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The Human Resource

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A NEWSLETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE ISU COMMUNITY.

The goal of this newsletter is to provide a tool in supporting the university's mission by providing leadership and service through comprehensive, effective, and efficient Human Resource Management for the students, faculty and staff.



A Word... from Wil

By Wil Downs, Assistant Vice President; HR

The month of March is an exciting time with flowers starting to come through the hard winter cold to bring us into spring. I believe all of us have had better February's. The displacement process has impacted staff all over campus and everyone is concerned for the staff that have received notice. We do however have to continue to move forward if we are to continue down the road of success as a university.

A number of things have been accomplished in February that is related to HR. An early retirement incentive was approved by the Board of Trustees at the February 18th meeting. Information regarding those incentive programs (VolTRIP) is available on the Staff Benefits web site. Staff Benefits is doing their best to meet with employees who have questions regarding this program. Remember to participate you must make your decision by April 2. Also FAQs have been made available on the Staff Benefits website to help you in your thought processes.

The President's Cabinet has approved a Compensation Philosophy in February and it is posted on the Compensation website. We are also preparing to begin the Performance Review Process for this past year. Dates regarding training and time guidelines will be coming out in March.

Recently a presentation was made to the Support Staff Council regarding what has been accomplished with your HR Department since 2007 and what are some of the goals we have going forward into 2010-2011. This power point presentation is available on the HR website.

As part of the Strategic Plan Goal Six initiative 3 the service award date to recognize staff and those receiving the President's Medallion has been changed. The recognition ceremony will be held on September 30, 2010. The reason for this change is that faculty members were not on campus when we had recognition in the past and this will allow them to share in the recognition of staff they work closely with or who work for them.

Try "Feedforward" Instead of Feedback

Adapted from HR publication; Leader to Leader, Summer 2002

by Marshall Goldsmith and submitted by Linda Brewer, HR Recruiter

Providing feedback has long been considered to be an essential skill for leaders. As they strive to achieve the goals of the organization, employees need to know how they are doing. They need to know if their performance is in line with what their leaders expect. They need to learn what they have done well and what they need to change. Traditionally, this information has been communicated in the form of "downward feedback" from leaders to their employees. Just as employees need feedback from leaders, leaders can benefit from feedback from their employees. Employees can provide useful input on the effectiveness of procedures and processes and as well as input to managers on their leadership effectiveness. This "upward feedback" has become increasingly common with the advent of 360 degree multi-rater assessments.



But there is a fundamental problem with all types of feedback: it focuses on a past, on what has already occurred - not on the infinite variety of opportunities that can happen in the future. As such, feedback can be limited and static, as opposed to expansive and dynamic.

Over the past several years, I have observed more than ten thousand leaders as they participated in a fascinating experiential exercise. In the exercise, participants are each asked to play two roles. In one role, they are asked provide feedforward - that is, to give someone else suggestions for the future and help as much as they can. In the second role, they are asked to accept feedforward - that is, to listen to the suggestions for the future and learn as much as they can. The exercise typically lasts for 10-15 minutes, and the average participant has 6-7 dialogue sessions.

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“Training Tips” - Quick training for people on the go!



Topic: “How to Be a Great Leader at Work”

Submitted by, Scott Walden & Content written by Dave Moore from the website: leadership-and-training.com.

Leadership is often made to feel much more complex than is necessary. Here is some simple advice about Leadership at Work. There are typically two kinds of folks in the work force. Those that, folks graciously line up to follow, and then there are those who struggle, as it is to do the job they have been given to do, with no one helping them out.

Most leaders are natural leaders. They were raised in such a way that folks enjoy working for them. We are not all blessed with this natural leadership, but you can make small changes in your habits that can cause you to be a leader at work. Follow these tips to become a successful leader in your work area:

- Good leadership makes folks feel good about themselves, and a good leader can make folks enjoy the work they are doing.
- A good leader can envision a goal, and then effectively communicate that goal to those following them.
- They can successfully communicate the “big picture” and tell their employees how they are to perform those jobs.
- Good leadership has a positive attitude, particularly when it comes to the future of his or her team, or the company's goals.
- If you tend to be a negative thinking person, but want to be a good leader, work to make changes in your leadership attitude. Focus on a solution, rather than any negative aspects of a job or situation. Some leadership things you can do are so simple you'll wonder why you didn't think of them sooner.
- A leader can introduce fellow employees on a first name basis and not by their job description. They never refer to themselves as an employee's 'boss' but rather as a 'fellow teammate'.
- To a good leader, all employees' jobs are vital, there are no employees who have a more important job than another.
- Most importantly, remember that EVERY 'teammate' matters to a good leader.

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When the exercise was finished, I asked participants to provide one word that best describes their reaction to this experience. I ask them to complete the sentence, "This exercise was ...". The words provided are almost always extremely positive, such as "great", "energizing", "useful" or "helpful." The most common word mentioned is "fun!" What is the last word that most of us think about when we receive feedback, coaching and developmental ideas? Fun!

Here Are Eleven Reasons to Try “Feedforward” :

1. We can change the future. We can't change the past. Feedforward helps people envision and focus on a positive future, not a failed past. Athletes are often trained using feedforward. Racecar drivers are taught to, "Look at the road ahead, not at the wall." Basketball players are taught to envision the ball going in the hoop and to imagine the perfect shot. By giving people ideas on how they can be even more successful, we can increase their chances of achieving this success in the future.

2. It can be more productive to help people be "right," than prove they were "wrong." Negative feedback often becomes an exercise in "let me prove you were wrong." This tends to produce defensiveness on the part of the receiver and discomfort on the part of the sender. Even constructively delivered feedback is often seen as negative as it necessarily involves a discussion of mistakes, shortfalls, and problems. Feedforward, on the other hand, is almost always seen as positive because it focuses on solutions - not problems.

3. Feedforward is especially suited to successful people. Successful people like getting ideas that are aimed at helping them achieve their goals. They tend to resist negative judgment. We all tend to accept feedback that is consistent with the way we see ourselves. We also tend to reject or deny feedback that is inconsistent with the way we see ourselves. Successful people tend to have a very positive self-image. I have observed many successful executives respond to (and even enjoy) feedforward. I am not sure that these same people would have had such a positive reaction to feedback.

4. Feedforward can come from anyone who knows about the task. It does not require personal experience with the individual. One very common positive reaction to the previously described exercise is that participants are amazed by how much they can learn from people that they don't know! For example, if you want to be a better listener, almost any fellow leader can give you ideas on how you can improve. They don't have to know you. Feedback requires knowing about the person. Feedforward just requires having good ideas for achieving the task.

5. People do not take feedforward as personally as feedback. In theory, constructive feedback is supposed to "focus on the performance, not the person". In practice, almost all feedback is taken personally (no matter how it is delivered). Successful people's sense of identity is highly connected with their work. The more successful people are, the more this tends to be true. It is hard to give a dedicated professional feedback that is not taken personally. Feedforward cannot involve a personal critique, since it is discussing something that has not yet happened! Positive suggestions tend to be seen as objective advice - personal critiques are often viewed as personal attacks.

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Words for Wellness... from HR Staff Benefits

Submitted by Scott Walden; Staff Benefits Coordinator & content by HealthyLiving.com.

Want to Burn More Calories at Work?...Try these helpful tips:

Do you think your work productivity can be increased if you are in good physical condition? Today's busy schedules include more work within the same amount of time. Recognizing our health is a priority we need to develop strategies to ensure our physical activity levels are not compromised.

Some Quick Tips...

Walk/Run at Lunch or on Breaks

Small amounts of activity, 10 or 15 minutes, are enough to burn off some calories and stimulate blood flow to the body and brain.

Use a pedometer to log distance and aim for additional steps each day. Keep a log of your activity and be proud of your accomplishments!

Take the stairs instead. Climbing stairs is a good way to build up leg muscles.

Use the talk test when walking/running to ensure you are not overdoing it. If you are breathing too heavy that you cannot carry on a conversation, you are working too hard.

Set up inside routes when the weather is not so good and outside routes when the weather is good.

Take Frequent Stretch Breaks

The body is made to move. Sitting or standing for long periods of time takes a toll on the muscles and compromises joints.

Stretch for 10-30 seconds in a stationary position without bouncing.

Want to find out more? Visit www.healthycomputing.com - click on 'Your Health' then 'Stretches and Exercises' or www.shelterpub.com - click on 'Stretching in the Office'

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6. Feedback can reinforce personal stereotyping and negative self-fulfilling prophecies. Feedforward can reinforce the possibility of change. Feedback can reinforce the feeling of failure. How many of us have been "helped" by a spouse, significant other or friend, who seems to have a near-photographic memory of our previous "sins" that they share with us in order to point out the history of our shortcomings. Negative feedback can be used to reinforce the message, "this is just the way you are". Feedforward is based on the assumption that the receiver of suggestions can make positive changes in the future.

7. Face it! Most of us hate getting negative feedback, and we don't like to give it. I have reviewed summary 360 degree feedback reports for over 50 companies. The items, "provides developmental feedback in a timely manner" and "encourages and accepts constructive criticism" almost always score near the bottom on co-worker satisfaction with leaders. Traditional training does not seem to make a great deal of difference. If leaders got better at providing feedback every time the performance appraisal forms were "improved", most should be perfect by now! Leaders are not very good at giving or receiving negative feedback. It is unlikely that this will change in the near future.

8. Feedforward can cover almost all of the same "material" as feedback. Imagine that you have just made a terrible presentation in front of the executive committee. Your manager is in the room. Rather than make you "relieve" this humiliating experience, your manager might help you prepare for future presentations by giving you suggestions for the future. These suggestions can be very specific and still delivered in a positive way. In this way your manager can "cover the same points" without feeling embarrassed and without making you feel even more humiliated.

9. Feedforward tends to be much faster and more efficient than feedback. An excellent technique for giving ideas to successful people is to say, "Here are four ideas for the future. Please accept these in the positive spirit that they are given. If you can only use two of the ideas, you are still two ahead. Just ignore what doesn't make sense for you." With this approach almost no time gets wasted on judging the quality of the ideas or "proving that the ideas are wrong". This "debate" time is usually negative; it can take up a lot of time, and it is often not very productive. By eliminating judgment of the ideas, the process becomes much more positive for the sender, as well as the receiver. Successful people tend to have a high need for self-determination and will tend to accept ideas that they "buy" while rejecting ideas that feel "forced" upon them.

10. Feedforward can be a useful tool to apply with managers, peers and team members. Rightly or wrongly, feedback is associated with judgment. This can lead to very negative - or even career-limiting - unintended consequences when applied to managers or peers. Feedforward does not imply superiority of judgment. It is more focused on being a helpful "fellow traveler" than an "expert". As such it can be easier to hear from a person who is not in a position of power or authority. An excellent team building exercise is to have each team member ask, "How can I better help our team in the future?" and listen to feedforward from fellow team members (in one-on-one dialogues.)

11. People tend to listen more attentively to feedforward than feedback. One participant in the feedforward exercise noted, "I think that I listened more effectively in this exercise than I ever do at work!" When asked why, he responded, "Normally, when others are speaking, I am so busy composing a reply that will make sure that I sound smart - that I am not fully listening to what the other person is saying. In feedforward the only reply that I am allowed to make is 'thank you'. Since I don't have to worry about composing a clever reply - I can focus all of my energy on listening to the other person!"

In summary, the intent of this article is not to imply that leaders should never give feedback or that performance appraisals should be abandoned. The intent is to show how feedforward can often be preferable to feedback in day-to-day interactions. Aside from its effectiveness and efficiency, feedforward can make life a lot more enjoyable. When managers are asked, "How did you feel the last time you received feedback?" their most common responses are very negative. When managers are asked how they felt after receiving feedforward, they reply that feedforward was not only useful, it was also fun!

Quality communication - between and among people at all levels and every department and division - is the glue that holds organizations together. By using feedforward - and by encouraging others to use it - leaders can dramatically improve the quality of communication in their organizations, ensuring that the right message is conveyed, and that those who receive it are receptive to its content. The result is a much more dynamic, much more open organization - one whose employees focus on the promise of the future rather than dwelling on the mistakes of the past.



Benefits Briefs...

...News you can use from the Office of Staff Benefits

INFORMATION ABOUT EARLY RETIREMENT PACKAGES

At the February 18 Board meeting, the Trustees approved a Voluntary Transitional Retirement Incentive Plan (VolTRIP) for faculty, administrative and hourly staff to encourage early retirement decisions by April 2, 2010, by employees who are age 55 and older and with at least nine (9) years of service by the retirement date. Individuals who are age 60 with 20 years of service will also receive certain post retirement benefits, if eligible. Retirement severance plans, without ending dates, were also approved. The retirement incentive and severance plans will replace previous plans effective in 1998.

On the ISU Staff Benefits web page, you will find the approved Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plans, a FAQ document to help explain the plan, the application for the plan as well as a calendar of events. There will be meetings held on campus during the month of March with Candy Barton of Staff Benefits, Public Employees Retirement Fund, TIAA-CREF and Social Security. For specific information on these meeting times, and locations, visit the website at: <http://www.indstate.edu/humres/newtemplate/staffben/Calendar%203.pdf>

Please attend the meetings and set up individual appointments to gather information on your benefits, retirement income and requirements. Staff Benefits will have extended hours of operations to accommodate employees. Spouses, partners or other advisors may attend meetings with the employees.

****A signed Election to retire must be submitted to Staff Benefits (300 Rankin Hall) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 2, 2010.** Since there is limited time to gather information, supervisors are asked to allow employees time from work to attend these sessions and individual appointments.

WEEKLY DIET INFORMATION SESSIONS NOW AVAILABLE IN HR!

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for your overall health. If you have any questions about weight management, ISU students in dietetics are studying to become Registered Dietitians- experts in food and nutrition, and can help with your questions. You can stop by Rankin Hall Room #327 for a one-on-one consultation with a Dietetics Student for individual counseling.

Student counselor sessions are FREE and available to meet with you on Tuesdays, from 1:30pm to 5pm and Thursdays, from 12:30 to 5pm. There is no appointment necessary and you will be seen on a "first come, first serve basis". For more information on the Dietetics program at ISU, visit the website at: <http://www.indstate.edu/fcs/FoodandNutritiondietetics.htm>.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT STAFF BENEFITS WEEKLY "4 YOUR BENEFIT"!

Don't forget that the office of Staff Benefits in the Department of Human Resources has a new communication tool that is available to the ISU Community. "4 Your Benefit" is a weekly communication E-Letter announcing current and future events, benefits programs, and employee wellness reminders.

This one page informational piece is also archived on the Staff Benefits page for access at anytime. Logon to the Staff Benefits page at: <http://www1.indstate.edu/humres/benefits.htm> to check it out!

