

## 4.9 Collaboratively Discussing Solutions

By giving the feedback-receiving individual the responsibility of finding solutions before you jump in with your own ideas, you communicate that you respect their ability to solve problems and generate ideas. You are also telling them that you expect them to figure out concrete ways to work better. Often, the best ideas are generated by those closer to the work than you are.

In addition, you avoid being put in the position of imposing your own perspective on the individual all the time. Doing so can result in the appraisee resisting your suggestions, or not offering their own solutions because you have already offered specifics.

The individual's ideas and suggestions are valuable, whether they are on target or not. They deserve an honest reaction from you. As a feedback-giver, use your communication skills to teach, train, guide, encourage, and refocus. It's always important to encourage and reinforce these things as much as you can.

These opportunities to talk about future solutions to current problems crop up formally and informally on a regular basis in the course of work. In every case, the questions below will help you to structure these opportunities. Use them to review the important issues before conducting a feedback discussion (or any coaching discussion, for that matter).

- What opportunities to coach do you have with this individual?
- How can you use these opportunities to develop the individual's potential?
- What specifically have you observed that has contributed to the situation?
- How can you tie your feedback to the individual's interest and career aspirations?
- From your experience, what potential pitfalls will you need to overcome in order to achieve success in coaching for optimal performance?
- How can you make sure that the conversation is solution-oriented?

Giving feedback is a relatively easy task when performance shortfalls are minor or the feedback is designed to improve on an already relatively strong base or platform. In these situations, feedback suggestions might be, **“Try this and you are likely to get an even better result”** or **“Eliminate that small error and you'll exceed the target easily.”**

However, at the other end of the scale, providing feedback is an extremely difficult task when the performance shortfalls are major and any feedback is likely to cause the individual some feelings of disappointment or even distress. You might be sorely tempted to “water down” the feedback comments or be less than honest with the feedback recipient.