How Do You Get Constructive Feedback From Your Management Team Members?

TIM GOBBLE
City Manager
East Ridge, Tennessee
tgobble@eastridgetn.org

My door is always open to management team members who want to discuss any issue. There is a level of trust between us. I also go to them on a regular basis, ask questions, and get feedback on matters that come to my attention. I want to learn, be fair, and help all of us grow in our profession. The internal attitude among top-level management in our community is positive toward each other.

We also have weekly staff meetings where I address issues and discuss relevant city management related topics. These meetings are generally informal and all top-level managers are invited. During this meeting we have a time set aside to go around the room to each division head, who discusses issues of concern and then asks questions of me and others in the room.

Each management team member is encouraged to provide input and perspective on any issue or question asked, regardless of whether the topic involves that particular manager’s immediate area of responsibility.

ROBBIE CHARTIER, ICMA-CM
County Administrator
County of Okeechobee, Florida
rchartier@co.okeechobee.fl.us

It has been my experience in obtaining constructive feedback that it starts first with building professional relationships with employees. Show employees that their opinion is valued and take action based on the ideas they have developed. This builds trust for the next opportunity. Receiving constructive feedback starts with giving constructive feedback. Feedback, which builds up employees rather than tearing them down, establishes rapport and trust.

Taking an interest in employees builds the working relationship and shows you’re willing to be open and honest. Being sincere and communicating truthfully allows them to provide honest and constructive feedback on ideas, projects, and even their view of you as a manager.

It is also important to set the example in your own attitude, initiative, and knowledge.

JAMES NEUBAUER, ICMA-CM
City Administrator
Mandan, North Dakota
jneubauer@cityofmandan.com

As the first city administrator of Mandan, my primary task was to bring our many departments together to ensure we are all communicating and spending resident’s tax dollars wisely.

We have more than enough meetings in our daily lives; however, we have at least one management team meeting per week. The week of the city commission’s meeting, all department managers attend with commissioners invited, to discuss items on the upcoming agenda.

Many times, items outside the agenda topics are discussed. Weeks where we do not have a commission meeting, we again gather department managers to discuss items that are of interest to all.

I believe we have created an environment where managers are comfortable in voicing their opinions on areas related to their expertise as well on all city operational areas. Through this environment, all departments are aware of what projects are being considered and how departments can assist each other.

BRENDA FISCHER, ICMA-CM
City Manager
Maricopa, Arizona
Brenda.Fischer@maricopa-az.gov

Simply ask and listen.

To be effective managers, we must be open to constructive feedback from our team. The first step is to have an organizational culture of open, honest dialogue. There must be trust that once feedback is given, there is no repercussion. If that culture and trust don’t exist, don’t bother asking.

Constructive feedback helps the organization and manager improve performance and effectiveness. Regardless of the topic, to improve, you must be comfortable asking, “What did we do right? What should we do differently? Where do we go from here?”

In addition to gaining invaluable information, you will earn greater respect from your team.