



FARRAR'S FAUCET

ACTIONABLE THOUGHTS ON PRINCIPLED BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

If they're not on track...ask!



“I have an employee who isn't meeting my performance expectations. I don't want to take disciplinary action inappropriately...is there some short set of questions I can ask that gets to the bottom of the issue?”

Managers are often reluctant to take appropriate corrective action with an employee. Sometimes it's because they think the employee is too senior, (really), sometimes they feel it's just a personality issue they need to get over, and sometimes they can't quite put their finger on the performance issue that needs to be addressed. Corrective action comes in many forms, and disciplinary processes are the last resort.

Here are the four questions I use:

1: Is the goal unclear? Sometimes employees don't meet expectations because they don't understand what the expectations are. Of course, sometimes the managers aren't clear on the expectations either, and that's where a good performance review and consensus process is essential. However, if there is any doubt at all on the clarity of the goals there is a simple solution. Make sure they're SMART, (Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Defined).

2: Is the employee competent? Sometimes the employee just doesn't have the required skills and abilities for the job. No amount of “performance management” is going to fix that. Have a candid discussion with the employee and decide to either get the required coaching or training, or change the employee's job requirements.

3: Have things changed? Sometimes circumstances have moved on and the original goals just aren't relevant any more. Particularly in the current climate, you can't hold employee's personally responsible for circumstances out of their control. Once again, have a candid

discussion with the employee, remove barriers to success, facilitate problem solving, or renegotiate the goal.

4: Is it a problem of motivation? This is probably the classic precursor to disciplinary action. If the goal is clear, the employee is competent and things haven't changed, then the only reason I can see why the employee isn't performing is because they don't want to. Manage them up or manage them on.

Most people are aware an issue exists before the discussion starts. Demonstrate that you can be trusted and the conversation will go much easier. *If the employee knows they will be treated with dignity and respect you'll have an open and candid exchange and come to a positive resolution.*

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An Australian living in the US since 2001, David is a psychologist with international experience as a consultant and professional speaker. David studied at the Royal Military College of Australia, (MUR), University of Melbourne, and Northwestern University, (Kellogg Business School). David has degrees in economics and psychology, graduated his master's program with honors, and qualified as a psychologist in Australia. David is the President and CEO of FGRAssociates, LLC. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Saint Mary's University and the College of Saint Scholastica where he teaches Ethics, Leadership and Conflict Management in MBA and other graduate programs.

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