it?**

## PERFORMANCE PROBLEM SOLVING – CASE STUDIES

### SCENARIO 1

A staff member is regularly turning up to work late. While at work, he is not a poor performer but he misses important meetings and has to be told what tasks have to be performed as an individual rather than at the team meeting, which wastes valuable time for the supervisor.

The supervisor has approached you for support. What are you going to do?

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### SCENARIO 2

A staff member does not contribute to the team of which she is part. She has indicated to you as the supervisor that she works better when she is left alone and that other members of her team just “slow her down”. The other team members have complained that she does not contribute and that information and work that they are relying on from her is never received on time.

As the supervisor – what are you going to do?

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### SCENARIO 3

A staff member is very friendly and liked by everyone but just does not complete the tasks that have been assigned to him. He constantly finds excuses for why the work is not completed and is always very apologetic when confronted by his colleagues and clients. The lack of achievement has had some negative consequences for his section and the department generally.

As the manager – what are you going to do?

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## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

What do I need to do about EDPD when I leave this workshop?

When will it be done?

How will I and others know I have achieved the outcome I am seeking?