



I ♥ MY
JOB

CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Sometimes, where and how you hear a message is as important as the message itself. Making sure that you prepare your direct reports for hearing feedback, and ensuring that you manage their expectations for what they might hear, is integral to ensuring that your message is well received and delivered in an environment of mutual respect. Getting regular feedback is something people have to get used to.

Following are tips for creating opportunities for practice, creating boundaries, and articulating expectations so that you are providing the safest possible environment for communication.



1. DRILLS, DRILLS, AND MORE DRILLS: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Can you compute the following long division? $.034 \overline{) 542.98}$

If you are having a little trouble figuring out where to start, you are not alone! What has happened since our grade school days is that we have had very little practice in completing long division by hand, let alone long division with decimals!

The same thing will happen if your employees return from training, armed with new knowledge and skills, and are not provided with opportunities to practice. This then leads to the inevitable question...where are the results from my investment in training?

Provide opportunities for those you coach to practice what they learned in training.

Here are nine questions to ask relative to finding practice opportunities:

What practice situations are available to my employees?

Are there internal projects with less risk, in the event that mistakes are made?

Are there safe clients/accounts that would be more tolerant of a novice or person-in-training?

What tasks can be performed with my undivided attention? Where can I provide the best feedback to my employees?

When can a fictional situation/project/scenario/role play be created for the sole purpose of practicing?

What opportunities exist for others to provide feedback on my employees or employees' performance?

What situations or projects include experienced and/or previously trained employees who can closely supervise my employee-in-training?

If the training is a soft skill (i.e., conflict resolution, interpersonal relations, etc.), with whom or in what situation would it be easiest to apply the training in small steps?

Are there meetings where participants could do short presentations/talks/discussions on the training content?

2. AFTER PRACTICE: GETTING REAL

Have a look at all of the experiences in the matrix below. Each has been identified as a real world experience that would help drive home the learning from a training session for someone who has just attended. Each experience is in a column assigned with relative difficulty. **Plan a time after training when you can meet and determine experiences and actions within the organization, and within the context of the person's job, that will continue to accelerate his or her learning curve.**

Use these to suggest courses of action to your coachee, and have him or her finalize a plan of action.

BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Role-play a situation that mirrors issues related to the training area (i.e., dealing with a difficult customer).	Before each meeting ask if there is an opportunity to practice the learning and, if so, how?	Lead a team or project group with the personal goal of ensuring that everyone's strengths are being used.
Have the beginning learner introduce some of the learning points to a new employee.	Lead a group to brainstorm some ways to bring the learning alive in the workplace.	Act as an information resource for someone else. Answer the person's questions and demonstrate how knowledge leads to greater effectiveness.
Identify one person to whom the beginner can turn for advice.	Interview two or three people who are accomplished at the new skill who can provide you with valuable insight into how they apply it.	Ask to be seconded to an assignment that will enable you to flex this muscle completely (i.e., if the topic is leading in change, volunteer to take on the communication planning for the next change initiative).
Find a situation where someone can be shadowed who is actively practicing the training areas (i.e., if the topic is project management, is there a project manager who can be shadowed?)	Find a project or task force to be part of that gets you real experience with the trained topic (i.e., if the topic is team building, is there a team being formed that you can facilitate or lead?)	

3. PARAMETERS OF YOUR POSITION: HOW BIG IS YOUR SANDBOX?

People need clear boundaries. Without boundaries, people tend to either err on the conservative side, or unintentionally take inappropriate risks.

There is a context for setting expectations and, at Eagle's Flight, we call this defining someone's "Sandbox." The Sandbox size one is given to "play in" determines the amount of accountability they carry for a specific task, a role, or an area of the business. Perhaps most importantly, the Sandbox size defines the decisions that the person is able to make independently.

People need clarity on the decisions they can make independently. **Lack of clarity on their current Sandbox size, and how it can grow, is what keeps many people from contributing all they can.**

4. FAILING FORWARD: HOW TO LET PEOPLE FAIL WITHOUT PUTTING THE END AT RISK

Most people have been socialized from an early age to be afraid of failure. This fear of failure often stops people from taking risks, which in turn limits their creativity and growth potential. In the business context, there is a tendency to avoid making mistakes at all costs, to ensure that a particular project is not labeled as a failure. The reality is that there is no such thing as a risk-free situation in the business world. All new strategies, programs, products, and projects come with varying degrees of risk in their implementation. As a leader coach, we need to ensure that we create a positive, open-minded environment where our employees are encouraged and supported in taking appropriate risks. Business success, after all, is about learning through trial and error. If we don't test or experiment with new concepts and ideas, we don't get the opportunity to learn and we don't grow as managers. **It's not whether we make mistakes; it's how we handle those mistakes and what learning we can take from them to solve the problems.** To truly succeed, we must be willing to fail along the way.

Need some help starting your behavior change initiative?
Join the crowd and give Eagle's Flight a call. This is what we do.
Connect with us at info@eaglesflight.com or call **1-800-567-8079**.

CONTACT US

Global Head Office
489 Clair Road West
Guelph, ON
CANADA N1L 0H7

US Head Office
7600 Parklawn Avenue
Edina, MN
USA 55435

Phone: 1-800-567-8079
Worldwide: 1-519-767-1747
Fax: 1-519-767-2920
Web: www.eaglesflight.com

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