

## **BECOMING A MORE CONFIDENT COMMUNICATOR AND EFFECTIVELY PROVIDING FEEDBACK**

We are all guilty of putting off or avoiding what we should do now, but the question is: “at what cost?”

One of the secrets of management is to clearly set standards and expectations, then whenever you see someone you manage fall below those standards you reinforce and refocus the expectation or standard. There is no question that if you are consistent with this strategy, you will have a stronger and more professionally run salon.

When you need to draw attention to something that has slipped, it is important to take action as soon as possible, no delays. Don’t wait a week, or until the next team meeting, it is essential to refocus as soon as possible.

If this is a behavior that needs to be addressed with only one person, then it should be addressed with that person directly. While it can be a little more confrontational to directly speak to someone, a one on one approach will achieve better results and allow the feedback to have more of a conversational tone, where the person receiving the feedback is able to respond, and discuss.

The key here is to take action at the earliest opportunity.

An example -

Your standard in the salon may be that “no one is to chew gum” as it does not reflect the professional image of the salon, yet ‘Mary’ is chewing gum. What do you do to address this?

The appropriate action would be to firstly ask, “Mary, is there a reason why you are chewing gum?” In this case it is highly unlikely that the reason is one that would be acceptable. You reinforce the standard “Mary, the reason why we don’t chew gum in our salon is that it detracts from the professional image of our salon. Do you understand?”

You reinforce. “Please do not do it again”. This is also called inspecting what you expect. If you allow Mary to chew gum you also give them a license to bend or break the other standards and for others to follow suit. Once you have addressed the situation and a satisfactory outcome has been achieved move on and you should not ever have to mention it again.

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When we avoid dealing with the little things, they often become big things that are much harder to deal with. As a manager I believe one of the greatest compliments that your team can pay to you is to say ‘They are a really good manager. They are very firm but always fair.’ There is a balance you need to get right to achieve good standards in your salon.

Don’t put off what you should do today. We all have done it and usually regret it.

Here are seven tips to becoming a better communicator as a manager. If you become more confident as a good communicator you are less likely to avoid.

1. Focus on listening. By letting the other person know you are paying attention you will encourage them to be more forthcoming and you will gather more information.
2. Ask for clarification when you need it. Making sure you understand correctly what you have been told, goes a long way toward keeping the lines of communication open. No grey areas.
3. Be brief. The less you say, the more likely you will be heard. Talk less and listen more...you will be a better manager and you will learn a lot more about your staff and your team. You have 2 ears for listening and one mouth for talking, use them in this order.
4. Don’t repeat yourself. This applies even when you don’t get an acknowledgement that the person agrees with you. They might disagree, but you don’t want to get into an embarrassing difference of opinion. So, if you need to make a point, find a different way to say it. A conversation can easily become aggressive when you just keep repeating your point.
5. Periodically ask “do you understand?” as asking for feedback lets others know you are interested in their reactions and creative input. “Does that make sense?” is something you could also say often, because we are often capable of saying something that we fully understand, but it may make no sense to others.
6. Have an open-door policy. Always keep the line of communication open by allowing yourself to be more approachable.

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7. Use self-deprecating humor. Being able to laugh at yourself shows an ability to be able to connect well with people.

Apply these rules of communication with your team and remember if you need to action something do it as soon as you can. The longer you leave it the more stress you will create for yourself and the less effective you will be in making a strong point to the person you are communicating with.

You want your messages to be taken seriously so when someone changes the rules you need to quickly re-set the standards that are yours.

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