March 2016
Coaching Tips of the Month for Supervisors
Providing Constructive Feedback

One of the most powerful coaching tools available to Supervisors is *feedback*. How often have you heard or been asked, *"How am I doing?"* At some point, we all want to know if we are meeting, exceeding, or falling short of expectations.

Supervisors should make it a habit to pay close attention to what is going on with staff and be consistent in providing them with constructive feedback. Constructive feedback is designed to help or improve one's understanding, behavior, or thoughts.

EXAMPLE
You share with Sally that supervisors and staff mention that she is a professional, highly respected, and influential employee. Sally is likely to feel really good about this feedback and may feel compelled to work harder at improving in her growth areas to maintain her reputation.

When given constructive feedback, staff gain valuable insight into their areas of strength and those in need of improvement. This vital information allows them to focus on improving in specific areas and may also boost their self-esteem. Although constructive feedback related to work performance is extremely important, sharing feedback related to other areas (such as peer interaction) can also be helpful.

The key to giving constructive feedback is *F.A.S.T.* *(frequent, appropriate, specific, timely)* delivery. *F.A.S.T.* feedback shows staff that you are invested in their success because you are taking the time to acknowledge their strengths and areas for growth. Constructive feedback opens the door for valuable dialogue between Supervisor and staff, allowing them to develop a trusting relationship.

Below are coaching tips for providing *Constructive Feedback*. Use these tips as you begin the practice of incorporating consistent, **F.A.S.T.** feedback into your interactions with your staff.

F — *Frequent* - Provide feedback frequently enough to ensure that staff are clear and confident about their workplace performance. However, too much feedback can lead to "feedback overload" causing the recipient to shut down. The feedback then becomes ineffective.

A — *Appropriate* - Consider the following when delivering feedback: how it is delivered (attitude, tone of voice, body language), when it is delivered (time of day, energy level, proximity to event), and where it is delivered (surroundings/location, private or public)?

S — *Specific* - Feedback should be clear, accurate and factual, not ambiguous! Clearly state who, what, where, when, why, and how when providing feedback. Avoid absolute words such as "usually" and "always." Focus on the person's behavior, not their character.

T — *Timely* - Give feedback immediately or as close in time to the event as possible. This will allow the recipient to more easily and accurately recall of the event, note their response or reaction, and determine how to make the appropriate adjustments.

Additional Resources

- Phoel, C.M. (2009). Feedback that works. *Harvard Business Review.*
  https://hbr.org/2009/04/feedback-that-works/
- Brounstein, M. (2000). Giving constructive feedback. *Coaching and Mentoring For Dummies.*
  http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/giving-constructive-feedback.html