

FOCUSING ON PERFORMANCE

A simple but very effective tool to help people perform better is to focus any praise or feedback on the person's act or performance, and not on the person.

An example: "Debbie" wrote a very detailed, clear and timely email and sent it to her staff describing how they would be assisting with a new company-wide communications process. You wanted to provide some confirming feedback to her, so you began to write a quick email back to thank her for doing a great job on the much-needed task. Just as you were about to send the email saying, "Great job, Debbie!" you realized what that message would mean to her. "Great job, Debbie!" is almost like saying, "You're great, Debbie." At first you may not even notice it, or realize that's going to happen, but think about it. When you're told, "Great job, ___!", you take it subconsciously as "I'm great." The problem is that when you think you're great, you then put less effort into future activities. After all, if I'm great, why should I have to put effort into things – it should come naturally.

So, what you did in this example was take another minute or two to compose an email that said something like, "It's obvious that you put a lot of thought and work into this document. It's well thought out, and exactly the information your staff needed. You communicated what was needed very clearly, and why this will benefit them. This will make them better, as well as making our company-wide communications more efficient. Thank you, Debbie."

The message Debbie takes away from this is that putting thought and effort into things is good, that this is exactly what her staff needed, that she communicated clearly, that it will make them all better, that it will make communications more efficient, and that you appreciated it. She now knows exactly what she needs to do in the future: think, effort, communicate, tell what the benefit is, etc. And she knows what is important to you. If you hadn't defined these things – if you had just said, "Great job" – she would not have known exactly what was a "great job."

Most importantly, this develops a mindset in Debbie – one of "effort equals great results," and one of not relying on being a "great person." It develops what Carol Dweck, PhD, in *Mindset* calls a "growth mindset." And it took you about one extra minute – a very small investment in someone who has tremendous potential for the future of the company when you can draw out the best performance in her.

The next time you begin to recognize, praise or provide feedback to a person, check to make sure it's focused on the activity the person did or is doing. *Focus on the act or performance, and not the person.*

Copyright 2007, Ross Bentley. All Rights Reserved.
For more information, contact Ross at ross@go-perform.com.

This article may be reprinted or forwarded to colleagues and friends as long as the above copyright notice and contact information is attached in its entirety. If you do reprint this article, please let us know that you have done so and forward us a copy of the article source or a link where the article may be viewed.

www.performance-rules.com