

## Conducting a Feedback Session with Employees

Occasionally managers will want to gain further information from their employees about their practices. This can be very valuable if the session is not used to intimidate employees or find out the ratings given by each employee. For managers and consultants who want to conduct such a feedback session, the following guidelines will be helpful. Preparation and planning are crucial to the success of this effort.

There are few managers capable of conducting such a session without assistance. It is recommended in all situations that the consultant conduct the session with employees, with the manager present for all or part of the session. Sometimes the manager can be present for the entire meeting and not inhibit employee discussion. The preferred procedure is to begin the meeting with the manager present for the introduction. Then the manager leaves the session while the consultant gathers information. Finally, the manager returns to the session and receives a report of suggestions for improvement. The report to the manager is done with the employees present. To help determine if it is appropriate for the manager to be present during the entire meeting, look at his/her MLPI scores on Coaching, Recognition, Approachable, Participative, Communication and Trust. If his/her scores are high on virtually all of these factors, then he/she can possibly attend the entire meeting. If his/her scores are low on several of these factors, then he/she will need to leave the room during the middle segment session.

### General Comments

Managers who are about to receive additional input from employees regarding their MLPI results are sometimes nervous and apprehensive. The concerns that people have are real. Some typical concerns are:

- *The things the inventory measures are personal or private and shouldn't be discussed in public.* Remember the inventory measures only things that people have seen and experienced for some time. Not discussing them doesn't keep them private. They are already there and noticeable.
- *Discussing the results will simply create problems that we wouldn't have otherwise.* There are no problems in the results that aren't already there in people's minds. The only person you fool by not talking about them is yourself. The problems will usually get worse if they are not discussed and addressed.
- *It will just turn into a gripe session.* This has some likelihood of occurring. More realistically, people may begin by "getting things off their chests" but will soon move toward constructive discussion. As long as you are well prepared, don't come across as defensive and inhibit discussion, the possibility of "gripping" is minimal.

2. Explain that you do not know how individuals answered. You only have a summary of their responses. Their responses were anonymous.
3. State the length of the meeting.
4. Tell the group how you (and possibly the manager) will act in the meeting. Then be sure you both act that way!
5. Tell the group how you expect them to act. Encourage a supportive atmosphere where open discussion can occur.
6. Ask for questions.

Once the opening remarks are made, the manager will usually leave the meeting.

### During the Meeting

1. Use the MLPI results to direct the discussion. Move through the data in a systematic way. You may want to present all the data or only the areas that are of concern. Decide that before the meeting.
2. Post important points and conclusions on the flipchart. It is helpful for everyone to see the ideas written. This is best done by the consultant (or the manager if he/she is present). Do not evaluate ideas as they are posted.
3. Get as much information from as many people as possible about why the results came out the way they did. As you discuss the problem areas, you will focus on four questions:
  - Why did the results come out this way?
  - Can you give me an example to illustrate this result?
  - What could the manager do differently to correct the problem?
  - Can you give me an example of how he/she could do that?
4. Ensure confidentiality in the meeting. Don't require anyone to speak if they don't choose to.
5. Keep to the facts, don't be judgmental. Describe results.
6. Focus on things the group or the manager can do something about. It is frustrating to have a lengthy discussion of issues over which no one has control.