

Case Study

Supervisory Skills Training with the *Work Expectations Profile*

The Client:

A long-term care facility contacted me to ask for supervisory skills training. Many of their supervisors had been promoted into their management responsibilities because of their job-knowledge but lacked experience with managing people. I discovered a rift between management and employees; the mentality of the organization was “us versus them.” The two groups lacked mutual respect, and employees felt they had no input into the organizational culture or into recent events within the community, such as team meetings or committee projects. The management team included 15 people, with a total employee base of 100.

The Business Need:

I suggested increasing the awareness of motivation techniques for a broad range of employees. They were telling, not asking for ideas. Oftentimes, they used their title and authority for control instead of involving their staff in decisions. The facility needed to consider the needs of every employee, including food service, environmental services, maintenance, marketing, and nursing. The resentment among the employee group resulted in increased turnover and reduced morale and productivity. The organization needed to focus on employee satisfaction and learn how to motivate everyone more effectively.

The Solutions:

We used the *Work Expectations Profile*. The management team first needed to understand what was important to them in their work; this set the tone and helped participants understand that everyone has work expectations, though they might differ greatly within an organization. Then the employees completed the *Work Expectations Profile* to open a dialogue with their managers about what their needs were.

The Delivery:

First, the management group completed the *Work Expectations Profile*. They realized the tool's usefulness to them and understood how beneficial it would be to their employees.

Next, I facilitated a 90-minute overview of the *Work Expectations Profile* with the employees. I introduced the product and had the employees complete the assessment. During this session, I used several excellent activities. I asked the employees to post their three highest expectations plus their lowest expectation on a flipchart. This way, we were able to see what the team was saying as a whole, for example, Recognition or Expression.

After the flipchart, we had breakout sessions to develop specific strategies for the team's top expectations. We addressed, for example, the different ways to handle Recognition; some people might want a simple thank you, while others want recognition of their skills. This offered a broad perspective to supervisors, helping them understand that motivation couldn't be one size fits all. To retain their staff, they needed to understand that it's not all about the paycheck. There are other factors that lead to dissatisfaction: lack of recognition or teamwork, etc. We also discussed a four-quadrant model in terms of employee motivation and productivity.

This opened a discussion about lack of productivity; without supervision or appropriate feedback, employees lose motivation. To increase effectiveness and ensure motivation, managers needed to initiate one-on-one discussions with their employees. We tell managers that they'll spend the time one way or another: they can either let issues fester until they're almost out of control or they can get out on the front line, learn what's important to their employees and work together to find ways to meet those needs. It's internal customer service.

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Finally, as a result of these discussions, the managers committed to meeting with their employees one-on-one in the two months following the training session in order to discuss the results of the assessment. As part of the initial session with managers, I prepared them for these one-on-one sessions by introducing coaching skills: listening, thanking your employee for input, etc. We practiced a coaching discussion using role-plays and a sample agenda. I've used this three-part training process with a number of clients to improve relationships between supervisors and employees. After these meetings, the managers shared what they learned with one another to identify organizational themes. They developed an action plan for the entire organization with regard to employee expectations. In addition to addressing issues and problems, the employees learned a lot about what they like in their jobs.

The Results:

This training was prompted by the organization's strategic plan. They had a number of ambitious goals, but the management team realized they couldn't accomplish their objectives without the support of their staff. I returned to the organization a year after this training to assist with additional strategic planning. The list of accomplishments was staggering! In one year's time they were able to improve employee and resident/customer satisfaction on their annual survey, obtain more cooperation within and between departments, and reduce employee and manager retention. They reached a number of their long-term goals, including 100 percent occupancy, because they created a strong, healthy relationship between managers and employees.