

Can We Talk?

Communication sounds so simple so why do we struggle so much? Communicating expectations to those people who work for us and with us seems to be a task we don't easily do.

Communicating expectations can be a tough task and often viewed as an unpleasant one since it is frequently done under circumstances involving discipline. The key is to view the meeting not as a "dressing down," but as an opportunity for the employee to be made aware of his important contribution to the organization and how he can meet the expectations more fully. The employee will profit from the feedback, and the manager will have the chance to reinforce the organization's needs and goals.

Here are some suggestions for success in communicating expectations and improving employee performance:

- *Set aside private time* to talk when there are no interruptions.
- *Don't wait until the next scheduled performance evaluation* to talk to the employee if improvement is required now. At the performance appraisal meeting, the employee should already be aware of major areas for improvement.
- Take time to *tell the employee the good things* he does and convey the organization's appreciation for performing those tasks well.
- Document your meeting by *providing the employee with written information* that he can take with him after the meeting.
- If needed, *plan a follow-up meeting* to help the employee achieve his goals. You can help him become a success.
- Be friendly and open with the employee; *be clear regarding the expectations*, the timelines to achieve those expectations and the results if those expectations aren't met. Explain to him how his achievement of goals impacts the organization.
- Give the employee the opportunity to ask questions and *provide him with follow-up opportunities*. For example, tell the employee to stop in with questions any time; he does not have to wait for the follow-up meeting to ask for help.

The organization and its managers can contribute to the individual's success by clearly communicating the expectations of the job, the impact of the individual's work for the organization, the good parts of the individual's performance, the areas that need to improve, and how great it is to have the employee at the organization.