



It's About People, Not Process
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ENGAGE: What Not to Do 3

Don't assume that long term employees aren't interested in developing in their professions.

Employee: Ya know Sam, I've been working for the Department for over 20 years now and I'd like to start thinking about what ways I can expand my skill set so I can contribute...

Supervisor: (interrupts employee) Are you into photography?

Employee: What?

Supervisor: Photography. My uncle, he's about ready to retire. He does nothing but photography all day long.

Employee: Well you know, I'm not really ready to retire yet. I've just been thinking about ways I can expand my skill set so that I can...

Supervisor: (interrupts employee again) Why? I mean you're this close to photo...paradise.

Long-term employees can be an important resource. While they may be happy with their current position, and have no desire to promote or move on, they may be interested in helping to develop employees with less tenure, identify problem areas in their section, or implement new practices or programs within their office. Many are just waiting to be asked to help in these areas.

Don't accept "I don't have any goals or ways I can improve" as an answer.

Supervisor: So Matt, do you have any goals or anything that you want to improve on?

Employee: How can you improve on this? (flexing his muscles)

Supervisor: Yeah!! (supervisor and employee give each other a high five)

Many employees focus only on their day-to-day tasks, rather than the broader goals and initiatives of the organization. It is incumbent upon supervisors to educate team members about those goals and initiatives, and encourage them to think about how they can contribute to the overall health and success of the agency.

Don't monopolize the ENGAGE conversation. It should be a dialogue, not a monologue.

Supervisor: So Matt welcome to the ENGAGE meeting. I'm really glad that you could come in to discuss your progress...

Employee: (interrupts supervisor) To ENGAGE or not to ENGAGE. That is the question.

Supervisor: Matt, I didn't think that we were going to be discussing...

Employee: (interrupts supervisor by clearing throat)

Supervisor: Never mind. Continue on.

Employee: To ENGAGE or not to ENGAGE. That is the question.

Instead of telling the team member what you think they should do, begin your sentences with language such as "tell me how . . .," "tell me why . . .," "how will you . . .," and "what do you think?" This will insure that the employee has ample opportunity to participate in the discussion.



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Don't be afraid to ask your team members to help you with your own professional development goals.

Supervisor: So Matt, that uh pretty much wraps it up. Uh is there anything, any questions, you have for me?

Employee: Well you know, how about you? Have you thought about any goals for yourself?

Supervisor: (facial expression shows supervisor has not thought of any goals for himself)

Successful supervisors constantly seek ways to improve themselves. A critical component of improvement is team member feedback. Team members often have very good ideas about what is and is not working well with their teams and how they need to be supervised. When handled professionally, these interactions can help a supervisor to grow and can lead to the overall improvement of the team as a whole.

Don't forget to follow-up on items between ENGAGE conversations.

Supervisor: So uh, just to reiterate, you do a fantastic job and uh, next week I'll come by and follow up regarding that project.

Employee: Thanks, that sounds great.

Supervisor: Great.

One week later...

Supervisor: (reminder to check in on employee pops up on computer screen) Oh yeah.

Employee 1: There's cake in the break room!

(Everybody takes off running.)

Employee 2: (enter supervisor's office) Hey, weren't you going to drop by today? Ugh!!

Supervisor: (lifts head up from plate full of smashed cake in his face) Hmm? Huh?

ENGAGE conversations often end with action items for both the supervisor and team member. Supervisors must make sure they complete their action items and report back to their team member. This will enhance trust between the supervisor and team member and emphasize the value of the ENGAGE conversations.