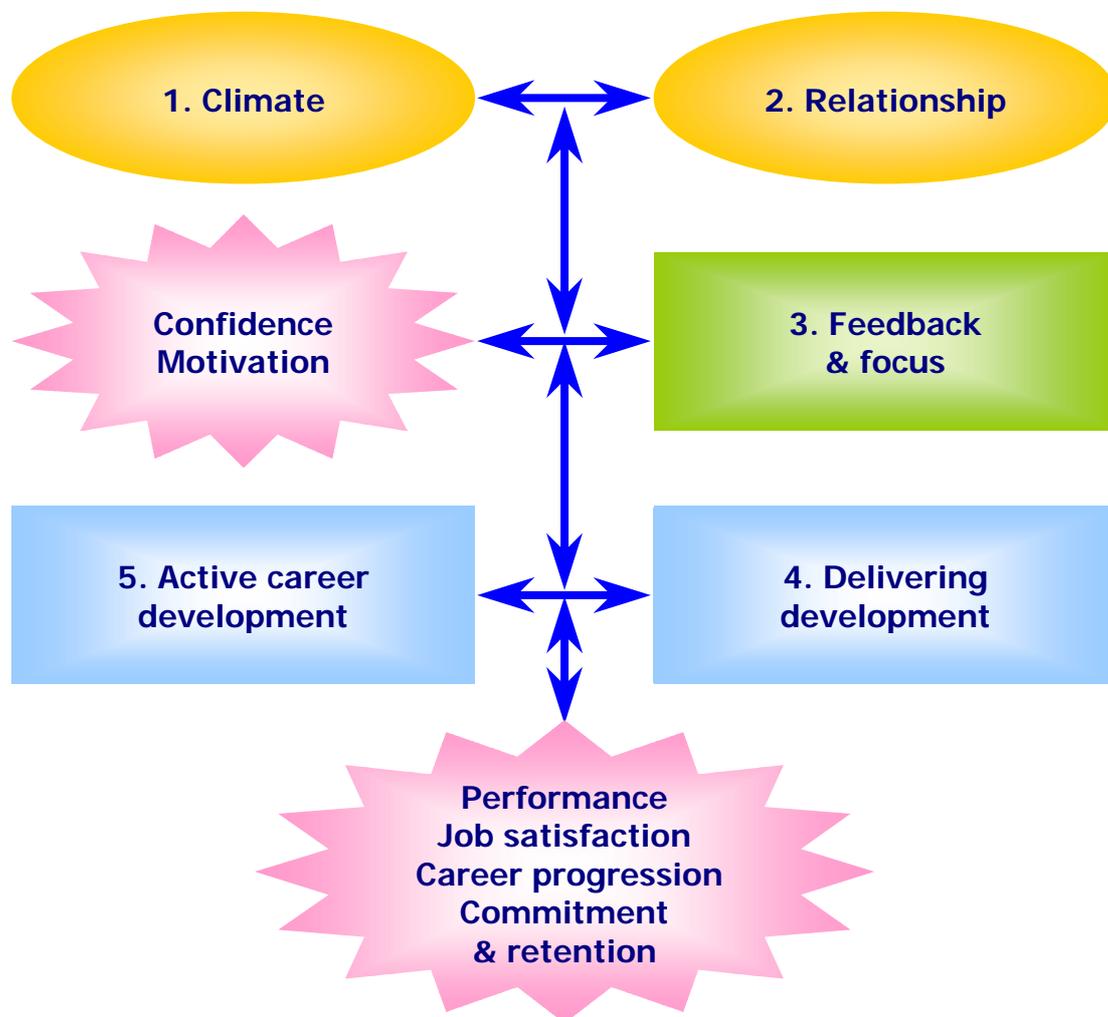


A practical framework for managers



The research report on which this framework is based is available from the Institute for Employment Studies website:

www.employment-studies.co.uk

Hirsh W, Silverman M, Tamkin P, Jackson C (2004), *Managers as Developers of Others*, IES Report 407

What to do to improve your effectiveness in developing others:

SETTING THE CLIMATE

Find time for people whenever they need help, and make them welcome.

Make development part of your team atmosphere by encouraging team members to help each other and share information in team meetings.

Acknowledge your own need for improvement and development.

Set work objectives with your staff and team which build in development, adjusting job design if appropriate.

Work on staff development within your own natural management style.

Allow yourself to take pleasure in developing others. Treat it as a business priority.

BUILDING A DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIP

Get to know your staff well through frequent, informal conversations about their work and how things are going.

Listen carefully to their concerns. See the work situation from the individual's point of view, and tailor your response to their particular needs.

Offer positive support, and build trust through an open, honest and considerate approach.

Be pro-active and persistent in the development of staff, but try to give employees as much control over their own development as possible.

Be alert to the extra development needs people have when they are new in a job or when they are outgrowing their job. Signs of stress or poor motivation can also show the need for extra development support.

Adjust each developmental relationship over time, giving people more space as their skills and confidence grow.

Be open to supporting other employees who do not work for you directly.

FEEDBACK & FOCUSING DEVELOPMENT

Be explicit about the standards of work and behaviour required.

Achieve a sound understanding of the individual's performance and skills through conversation, and also through direct observation and review of specific tasks.

Review performance and development progress in frequent one-to-one meetings.

Be open and honest in giving feedback. Give praise wherever you can, and use positive feedback to build confidence. Make any criticism specific and constructive.

Listen carefully to how the individual sees themselves, and challenge this if necessary.

Try to agree a few development priorities, based on a clear, objective, and shared assessment of their needs - sometimes just one thing is best.

Track development activity and progress consistently, keeping notes if this helps.

DELIVERING DEVELOPMENT

Make sure that agreed development priorities are actively pursued.

If you are coaching the individual yourself, be focused and take the time to explain things thoroughly, preferably through using real work examples.

Invite the individual to rehearse important tasks or to share ideas before executing them. Review such tasks afterwards and help the individual learn from them.

Give employees a wider understanding of the business, including how it operates politically.

Pull in others to help with development. Choose them for the skills they have and work experiences they can offer, but also pick people who are effective developers.

Make the best use of the formal training your organisation can offer, where this meets the development needs you have identified. Talk to the individual before and after any training course.

Look for direct experiences outside the normal job which can deliver development *eg* projects, working groups, job swaps, secondments, external activities *etc.* Use delegation consciously to develop others.

If personal problems are affecting an employee's work performance or development, try and work with them to solve the problem in a supportive but objective fashion. Be flexible in your approach. Pull in expert help if needed.

ACTIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT

See a person's current job performance in the context of what they have done before, and what they may go on to do. See their work and career in the context of their life outside work, and remember that people's circumstances are always changing.

If you think someone has potential beyond their current job, or would do better in a different kind of job, talk to them. Be prepared to gently push them to extend their career aspirations if they under-estimate their own ability. Sometimes, the reverse is needed for people who over-estimate their own skills or abilities.

If an individual is thinking about a career move, help them obtain a realistic view of the possible new job role, and whether they have the skills it requires.

Support staff through the processes of job change or promotion. Make sure they understand how these processes work, and coach them if necessary on the application documents they have to complete, or for interviews or presentations.

What NOT to do in developing others:

We could write a long list, but here are some of the negative behaviours that individuals in the IES research project mentioned most frequently:

- Blaming work objectives or targets set from above for not developing your staff.
- Making yourself inaccessible or being aggressive when people ask you for help.
- Criticising your staff or your team in front of other people.
- Showing an erratic or inconsistent attitude to staff development.
- Using negative feedback to undermine people, or hurt them personally.
- Giving someone a job you know they can't do and leaving them to sink or swim.
- Trying to keep someone in a job you know they have outgrown.
- Ignoring a personal problem which is clearly affecting someone's work.
- Losing touch with what your staff are doing, and how well they are doing it.
- Only talking about development once a year in formal appraisal. Agreeing a Personal Development Plan and then putting it in a drawer.
- Seeing development only in terms of sending staff on courses.
- Being uninterested, not exploring performance and not helping the individual think ahead.