

QUICK TIPS – *DON'T POINT FINGERS*

In many organizations, when things go wrong, the immediate reaction is to identify and blame the person responsible by “*pointing fingers*”. This type of response is neither constructive nor professional.

When a manager “*points the finger*” at an employee who has demonstrated sub-par performance, it undermines the very fabric of their working relationship. The manager has abrogated personal accountability, by publicly humiliating the employee. Furthermore, an important coaching opportunity has been eliminated.

The appropriate role for the manager is to assume responsibility and publicly shield the employee from further embarrassment, while working privately at developing improved performance. Conversely, when the employee has achieved successful performance, the manager publicly should recognize the employee’s accomplishments, rather than taking personal credit for the outcome.

When one “*points the finger*” at a colleague or a team member for deficient performance, it indicates an absence of common goals and shared accountability. This defensive action is divisive and counter-productive. It erodes the prospect for future team development and success.

Blaming others does not rectify the situation: in fact, it exacerbates it. Collaborative opportunities are diminished, often to the point where even co-operation becomes impossible. An atmosphere that fosters distrust and resentment will not support sustainable performance.

In the best of circumstances, accomplishing an organization’s business goals is a challenging undertaking, because any number of elements can mitigate against success. It takes a team working in concert to achieve the desired outcomes. This implies mutually-supportive and respectful behaviour in a culture that promotes success and growth.

It needs to be remembered that making a mistake often indicates that someone has taken a chance. This is substantially better than mundane organizational lethargy and complacency. In this instance, the “*mistake*” should be celebrated as an act of courage and creativity.

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