

his ability, and so may fear being embarrassed by failure but also feel uncomfortable raising this issue. When you show confidence in your employee, the employee will likely gain the self-confidence necessary to solve the problem. You may be able to avoid this problem at the start by explicitly conveying to the employee your level of confidence in his ability to complete the assigned task and asking about any concerns he has.

5. *Acknowledge. Recognize the employee's accomplishments.* Acknowledge what has been done, and show appropriate appreciation. Also make sure that the employee recognizes what she has accomplished and how it has contributed to the work unit's functioning, as well as to her own growth and development.

As noted, we focus on delegation in this module as a means to develop employees. As such, the new responsibility or task should be integrated into the employee's performance appraisal, discussed earlier in this competency. While focusing here on the employee who is taking on a new assignment, it should also be clear that managers who are effective delegators benefit personally and also provide benefits to the organization. In the exercises that follow, you will have a chance to analyze how a performance evaluation was handled, practice giving feedback as part of a performance evaluation role-play, and think about how the performance evaluation could have been improved. The final exercise asks you to apply what you have learned in the first three competencies in this module when delegating a task to someone else.

ANALYSIS United Chemical Company*

Objective When faced with our own performance evaluations or those of our subordinates, it is often difficult to separate the people from the issues. The objective of this case analysis and the practice exercise that follows it is to give you the opportunity to examine how the principles of supportive communication and reflective listening that you learned about earlier in this module can be applied to a performance review situation that is "neutral" for you so that you can gain a more in-depth understanding of how these techniques can be used in mentoring and developing employees.

Directions Read the case and then answer the questions that follow.

The United Chemical Company is a large producer and distributor of commodity chemicals with five chemical production plants in the United States. The operations at the main plant in Baytown, Texas, include not only production equipment but also the company's research and engineering center.

The process design group consists of eight male engineers and the manager, Max Kane. The group has worked together steadily for a number of years, and good relationships have developed among all members. When the workload began to increase, Max hired a new design engineer, Sue Davis, a recent master's degree graduate from one of the foremost engineering schools in the country. Sue was assigned to a project involving expansion of the capacity of one of the existing plant facilities. Three other design engineers were assigned to the project along with Sue: Jack Keller (age 38, with 15 years with the

*Adapted from Szilagyi, Andrew D.; Wallace, Marc J.; Ivancevich, John M., *Organizational Behavior Performance*, 3rd Edition, © 1983, pp. 204–205. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

company), Sam Sims (age 40, with 10 years with the company), and Lance Madison (age 32, with 8 years with the company).

As a new employee, Sue was enthusiastic about the opportunity to work at United. She liked her work very much because it was challenging and offered her a chance to apply much of the knowledge she had gained in her university studies. On the job, Sue kept to herself and her design work. Her relations with her fellow project members were friendly, but she did not go out of her way to have informal conversations during or after working hours.

Sue was a diligent employee who took her work seriously. On occasions when a difficult problem arose, she would stay after hours in order to come up with a solution. Because of her persistence, coupled with her more current education, Sue usually completed her portion of the various project stages a number of days before her colleagues. This was somewhat irritating to her, and on these occasions she went to Max to ask for additional work to keep her busy until her fellow workers caught up to her. Initially, she had offered to help Jack, Sam, and Lance with their parts of the project, but each time she was turned down tersely.

About five months after Sue had joined the design group, Jack asked to see Max about a problem the group was having. The conversation between Max and Jack was as follows.

- Max:* Jack, I understand you wanted to discuss a problem with me.
- Jack:* Yes, Max. I didn't want to waste your time, but some of the other design engineers wanted me to discuss Sue with you. She's irritating everyone with her know-it-all, pompous attitude. She just isn't the kind of person that we want to work with.
- Max:* I can't understand that, Jack. She's an excellent worker whose design work is always well done and usually flawless. She's doing everything the company wants her to do.
- Jack:* The company never asked her to disturb the morale of the group or to tell us how to do our work. The animosity of the group can eventually result in lower-quality work for the whole unit.
- Max:* I'll tell you what I'll do. Sue has a meeting with me next week to discuss her six-month performance. I'll keep your thoughts in mind, but I can't promise an improvement in what you and the others believe is a pompous attitude.
- Jack:* Immediate improvement in her behavior isn't the problem—it's her coaching others when she has no right to engage in publicly showing others what to do. You'd think she was lecturing an advanced class in design with all her high-power, useless equations and formulas. She'd better back off soon, or some of us will quit or transfer.

During the next week, Max thought carefully about his meeting with Jack. He knew that Jack was the informal leader of the design engineers and generally spoke for the other group members. On Thursday of the following week, Max called Sue into his office for her midyear review. One portion of the conversation was as follows:

- Max:* There is one other aspect I'd like to discuss with you about your performance. As I just related to you, your technical performance has been excellent; however, there are some questions about your relationships with the other workers.
- Sue:* I don't understand—what questions are you talking about?
- Max:* Well, to be specific, certain members of the design group have complained about your apparent "know-it-all attitude" and the manner in which you try to tell them how to do their job. You're going to have to be patient with them and not publicly call them out about their performance. This is a good group of engineers, and their work over the years has been more than acceptable. I don't want any problems that will cause the group to produce less effectively.

Sue: Let me make a few comments. First of all, I have never publicly criticized their performance to them or to you. Initially, when I was finished ahead of them, I offered to help them with their work but was bluntly told to mind my own business. I took the hint and concentrated only on my part of the work. What you don't understand is that after five months of working in this group I have come to the conclusion that what is going on is a "rip-off" of the company. The other engineers are "goldbricking" and setting a work pace much slower than they're capable of. They're more interested in the music from Sam's radio, the local football team, and the bar they're going to go to for TGIF. I'm sorry, but this is just not the way I was raised or trained. And, finally, they've never looked on me as a qualified engineer, but as a woman who has broken their professional barrier.

Discussion Questions Answer the following questions:

1. What are the key problems with this portion of the performance review? What is missing?
2. How would you use the knowledge and skills you have acquired thus far in this module to redesign the meeting between Max and Sue?
3. What concerns, if any, do you have with Max's conversation with Jack? What might Max have done differently?

Reflection In describing the objective of this analysis, we wrote that this was a "neutral" situation. We used quotation marks because, in reality, many people tend to identify with the characters in case studies based on their own past experiences and characteristics they might share with these characters. Discussing this case in class can be very productive for surfacing different assumptions that people are making about the characters in the case based on stereotypes rather than based on the limited facts presented in the case.

PRACTICE What Would You Include in the Performance Evaluation?

Objective Supportive communication and reflective listening are useful tools during the performance review, but managers need to remember that the performance review is only useful if it is part of a larger performance evaluation process. This exercise gives you an opportunity to think about the role of the performance review in planning the next cycle of performance evaluation.

Directions Review the guidelines for developing an effective performance evaluation system. Then think about the suggestions you had for redesigning Max's midyear review of Sue.

1. What elements would you include in a performance review of Sue? What kind of feedback should you give her? What skills will you suggest that she develop? What other issues will you raise?
2. In dyads, role-play the conversation that occurs in Max's midyear performance evaluation review of Sue.

Discussion Questions Answer the following questions:

1. During the role-play, how successful were you at conducting a successful performance evaluation? Do you feel that you achieved a successful outcome? Why or why not?
2. Which of the guidelines for giving and receiving feedback did you follow? Which did you forget? What were the outcomes?
3. To what degree did your performance review focus on Sue's technical skills, and to what degree did it focus on her role as a member of the process design group? To what degree was Max's role in helping Sue develop as an employee in the process design group part of the performance review?
4. What did you learn from this role-play?