

## Topic Five – The EARN Feedback Process for Positive & Negative Situations



### Coaching, Evaluating and Delivering Constructive Feedback – Learning Series

We are pleased to bring you *“The EARN Feedback Process for Positive & Negative Situations;”* the fifth in a series of communications that discuss the value that coaching brings to your management practice and team leadership. The content presented will address the formal performance management process, and your role – as a Manager or Supervisor– in helping your employees get the most from the experience.

To reference previous topics, please click on the Coaching Series Home link located in the Quick Links section of this web page.

Thanks for all you do.

#### Overview: The EARN Feedback Process for Positive & Negative Situations

Providing feedback to your employees is at the foundation of coaching and should occur as needed. When an opportunity to provide feedback comes up, coaches should address it in a timely manner. Employees expect to receive feedback as part of the performance and professional feedback process. Coaches have an obligation to provide feedback as part of guiding their employees and team to achieve goals.

The EARN Feedback Process defines a method for communicating feedback – both motivational and developmental – for maximum clarity and effect.

The EARN acronym outlines the components of a strong feedback statements. ‘EARN’ stands for:

- **E**vent: What was the situation?
- **A**ction: What was the observed behavior?
- **R**esult: What was the impact or consequence?
- **N**ext Steps: What behaviors need to be continued/changed?

Note: More details on each step are found in the “Keys to Using the EARN Feedback Process” below.

First, you identify the Event – when and where the behavior occurred. For example, “During yesterday’s weekly team meeting...” describes the Event.

Next, you describe the Action on which you’re providing feedback, e.g., “You answered your phone and stepped away...” Third, you explain the Result the behavior creates. “When we have time set aside for meetings, it’s important that you’re present and focused, and by stepping away to take a call you are neither...” is a clear statement of the Result.

Finally, you ask for or recommend Next Steps to turn the conversation to your employees. For example, “How would you feel about leaving your phone at your desk during meetings or only answering it in an emergency?” allows your employee

to be a part of the solution.

Using the EARN Feedback Process allows you to provide motivational and developmental feedback in a structured way.

Here is an example of a motivational coaching session.

Terrell has been coaching his employee, Jacob, for a few months. Most of their coaching sessions involve discussing high-level projects and how Jacob should approach the specific needs of each project. Lately, Terrell has been including Jacob in higher-level meetings where these projects are being discussed. Jacob easily participates in the meetings with senior-level managers and provides sophisticated solutions to complex issues brought forward by other meeting participants. Terrell makes a note of Jacob's ease and diplomatic approach to problem solving in the meetings. During their next coaching session, Terrell recalls the meeting (**Event**) and shares his observations (Jacob's **Action**). Terrell also informs Jacob that he has been asked to be a permanent participant at these meetings going forward (**Result**) and to continue to use his problem solving approach in the future (**Next Steps**).

## **Benefits of the EARN Feedback Process for Positive & Negative Situations**

The benefits of the EARN Feedback Process for Positive & Negative Situations are outlined below:

- Provides coach with a structured way to provide timely feedback
- Ensures employees receive focused and actionable feedback
- Allows for emotion-free, fact-based delivery of feedback

## **Keys to the EARN Feedback Process for Positive & Negative Situations**

As you implement the EARN Feedback Process, keep the following tips in mind for capturing each point of feedback effectively.

**Event:** Use this opening to orient your employee to the place and time during which the action or behavior on which you are providing feedback was observed. What was the situation? When did it happen? Where did it occur? Make sure your employee knows what you're talking about before you take the conversation too far.

**Action:** Describe the specific action or behavior on which you are providing feedback. What was the observed behavior? What did he or she specifically do or say? Here it is important to keep the focus on the behavior – not the person. Keep your tone non-accusing and describe the action or behavior without judgment.

**Result:** Explain the impact or consequence of his or her behavior or action. What changed (for better or worse)? What was the impact or the consequence? What was affected? Be very clear about what you're providing feedback on. It is also important that your employee thoroughly understand the importance or consequences of his or her action or behavior.

**Next Steps:** Make a specific request to change or continue the identified action or behavior – or ask for ideas on how to move forward. Not all employees will be willing or able in all instances to suggest next steps, but it is valuable to show your employees that you see him or her as part of the solution. You can also communicate that value by agreeing on next steps before you leave the coaching conversation.

Overall feedback should be:

- **Focused** – specifically on “what” and “how”
- **Frequent** – timely (e.g., occurring a day or two after the behavior is observed) and regular
- **Appropriate Environment** – employee should feel safe and open
- **Given with Attention** – share your feelings and perspective
- **Actionable** – behavior one can change or sustain
- **Balanced** – motivational and developmental

## Next Steps

**Activities:** For additional information on planning for coaching, please take a moment to review the job aid and complete the worksheet listed below.

- [Job Aids for 'The Earn Feedback Process'](#)
- [Feedback Role-play Worksheet](#)
- [Feedback Role-play Worksheet - Key](#)

**Coming Next:** *Effective Next Steps Planning* is a crucial follow-up to providing feedback, and the next topic in this series to provide you with ways to incorporate planning for your next coaching conversation before you leave the last.