

September 2009 – MSPB - The “Good Supervisor”

To Department of Energy Learning and Workforce Development Community,

The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) has completed two studies recently on employee engagement. ([MSPB studies can be downloaded](#) at the MSPB website)

The latest study, dated Aug 24, 2009, "Managing for Engagement - Communication, Connection, and Courage" recommends actions to improve employee engagement and obtain a 20 percent or more performance improvement. The key recommendation is that top political and career leadership needs to communicate, listen, and act on issues affecting the agency's workforce. The report also makes recommendations on supervisory performance and development. Managers and supervisors, those individuals who direct and control the work of at least three persons, in addition to their own work, and complete performance ratings for those persons may be the exemplary [Employee Quick-Resource](#).

According to the MSPB report, the picture of the "good supervisor" includes:

1. Was selected in part for and comes to the job with good interpersonal skills.
2. Is a good listener and provides clear, honest, work-centered feedback.
3. Is trustworthy, honest, and consistent in dealing with people.
4. Builds an office team by communicating, listening, and acting on group needs.
5. Has the courage to interact with employees as individuals and make decisions based on both office work needs and individual employee circumstances.
6. Maintains a climate in which employees feel free to express their ideas and opinions.
7. Knows and clearly explains the office's work objectives, products, and expected results.
8. Works with employees to define and achieve performance goals.
9. Insists on high performance goals.
10. Reviews work performance providing individual feedback frequently and systematically, relating individuals' work to office and program goals.
11. Coaches employees effectively in how to produce excellent, high-performance work.
12. Recognizes and rewards good performance, relating it to mission achievements.
13. Prevents or corrects and takes positive actions with low performers.
14. Purposively grows his or her own and insists employees grow their competencies through work related training and work assignment opportunities.

15. Insists that employees have career development training and assignment opportunities and also participates in career development opportunities.
16. Makes sure that all employees know about career promotion opportunities.
17. Provides the space, tools, and supplies needed to do the work effectively.
18. Ensures that everyone works in a safe and secure environment.

As a result, employees

1. Take an active role in managing their own work performance.
2. Carefully prepare for work product and performance review meetings.
3. Have the opportunity to use their talents and strengths to perform well at work.
4. Have an individual development plan including work and career development objectives and actions.

Do these characteristics or behaviors remind you of someone in your office? If you are a supervisor, how would your employees and peers respond to these performance values on a 360 degree evaluation? If we had a supervisor-coach of the year contest, could we use these characteristics as evaluation criteria in the assessment process? How would we develop training that builds these traits, characteristics, behaviors?

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