



Providing Concrete Feedback on Employee Performance to Your Staff

by Craig Pendleton

Many casinos go to great lengths to explain the goals, mission, vision and culture of their business when training new staff members. The challenge is to hire staff members who can carry forward this mission and for trainers to provide these trainees with guidance as they learn their specific job skills, guest service standards and a multitude of other desired behaviors. After screening and hiring the right new staff members, the initial hurdle is to properly train them. This can only successfully occur with adequate training materials, the proper trainers and ongoing feedback to reinforce desired behavior while counseling, coaching and correcting behaviors that don't match the goals of the organization.

After training, often there is an expectation that staff members who did well in training and demonstrated proficiency will continue to deliver ongoing and consistent performance matching behaviors they have exhibited. In the volume of daily business, however, there is a tendency to lose connection with staff members and later discover that their performance has not continued to follow guidelines from training.

First Actions

It is critical that staff members receive frequent and consistent feedback about their performance. Discussions and coaching can assist in maintaining standards and direction. Equally important is the use of consistent, non-subjective methods of measuring performance and scoring the results of compliance or non-compliance using scoring methods that are equal for all staff members.

Pass or Fail

All elements of critically important job performance must be graded on the guidelines of "pass or fail." Did the staff member perform the required behavior? Yes or no? Pass or fail? The scoring method should be clear cut enough that supervisors from other casino departments can observe and score any staff member's performance within any other department.

Guest Service Standard Example: Staff member introduction at the beginning of the service experience to personalize the experience. Did the staff member introduce themselves during the beginning of the service interaction using their name, or use the name of the guest (if known) during the introduction to personalize the service experience?

This is a clear cut standard – easy to observe, easy to score, simple performance standard. Yes or no, did they do it? For service staff, there should be simple steps to any service cycle experience with a guest that must be performed. The standard is either: performed or not performed.

When building the scoring system this does not mean that

there can't be flexibility allowed in the process of performing the behavior standard by the staff member. A server passing a new table may acknowledge new guests but not actually perform the introduction until returning to the table. A server greeting recognized regular guests may use the guests' names in the greeting where it would seem strange to introduce themselves by their name when the customers already know them. The goal is not to restrict the fluidity of service or create "canned robotic" service steps, but to measure and ensure that the standards and steps of service are consistently performed every time.

Over and Above

Staff is encouraged to perform unexpected exceptional acts of service allowing them to create customized service experiences. In fact, performing at least one unexpected exceptional act of service, may even be a required service standard.

To encourage this behavior a scoring system may be established with three levels of scoring of compliance:

- 1) Doesn't meet the required standard
- 2) Meets the required standard
- 3) Exceeds the required standard

Clear Standards and Behaviors

For every job position, it is possible to establish both job skill standards required to perform specific tasks and service standards required to provide exceptional personal guest experience for positions interacting with guests or other staff members. There is good reason to view the back of house staff members as serving the front of the house staff members, for example: food servers served by kitchen staff and staff members served by employee services staff. All staff members have a roll in serving others, and as such, should have service standards documented and scored for their daily performance of duties.

Mix It Up

Often it can be a great training process to have supervisors from other outlets scoring staff that are not their own. Differences in performance can be observed, leading to valuable cross cultivation of ideas between outlets, departments and supervisors established to improve performance levels casino wide.

Frequency of Scoring and Feedback for Success

Guidelines determining the frequency of scoring and the frequency of providing feedback of performance results must be established. This process should be non-negotiable and performed often. It may be a good idea to break the scoring and observations of different components of job performance into smaller elements that are quick to score and will be combined

with scoring of the other job performance elements when all areas are completed. Long periods of time should not be allowed between scoring periods. This allows for frequent positive feedback and reinforcement, and most importantly, immediate correction of improper performance before these actions become habits and are harder to correct. Frequent observations will assist staff members in being comfortable with the observation and scoring process.

When scoring and feedback is performed, this can lead to staff members hoping to be observed doing things properly and exceptionally well. The goal is always a positive experience. If the process becomes mostly negative, either the staff members are undertrained or incapable of performing the actions required. It all begins with hiring the proper staff with the desire and abilities to provide the necessary skill actions.

The scoring system can be used by trainers to evaluate trainee progress. When staff members become observers themselves of other staff members, they can often rise to the occasion and increase their own performance. Staff engagement in the evaluation process can be powerful. Mentors and coaches often emerge from the group during this process.

Positive Reinforcement

Within a department, it is possible to reward the best performers with internal benefits such as preferred schedules, early outs, choice of station, and benefit perks such as free staff meals, a day off from side work, etc., without the casino incurring a significant financial cost. Creativity can be encouraged by letting the staff suggest rewards and then compete for them. Different processes of scoring can be arranged similar to sales contests where the top performers are paired with the lowest performers to mentor and coach improvement. They both then succeed as a team or continue to strive together for improvement.

The Bottom Line

Having specific written standards for the elements of job performance and guest service is crucial. A detailed scoring system for performance standards using “doesn’t meet, meets, or exceeds the standard” should be used. Specific

frequency of scoring should be established and be non-negotiable. The success of ensuring performance will be based upon: frequent and clear scoring, frequent feedback, ongoing coaching, flexibility in the process and potential rewards. ♣

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