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Session 80TS
Managing Difficult Employees

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Summary: Employees come in all shapes and sizes. They can be superstars, worker bees, or beginners. Managers must take responsibility to motivate and challenge each and every employee that reports to them. But how does one increase the productivity of the difficult employee?

The instructor focuses on increasing the awareness of managers to motivate, stimulate, and challenge their difficult employees. A variety of techniques and tools that assist managers to increase productivity and maximize performance capacity are provided.

Mr. Nathaniel W. Boughton: Does everyone in here manage someone or want to get into management? What would you say are some of the things that cause you problems as a manager?

From the Floor: Motivation.

Mr. Boughton: Motivation, what else?

From the Floor: Managing friends.

Mr. Boughton: Managing people who were formerly your peers. That is very difficult. During the Industrial Revolution, 80% of employees who went into management went back down the line because of the difficulty that they had managing what used to be their peers. What else?

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From the Floor: Taking time for performance evaluation. You're supposed to know how they're doing.

Mr. Boughton: All right, so part of managing is about giving feedback. Anything else?

From the Floor: Teaching people who are new to the company or new to their specific task.

Mr. Boughton: So, identifying people who are in new jobs or in a new division and determining how to get them to start to understand the kinds of things that they're going to get involved in.

From the Floor: Getting them to do what you want them to do.

Mr. Boughton: Getting them to do what you want them to do. That is one of the key things. In our research for our latest book we found some of the reasons why employees don't do what they're asked, and you'll be shocked to know what they are.

What are we going to look at today? We'll look at task versus strategy, which gets to the problem of how we get employees, especially new ones, to really understand what it is that they need to accomplish and what it is that they want to be able to do and how they can be successful at doing it. We'll look at building relationships. That is probably the most fundamental component to being a successful manager. We'll look at performance coaching. In my first book, *Stop Managing Start Coaching*, we created a new model for a manager, a model which differs from the old school model. And what do I mean by old school? What's the old school of management? Let me ask it a different way. How many of you have had a manager that you don't want to be like? What did they do?

From the Floor: They didn't manage. They weren't a people person.

Mr. Boughton: They weren't a people person.

From the Floor: They didn't know how to manage.

Mr. Boughton: So they were a technical person without interpersonal skills. What else?

From the Floor: Some elements of a dictatorship.

Mr. Boughton: Dictatorship.

From the Floor: Or managers who say, "Just do it."

Mr. Boughton: Very autocratic, "just do it." Don't come talk to me about the problems; just give me the result. What else? When you think of a coach, what

pops into your head? When you think of the term "coach," what do you think about?

From the Floor: Leader, trainer.

Mr. Boughton: Leader, trainer. What else?

From the Floor: Motivator.

Mr. Boughton: Motivator.

From the Floor: Somebody called the team player. Somebody who helps you.

Mr. Boughton: Somebody who wants you to be successful because they know that their success is dependent on your success. The old management philosophy is: "Just do it; get it done. I don't care because these are the results I need." Consider that versus a coaching philosophy where it's collaborative and we start to think about things differently. We can energize our workforce and get them to embrace the strategy. That's where the success lies.

We'll spend a good deal of time talking about feedback because, especially when you're dealing with difficult employees, success is dependent upon how we give feedback. How do we communicate? How do we talk to one another? The managers who you just described are the kinds of people who, when you walk into their office, make you feel nervous. You walk in thinking, "Oh gosh, I know something's going to happen; I know he's going to say something bad to me." Do you ever get the phone call "Could you please come to my office?" Can you hear it? It's "Oh, no" because that's how we feel. Consider that call from a coach who says, "Hey, come on down. I have a couple of ideas I want to bounce off of you." That's a big, big difference. That's where we need you to go.

Then we'll talk about next steps. What are the kinds of things that you need to do to be more successful as a manager and to manage those people who are difficult? Why are employees difficult? Jobs don't link to strategy. How many of your employees have job responsibilities? Everybody, right? You have job responsibilities too. When was the last time those were looked at? Ten years ago? Maybe longer? Has anything changed? Has your job changed? Has the actuarial industry changed? Yet, the job responsibilities are the same as they were ten years ago. Their jobs are different, so when they look at that piece of paper and look at what they're supposed to do, they're confused. They don't understand what their job is. So there's failure, if jobs don't link up to strategy. Do you ever see that in your workplace? What do you like to do in your job?

From the Floor: What I would look at is things that make a difference. Not day-to-day, routine things, but something that is visible.

Mr. Boughton: OK, what else?

From the Floor: Talking to clients.

Mr. Boughton: Talking to clients. A lot of times, especially in lower levels in an organization, employees don't understand exactly what it is they're supposed to do. They want to focus on things that they like to do or that are the easiest to do because they don't understand the strategy.

The design of your jobs may be poor. They may not meet the needs of the employees and the organization. Employees may not understand their job. They know that they're supposed to take tests. They know what it means to be an actuary. But, if they still don't understand specifically what their job is and how that fits into the big picture, there is difficulty.

Employees are often fearful of repercussions, especially from that manager who is going to yell at them or reprimand them for asking a question or taking a risk. Those are the kinds of things that you don't want to see happen in your organization. What's the significance of not having trust in your organization?

From the Floor: You don't get honest responses.

Mr. Boughton: So what kind of responses do you get?

From the Floor: Safe responses.

Mr. Boughton: The response that's going to keep them safe. You're also going to get the response that they think you want to hear. If that number is supposed to come in at X and they know it's looking more like it's going to be Y, where is it going to come in at? It's going to come in at X. It's important that we understand that right from the start that trust is a critical factor in managing difficult employees.

How many of you interact with clients? Several. How many of your employees interact with clients? Several. What most organizations don't understand is the simple fact that employees need to understand who their internal customers and their external customers are. What departments do you interact with in your organization?

From the Floor: Finance, marketing, and systems.

Mr. Boughton: Finance, marketing, systems, sales, and claims. You work with a variety of entities within your organization. Employees need to know the critical needs of those stakeholders. If we're going to be successful at selling this new plan, they need to be brought into it and accept it.

Let's discuss task versus strategy. What do employees tend to do? They focus on tasks, and when employees focus on tasks, they'll be mediocre at best. They will maintain the status quo and they'll have average performance. Is that where most of your employees fall into that category? Where do you need them to go? You

need them to get to strategy. You need them to be strategic thinkers. They need to understand what it is that you are trying to accomplish within your organization. If they do, the success is going to be drastic. There's going to be excellence, there's going to be ownership, and there's going to be high performance. That is where you want your organization to go.

From the Floor: You're suggesting that the onus is on the manager and that all difficult employees are difficult because they're not being managed properly.

Mr. Boughton: For the most part. If employees are difficult, it is partly the responsibility of you as managers, and I would agree to that. We all have employees who can be difficult to work with and those who we need to take a closer look at. The reality is you have some of the brightest people in this country working for you, yet they're only achieving mediocrity. I don't think that is good enough, and I don't think that you think that that is good enough. So how do we forge a relationship that is going to allow us to drive revenue and our organizational success, and ultimately guarantee your own personal success? Those are the things that are going to make a difference.

From the Floor: How do we define that word *difficult*? Difficult employees do not mean lower performers. Some employees are good performers, but are still difficult.

Mr. Boughton: Right. Let's define it for ourselves. What do you think a difficult employee is?

From the Floor: Someone who does not perform up to standards.

From the Floor: Someone who is not a team player.

Mr. Boughton: What else?

From the Floor: Someone you have to stay on top of all the time to make sure they're focusing.

Mr. Boughton: OK, someone you need to stay on top of so that they can stay focused. Were you going to add something?

From the Floor: Lack of motivation.

From the Floor: Too much motivation?

Mr. Boughton: Too much motivation. That can be very true too. You have some high achievers, no question about it. Sometimes they are overmotivated, sometimes undermotivated. You have to stay on top of them.

From the Floor: Some might have personal skill problems.

Mr. Boughton: Personal skill problems. Maybe they lack communications skills or interpersonal skills, or they're not a team player.

From the Floor: Sometimes employees are critical.

Mr. Boughton: What if they can do their job well, but they're extremely critical of the company? That kind of an individual, even though they may be able to deliver the results that you expect of them, can drain some of that powerful, positive energy of the organization. And those are some of the people who we'll take a look at too because they have the ability to be successful. It's just learning how to push the right button to get them to think about things in a positive way. They can impact things in a positive way. It gets back to their understanding the strategy. It's about ownership. A lot of times employees don't quite understand how they fit into the bigger picture and, because they don't understand how they fit into the bigger picture, they complain a lot. They can't see what other departments and other parts of the organization are doing. This is a very important point.

There are certain words that will trigger negative behavior, and I guarantee when you look at some of them you're going to question them.

Judging or criticizing. Think of that manager who was very negative. They tend to be very judging.

Praising or reassuring. How can that be a performance killer? I see you all looking at me with that questioning look.

From the Floor: Praising someone else.

Mr. Boughton: Praising someone else, how so?

From the Floor: Well, praise one and not the other person who you're not praising.

Mr. Boughton: Good point. He said that when you're praising one person, but not another, the other person may get resentful.

From the Floor: Patronizing.

Mr. Boughton: Absolutely. Right on the money. If it's patronizing, praise is a performance killer. If I go to William all the time and say, "Hey, William, good job. Good job, William. Yeah, I know you made that error on that last run and it cost us $500,000, but good job. Keep up the good work, you're doing fine," and he isn't, William's walking around thinking, "Wait a second, I made a mistake." I would hope that my manager would talk to me about it. But he or she doesn't. So when you're overbearing, it carries to the point where there is no weight. You know that every time that person says anything to you, you know he or she's going to say it's good.

Labeling or moralizing. Those are pretty significant. Avoiding or diverting. One of the things that we have a very, very difficult time doing, ladies and gentlemen, is giving negative feedback. Anybody enjoy it? No, we don't have any fun doing that. The reason we don't is because we have a feeling that we're going to hurt someone. It's a very uncomfortable process, but each of you has been given the responsibility to manage other people, which means you have to be held accountable to demanding excellence in dealing with others in an honest and responsive fashion.

Diagnosing and providing solutions. This is not the patronizing side of the equation but, rather, providing a lot of information to someone who is capable of making sense of it easily. You give the answer before they can solve it for themselves. That can be very frustrating. Has that ever happened to anyone in here? You're working on something and you know you're real close; you're excited about it, and somebody comes in and tells you what it should be. Or your boss comes in and tells you what it should be. You were just about there. Let me learn it.

Ordering or threatening. That's pretty self-explanatory. Questioning and logical argument. Sometimes we get emotional at work. And sometimes we don't need to hear a logical argument. Sometimes we need to let somebody simmer and think through and process it themselves instead of trying to get deep inside their head.

The performance killer that is most important for us to eliminate from our vocabulary is the word *but*. "Scott, you did a fantastic job with that report. But, I need to talk to you about what you didn't do yesterday." How do you feel?

From the Floor: All you really remember is the "but" part, not anything before that.

Mr. Boughton: You got it. What happens? We focus directly in on the bad news. Some of you bright ladies and gentlemen will say, "How about 'however'? How about 'although'?" They don't work either. Yes, we need to use the word *but* in our vocabulary, so it's not easy to eliminate it. Watch the difference when I use these other techniques.

The first one is to separate. If Scott did a fantastic job with Report A, then after he completed that report I should tell him, "Scott, you did a fantastic job with Report A." A couple of days later I get Report B. I see there are errors. I say, "Scott, I noticed that there were some errors in Report B. Can you tell me about them?" That way I separate the two events. I give him the positive feedback when he deserves it and the constructive feedback when he needs to hear it too. Watch the difference. If I say, "Scott, you did a great job with Report A, but I need to talk to you about Report B," he knows it's bad. Watch the difference when I use that simple word *and* and say, "Scott, you did a fantastic job with Report A, and what I need to talk to you about today is Report B." It's subtle, but it's couched. You don't have the reaction that you normally would have if you heard the word *but*. If I say, "Scott, you did a great job with Report A," and pause before saying, "What I

need to talk to you about today is Report B," that is not as dramatic. "And" is your best choice.

The second performance killer is the word *why*. "William, why did you do that?"

How do you feel? "Why" goes right after you as a person. It's not about behavior anymore; it's about you as an individual. So when I ask, "William, why did you do that?" we all know William did that. We know William's in trouble, and that automatically puts us on the defensive.

From the Floor: Someone once told me that the word *why* is an accusation.

Mr. Boughton: Absolutely. That's an excellent point because it is, and I've had people say to me, "Well, Nat, look at the way you said it. I mean the inflection in your voice clearly was accusatory." Now, listen, I'll try to be very nice. "William, why did you do that?"

From the Floor: It doesn't work, no matter how you put it.

Mr. Boughton: Exactly. It doesn't make a difference, does it? That's the point. Now watch the difference if I use a "how" or "what." I ask, "William, what were the circumstances that caused X?" What am I focusing on now? Behavior. I'm asking for what caused X. It's not about William as an individual; it's about X. Or if I use "how" and say, "You know, William, how do we get to X?" it's about the behavior or the event or the circumstances. It's not about William, the lazy, worthless employee I have. No, it's not about William, it's about what that end result is. That's very, very important.

A quick story. I am the youngest of five boys and my oldest two brothers were out of the house already. I was ten, and my brother was 12. My mom came home from work, and my brother and I said, "Where's dinner?" Good question to ask Mom after a hard day's work. She literally had us over the stove for about two-and-a-half weeks cooking every meal with her. Now I can cook anything. I can do Italian, Chinese, and some Indian. I can do a wide variety of cooking, so when my wife and I have dinner parties I get the loving chore of cooking. So I'm making fettuccini Alfredo with marinated chicken for dinner one night. I had rosemary roasted red potatoes in the oven, and I was going to make caramelized asparagus. My wife comes home and says, "Gosh, it smells great. But why in the world do you have potatoes in the oven?" She double-whammied me. She said, "But why." So what did I do? I got upset. "I've been in this kitchen for the last three hours slaving over this stove making our dinner—what do you mean we can't have potatoes?" Anybody cook? Having pasta and potatoes was the problem. You're not supposed to have two starches. So I'm ripping things out of the oven, dumping potatoes into Tupperware saying, "Fine, we'll eat them some other day." My wife is just looking at me and she's laughing so hard that she's crying. And then I started laughing. I went a little crazy because of the fact she said the words *but* and *why*. I just immediately reacted because I thought she was attacking me.

The third performance killer is the word *want*. Take the statement, "You know, Scott, I want you to do X." That clearly establishes that there's a hierarchy. Instead say, "You know, Scott, we need to really think about how to do X." When I say the words *we* and *need*, what do they do? They make a team. They balance it out a bit. It's very powerful if you say "need" because, when you say "need," it's always with the word *we*.

The most critical thing you can do as far as understanding employees and managing, whether the employees are difficult or superstars, is to build relationships. How do we go about building relationships? The first thing we need to do is get to a point where fear is eliminated in the workplace. Fear is an acronym. The F stands for frustration of people, places, or situations; the E stands for ego (control); the A stands for anger; and the R stands for resentment or, worse yet, rage. The first step in building strong relationships with your employees is the elimination of that unhealthy fear, the fear that paralyzes you. There is, of course, healthy fear, which motivates us to achieve success.

The next step is to communicate. How do you communicate in your organization? What are the two favorite ways that you communicate?

From the Floor: e-mail and voice mail.

Mr. Boughton: That's not the best way. Face-to-face is absolutely the way. How many of you have typed an e-mail or left a voice mail, sent it, and said, "Oh no. I want that back," because you said something in it that you probably wouldn't have said if you were face-to-face? Today technology is supposed to make us more efficient. We're getting to a point where we communicate only via e-mail. Some of you don't spend any time talking with your employees one-on-one because you spend so much time communicating via e-mail. They e-mail you back; you e-mail again. You may be three doors down, but you don't get up and walk down to see them. That's a problem. You want to interact. That's extremely important. You want to be able to have face time with your people. Now let me ask you a question. Where should you go talk to your people, or where do you usually have meetings with your people?

From the Floor: In their office.

Mr. Boughton: Their office. A lot of times we have them to our office, right? There is an inherent fear with going to your boss's office. Go to their turf instead; talk to them in their space where they're relaxed and you're the one sitting in the chair.

I do executive coaching. I had this senior executive say to me once, "Whenever I want to yell at somebody, I bring them into my office into one of those chairs that's adjustable. I lower it so that I'm always sitting higher up looking down at my employee. This one time I had an ex-basketball player who was 6' 6", and whose knees were around his ears." He was serious and he's thinking it's humorous, and I'm thinking, "Gosh, we're going to be together for a long time."

After we interact you begin to accept. It's about understanding the differences from a diversity perspective, i.e., the different nationalities, ethnicities, and experiences. It's beginning to accept your employees. What I challenge all of you to do is to develop deeper levels of business intimacy. Get involved with your people. What do I mean?

From the Floor: Get to know them.

Mr. Boughton: Get to know them. How do you find out something about your people?

From the Floor: Go out with them.

Mr. Boughton: Go out for lunch. What about in their work space, are there any clues?

From the Floor: Photos.

Mr. Boughton: Photos, right. Pull out your pictures. People want to talk about them. I have a beautiful four-year-old whose birthday was yesterday. I also have a ten-month-old. I want to talk to people about my children. I love my children. Those are things that are safe to talk about. You need to get to know your people.

The next step is trust and honesty. You need to understand people to have trust. Once you have trust, they will begin to get honest with you. If you don't have a relationship, you're not going to have trust, and they aren't going to be honest with you. They're going to tell you what you want to hear, and that's the extent of it.

Let's discuss self-esteeming. When I designed this model, I was thinking of something that was more powerful than just empowerment. *Empowerment* is a great word, but what about you as a manager and a coach? Shouldn't there be some reciprocity in the relationship? Absolutely. Self-esteeming is just that. It's reciprocal self-worth. If I'm working with my employee Paul, suppose I say to Paul, "We need you to do this assignment; here are the parameters. Let me know if you run into any roadblocks and get back to me." Paul does some work, runs into some difficulty, and tells me. I say, "Enid did something just like that. Why don't you talk to her?" Enid solves Paul's problems. He then comes back to me. The report is awesome. It is great, and I say to Paul, "Paul, you did a fantastic job. This is really right on the money. I am really excited about the work you completed here." That's one way. But, what about me? Can't Paul say to me, "Nat, that was a really challenging assignment, and when I ran into roadblocks you steered me to Enid, who straightened things out right away. She pointed me in the right direction." If the relationship isn't in place, what do we call it? Brownnosing. You need to have the relationship. Once you have that, then you have high performance. When it comes to dealing with difficult employees, start by trying to build a relationship. Otherwise, all you're going to do is talk at them and they're just going to talk at you.

This is the performance coaching model from our first book. The relationship model is the most important component. We've identified four critical roles to success as a performance coach. One is to be a trainer. Does that mean that you need to stand up here in front of an audience and deliver information? No. What it means is spending time with your employees and educating them about skills.

You'll get your greatest success out of your employees if you leverage and maximize their strengths and minimize the liability of their weaknesses. How many of you have done some kind of a psychological profile on yourself? You may get a list of 10 or 15 competencies and on some you score high and on some you score low. Somebody then tells you to focus on the ones at the bottom. When you do that, what happens to the ones at the top? Atrophy sets in. So the things that we're already doing well start to slip. If you forced me to do it, then who loses? The organization does, and so do I. It's important that, with each of your people and their different skills, you identify their strengths and get them focused on those strengths. They enjoy doing those things, and you create a team that is heterogeneous, not homogeneous.

I make the analogy in basketball with Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls. If you had five Michael Jordans, would they have been as good as the Bulls were in the last few years? No. Because you need different skills. That's what you need to do with your teams.

Career coach. There are many tracks that your employees follow. You need to make sure that you're there with them and coaching them through the process of being successful and excited. Get them to focus on the future because if you focus on the future you have a better opportunity to make things happen for you, them, and your organization.

Let's talk some more about communication. Eighty percent of our job is communication, yet we only listen 50% of the time. We're going to have difficulties because we're not listening well.

Work with somebody next to you for about two minutes and brainstorm over the characteristics that make an exceptional listener. What makes a poor listener? Lack of concentration and physical barriers. One bad listening technique is to stay behind our desks when somebody comes in to talk. If you have another place, a table, for example, say to the person, "Hold on one second, let me finish this note. Feel free to sit down." Then get up and go sit with that individual.

Visual distractions. I used to have an office with glass windows in New York City, and everybody would go by and always wave to me. I'd be talking with William and be interacting with somebody walking by. Once it came to my attention when I read the nonverbals, I switched my desk so my back was to the window.

Hearing ability. Sometimes we just aren't willing to listen or we can't hear well because there's noise. Personal biases can affect the way we listen.

Communication styles. Personal space. Don't get too close in somebody's personal space. So what are the skills that you want to portray? A lot of them you've already brought up. Encouragement. How do we encourage nonverbally?

From the Floor: Nod.

Mr. Boughton: Nod your head. I'm up here in front of an audience and some of you are nodding your head, following along with me. Those kinds of things are important. Another way of encouraging is just opening your eyes and looking at the person speaking.

Questioning. What's the significance of questioning?

From the Floor: You clarify what they're saying.

Mr. Boughton: You can clarify what they're saying by condensing a lot of information down to substantive information. We tend to try to immediately solve a problem. Somebody comes into your office with a problem, and you have your answer. We need to listen first because a lot of times that original answer isn't the same answer at the end.

Silence. Don't talk while listening. Paraphrasing. If Scott says, "And I think we really need to change the way we go about making these calculations," then I say, "Well, how would we make those changes in the calculations?" I'm paraphrasing, but I'm also asking a question within that.

Clarifying. When you start narrowing down, it's very important that you get to a point where things are clear. I say, "So, we need to change the calculations with regard to X-factors. Is that what you're telling me?" and Scott responds, "Yes." You do that by way of open-ended questions, narrowing down to more focused questions. When it's all done, make sure you summarize it. Clarify what the next steps are.

When you're handling difficult employees, don't speak too soon. If William comes in and says, "You know what? I am so sick and tired of Scott. Every time I deal with him he comes in late. I have to cover for him at lunch. I tend to do his work," I say to William, "You know, William, I'm going to go talk to Scott and he may not have a job by the end of the day." What have I just done? I've given him some feedback, but I assume that Scott was the problem before I knew enough. I never listened. I never got deeper information. Maybe the truth is that William is frustrated because Scott's working on a special assignment. It's very important that you summarize and say, "William, I'm going to talk to Scott, and I'll get back to you by Thursday." If Scott was out of town on that special project, the biggest mistake we make as managers is not making that phone call. I should call William and say, "William, I told you I'd get back to you on Thursday but, unfortunately, Scott's not going to be back in until Monday. I just wanted to let you know that I probably won't get to you until Tuesday, but I'm still thinking about what you

brought up." We forget to follow up with our people. That is unacceptable. You've been in those shoes.

Giving feedback is an extremely powerful way to motivate. It helps build relationships and provides documentation for development. I say development instead of improvement. When you hear the word *improvement*, what do you think?

From the Floor: That I wasn't very good at it in the first place.

Mr. Boughton: Right. That word *improvement*, no matter how you spin it, has a negative connotation. You can be the top salesperson but your boss can say, "You know what? I think you need to improve a couple of different things." The person is thinking, "Gosh, I've generated more revenue than anybody else in this organization, and I'm not worth much." Rather, say that there are a couple of other things we can develop to make you even more successful for next year. *Development* isn't attacking the skill set; it's about helping to make people into what you want them to be.

If you use feedback effectively, your team will produce better results than you have ever seen in your organization. It's about communicating effectively.

How many of you work in team environments? Most everybody. If five of us were a team, and I'm the leader of that team, one of the mistakes I might make is giving this feedback to the team: "That project that we've been working on landed the deal. We're getting the business. It looks great, and I want to say thank you very much." Now we all feel pretty good, right? Watch the difference with this feedback: "Guys, we got the project. That was a great job. The marketing effort went through without any glitches. William, I want to let you know that that work you did on the summary page was outstanding. Michael, when you made contact with the client, you made sure that you built that relationship, and that's what we need to constantly do. Scott, I want to let you know that when we ran into difficulty with the technology you supported us so we were able to make the presentation to the client. And, Paul, when you were in the meeting delivering the presentation, you were really articulate and you answered those questions professionally." What a difference! How do those four feel? Which would you rather hear? It's a no-brainer. Yet, when we work in teams what we tend to say is, "Great job, team." If you single out each one of your team members and give them kudos, the result will be significant.

When giving feedback, be specific. Be sincere. Deliver it immediately, not eight months after the fact.

From the Floor: What about performance reviews?

Mr. Boughton: I got feedback at my performance review on something I did wrong eight months ago. I made the mistake continuously and at eight months, when told about it, was able to immediately correct it. I asked, "Any reason why

you didn't tell me the first time I did it wrong?" Especially if you're giving constructive feedback, the longer you wait, the less likely the facts are in place.

How many of you know that your boss knew that you had made a mistake at some point? Did he tell you right away? No. My boss, Ben, comes walking down the hall, and I know I just made that mistake. I think, "Uh-oh, here comes Ben," but nothing happens. Another week goes by, and I see Ben again. I'm still on edge. What am I waiting for? I'm waiting for Ben to tell me that I did something wrong. What happens to my performance? It slips because I'm waiting for Ben to tell me what I did wrong.

Each of us has been in those same shoes. Tell your people when they make a mistake, but don't use "why" and don't use "but." Explain the situation. Be specific. Be sincere, and explain the opportunity for development.

From the Floor: If the mistake was an isolated incident, can it just be ignored?

Mr. Boughton: Yes, to a certain degree. You can keep it informal. Say, "I noticed that you just made an error. It's the first error you've made in months." Or, I may just say, "Hey, John, I noticed you finally made an error," or maybe make a joke out of it. If I had a relationship with the person, I may just say, "I see you made an error and, until now, you've been doing great work. I know it's going to continue." I didn't use the word *but*, so I'm being sincere about giving that feedback.

From the Floor: Sometimes it's best just to not make a big deal out of a mistake. Since I do good work, I know that I wouldn't want my boss to say anything to me, and my boss knows that too.

Mr. Boughton: You brought up a couple of very important things. You said a couple of critical words. One was, "I would not have liked anyone to have said anything to me." How would his boss have known that he wouldn't want something said to him? They have the relationship, so, in this case, the boss does not need to say anything. The employee knows he made a mistake. And that's the important thing about it. The other critical point is that you didn't want a "big deal." If it's just an isolated incident, there's no reason for it to be a big deal.

Be clear and concise. Be specific about the issue you're addressing. Use firsthand information. Gather the facts before you have that conversation.

Feedback statements. Use the "I" qualifier. For example, I would say, "I noticed that you've been having some difficulty with that formula. The impact to the rest of the team is that it's slowing down our process. In the future, I hope that you come to me so I can help you understand that formula."

What did I focus on? Behavior. I addressed the impact to the team and what I expect. I asked that we work together. That's about us being collaborative. He has not taken offense. He knows it's an issue. He's talking about it. The way that

we tend to do it, which is extremely negative, is to use a "you" qualifier and say, "You made the mistake again and that is unacceptable. If this continues, there are going to be serious repercussions." What have I just done? I've blown my employee right out of the water. There is a significant difference in just how we put it. I say "you" and he feels that pointing finger going into his face. And then I'm adding repercussions. Focus on the behavior and be supportive. That's very important. If you try that a few times, it will start to come easily.

Questioning. When giving constructive feedback, always ask a question. Instead of saying, "Paul, I need to talk to you about blah, blah, blah, blah," try saying, "Paul, what were the circumstances that caused X?" What am I doing? I'm allowing Paul to tell me his side. I can continue to follow up with questions and let him create the picture for himself. Questioning is a very powerful technique in managing anyone. Questioning is also a great way to manage up because you don't have to say, "I don't understand why we're doing all this kind of stuff." You can say, "You know, where do you want us to be in three months? And what kind of resources do you think I'll be able to get to help us get there?" So now I'm getting my boss to start saying, "Well, if you're really going to get there, you're going to need these kinds of resources. I may be able to get an additional half an employee." If I say I need another employee they always say no.

If I'm working with an employee on correcting a problem, I might ask, "How do you feel you did with regard to X?" Someone role play.

From the Floor: Well, I probably didn't say the right thing when I was talking to that person.

Mr. Boughton: And is there anything we can think about going forward?

From the Floor: Yes, I can be more careful with the words I choose. Maybe I can think a little bit more about where they're coming from.

Mr. Boughton: So maybe one of the things we need to think about is how to ask a question and then listen for responses before we just start jumping into things.

From the Floor: Sure, I could do that.

Mr. Boughton: And is there any kind of additional training you think that may help you when you're dealing with clients?

From the Floor: Yes, if I had better communication skills, they could, of course, help me with that.

Mr. Boughton: What did I do? What did I become? A coach. I got the information I needed and then became the coach by helping him through the issue. In dealing with difficult employees, it is very important to continually ask questions. You'll have an employee that says on a performance appraisal that he or she's always a five on a one to five scale. He or she thinks he or she's the best employee

you ever had. You can say, "How do you exceed standard?" "I come to work every day." "It says here that that meets standard. Give me an example of how you exceeded standard." You see what I'm getting at? You know it's going to be a give-and-take and you're going to keep on battling over the point. By asking questions you can narrow it down and get them to a certain point.

Make employees define expectations and results by asking them, "What do you expect out of this job and how do you define your role in the organization?" You can start to narrow it down and make sense of what it is they're trying to accomplish. Then you can explain that what they perceive either fits or doesn't fit your strategy for your team.

Voice inflection must be consistent and calm. When one voice gets raised, what happens to the other voice? It gets raised, and another voice gets raised, and the next thing you know you're talking rather loud. Stay calm and keep a consistent tone. The other person will come down to your level. If they're ranting and raving and you're calm, they'll eventually realize that they're being extreme.

Be firm and support your decisions with documentation. At some point you may have an employee who is a lost cause. That happens. Not everyone is cut out to be successful in your organization. They may fit in wonderfully somewhere else. The important thing is that you support your decisions with documentation, especially when it comes to difficult employees.

Next steps. Practice these skills immediately. Try the "I" qualifier statements. Go back and build some relationships. Discuss situations with peers. I don't know if other people in this room work with you in your organization, but if you don't have a mentoring organization, find one. Find somebody that you respect who has the skills that you may not have. Listen to them, talk to them, and learn from them. Mentoring is another one of those critical roles to your success. You have to make a choice today. It's a simple choice. You can walk away from here and still be an old-school manager, one of those people who you don't quite respect, or you can go back and be a coach, somebody who's going to drive revenue and results, manage expectations, and have a group of individuals who are excited to come to work every day. That is your choice.

There are five steps to organizational success that will drive your business in the more macro sense. The first is to get everyone in your organization focusing on the big picture. Everyone needs to understand the strategy that your organization is undertaking. The second is to redefine job responsibilities. Many organizations are working from job responsibilities and job descriptions that are five or ten years old, and those jobs have changed. So it's important that you go back in and start to define jobs again. The easiest way to do that is to ask your people, "What is it that you do?" Define your job for us. Then there will be a template that you can use.

Next, we want to make sure that we create heterogeneous teams. They need to focus on specific goals and be able to deliver those goals. Teams can be anywhere. They don't necessarily have to be at the same location.

Some of the biggest corporations in America have fallen in the last several years because their board of directors is made up of the same people who have been there for 10, 15, or 20 years. Do you think when they get together for their board meetings any creative thoughts come up? Not many. We need to always reinvigorate our team.

Look forward, not backwards. When it comes to performance, we spend a lot of time in performance review and tell people what they didn't do over the last year. What we need to be focused on is determining the skills we need for the future. We tell people what they've done in the past. What are the things we need to work on and develop going into the future? You also need to develop your people. What are the skill sets that your people are going to need in six months or in three years? Are your jobs going to be the same? No, they're not.

Next is support fantasy and out-of-the-box thinking. You need to allow your people to think about things creatively. Don't put them in that box. Every time they get in that box, it gets smaller and smaller. The more you let them express themselves and take risk, the more success you're going to have on your team and in your organization. Your profits and your revenues are going to go through the roof. I spell risk RISC. What does RISC stand for? First you need to identify all the resources that are at your disposal. Next you need to gather all the information that is pertinent to the issue you're addressing. You need to develop a strategy and make the necessary changes. Let RISC be a part of the day-to-day workings of your organization, and do that by allowing people to have ownership. Allow people to take responsibility and hold them accountable to their jobs.

Eliminate fear in the workplace and in your lives via this simple seven-step model with another acronym, the word BELIEVE. The B stands for balance between your personal, professional, and community life. The E stands for empathy. We want to make sure that you can empathize with other individuals. Understand and appreciate the diversity that exists within your organization and within your community. Once you begin to empathize, you have an opportunity to learn more about yourself. L is for leverage. We need to make sure that we leverage our strengths and minimize the liability of our weaknesses. Let's focus on the things that all of us do well. The team and the organization will be driven much further. I means you invest in your spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being on a regular basis. E means educate, not just from a book sense, but through passions and hobbies. Constantly learn. You'll find your greatest success is doing the things you love to do, so take the time to educate yourselves in things that you enjoy. V stands for creating a vision for yourself. Where do you want to be? How do you want to get there? Those are the kinds of things that are going to make all the difference in the world. Those are the things that will allow you to get focused and deliver the results both in your life at work and at home. And finally, E is for evolve. All of us change on a daily basis as we grow up and we change jobs. We constantly need to look at the way that we evolve into the kind of person that we want to be.

The choice is really yours. You can believe in yourself and in your abilities, and that will truly drive your life, or you can let fear hold you back and paralyze you so that you never get the kind of satisfaction and happiness that we all deserve.