

Striving for Improvement

One of the most common frustrations reported by managers is that people do not do what is asked of them. When we unpick this there are usually 2 issues – either the work was not completed on time – or it was not completed to the quality expected – or worse still – both! So how can we as leaders, ensure better outcomes from our staff and ultimately through their best efforts, for our clients?

First, we have to create a learning culture where there is an emphasis on training and feedback, where people are supported in learning new skills and there is an expectation it is ok to try and fail. There has to be a culture where it is ok to ask for help and to be given opportunities to grow and develop.

Secondly, as leaders we have to set out clear standards for our teams and services, involving them whenever possible. What is the purpose of the service and how is that to be achieved? Who suffers if work is not delivered on time and to agreed standards? We have to engage with staff to identify their strengths and celebrate them. We need to condition good practice and good behaviour across the whole spectrum of our expectations, including punctuality, timeliness of completing pieces of work, respect for colleagues and clients, and teamwork.

Thirdly we need to be consistent and confident about upholding standards and to have integrity and transparency around identifying and helping staff to acknowledge areas in which their performance or attitude needs to improve. This should include clarity about specific issues, and the change that is expected, leading to written agreements about each party's role in the way forward, including timescales. What is expected of the worker and what they can expect from the supervisor should be clear. Is specific training to be provided and by whom? What will be the consequences if improvements are not realised?

As leaders we have to balance the competing demands of staff and the service, being empathetic while not compromising good practice. Sometimes regardless of our best efforts, it is not possible to get the outcome we need from certain staff and in such circumstances performance management, disciplinary and other human resources expertise will be required.

For more information on CORE leadership skills please visit my website at
www.lynnepeyton.com/core