

Giving Instructions: Key points Handout



1. Possible barriers to staff 'receiving' instructions

- Egos – people can resent being told what to do, or feel they are more experienced than the person giving directions, some staff (Israelis?) feel *they* should be the manager, even when they have very limited experience
- Different points of view – staff may have a different or 'better' idea about how to do the task, which may be better or not!
- Staff may feel 'disrespected'
- Staff may not 'want' to do the allocated task, so actively avoids doing it or does it 'incompetently' or 'badly' on purpose, so the task is given to someone else
- Fairness – staff may feel that they are unfairly given tasks
- Speed and dynamics of the working day, don't always lend themselves to lengthy discussion time about work that needs to be done

2. Types of tasks

Routine tasks – these are tasks that staff should already know about, things that are done daily, and pre-allocated to an individual, such as activities, setting out beds, preparing fruit, taking children to the garden

Special Requests – these are tasks during the working day, that the staff do not 'know about' in advance, but things that need doing and crop up during the day. This could be cleaning up a toileting accident, getting resources that have run out, calling a parent, cleaning out a set of drawers, sorting out lost property etc... all every-day tasks – but things that are not pre-assigned.

Projects – these are tasks that usually take longer than a few minutes, and cannot be done instantly. Examples include; displays, re-arranging a room or an area, preparing for a parent meeting, making a new resource.

Each one of these categories require **different kinds of instruction and input** from the team leader/senior practitioner. Another important dimension relates to **who is carrying out** the task. This will also determine the level of instruction or input required.

3. Commands and Directions

Here are some definitions of Commands:

1. give an authoritative order.
2. to exercise a dominating influence
3. to have or exercise direct authority
4. to dominate as if from an elevated place
5. an order that you must follow, if the person who gives it has authority over you.

Here are some definitions of Directions:

1. instructions that tell you what to do, how to do something, or how to get somewhere.
2. the place towards which a person or thing is directed
3. the course or line along which a person or thing moves, points, or lies
4. management, control, or guidance
5. guidance or supervision of action or conduct
6. assistance in pointing out the proper route

4. Practicing giving directions using a framework

Staff must feel respected and must be able to understand the orders you are giving. Most of all, staff shouldn't feel as though they are being given orders at all. Rather, treat your staff as though you are giving them instructions to help you run the unit

1. **Use respectful words such as "please"** when giving orders to staff. Although they are obliged to follow your instructions, you will establish goodwill that will make your job as team leader easier. Staff are more likely to respect a team leader who shows them respect as well.
2. **Give clear instructions to your staff.** Vague instructions such as, "Mop the floor," may not be sufficient. You may need to provide instructions such as, "Use hot water and the blue cleaner to mop the floor in the Mitbachon."
3. **Make yourself available to answer questions** that staff might have, otherwise you risk the job being done incorrectly or not at all. Human resources expert Stewart Liff recommends that you "manage by walking around and giving a helping hand" Liff points out that this sends the message to employees that you want them to succeed.
4. **Use a firm, confident tone of voice** when giving orders to staff. If you give a directive, yet use a tone that is questioning or wavering, your directions may not be deemed important.
5. **Let staff know the reason** you are giving them an instruction. For example, you might say, "Please count how many spoons are there so that we know if we need to bring down more for the 2nd group." This approach helps staff feel like they are part of the team. Of course, this is not necessary if you are merely asking staff to do routine tasks for which the reason is already clear. (However, what might be clear to you, might not be clear to them!).
6. **Provide a clear deadline, or time allocation** for the task, so the staff member knows exactly how long they should spend on what you have asked them to do.
7. **Follow up with your team member** and ask about the status of the task. Find out if he has encountered any problems that might delay completion. If he has, work with him to find a solution that will allow him to move forward.

Positive Communication Practices for Offering Task Directions

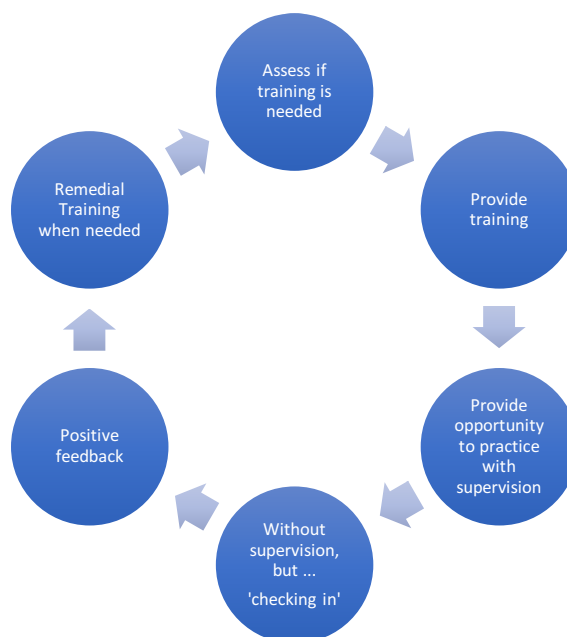
- **Always provide context for the task** to be completed. People do their best work when they understand the importance of the task to the larger operation. When you take the time to explain the business importance of the task you are requesting to be completed, you are teaching and you are showing respect for the individual you asked to complete the work.
- **Be specific.** Outline when the task must be completed and sharing any quality standards.
- **Ask respectfully.** Choose a respectful tone of voice, polite words and deliver the message with the appropriate volume. Contrast: "Hey, you need to go unload that truck," said in a stern tone to, "John, the shipment on that truck is needed on the production line. Would you please help out and unload the truck before noon." There is little doubt the latter approach would be perceived as positive and the former as negative.

- **Give them a chance to ask questions.** Offer the individual being asked to complete the task the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. This step helps strengthen communication between the employee and supervisor and improves the probability of a successful outcome. The team member has the opportunity to confirm that he or she truly understands what is being asked of them.
- **Trust your team members.** Resist the urge to oversee or micro-manage the employee's completion of the requested task. Part of learning to give directions effectively is learning to trust the individuals you are asking for help.
- **Reinforce your team members' confidence.** Offer appropriate thanks and positive feedback for jobs completed properly.
- **Give constructive feedback.** Offer clear, behavioral, focused feedback for any tasks that are completed improperly.

5. Training as part of giving instructions

Definitions of training:

1. the action of teaching a person or animal a particular skill or type of behaviour.
2. Organised activity aimed at imparting information and/or instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill.
3. Training is the process of learning the skills that you need for a particular job or activity.
4. the process of bringing a person, etc to an agreed standard of proficiency, etc by practice and instruction
5. the process of learning the skills you need to do a particular job or activity



Teaching Along with Giving Directions

- Assess whether the task is new or complicated and requires 'training'
- Provide instruction and then offer the opportunity for the individual to practice the task with your helpful supervision.
- Once the individual has developed confidence for the task, allow them to complete the work without your supervision. Check back later to validate completion, timeliness, and quality.
- Offer positive feedback for jobs properly completed.
- Offer remedial (correctional) training when the individual struggles to complete the task on time or at the right quality level.

The flow chart below is available on the learners' handout.

6. Pitfalls

Beware These Pitfalls When Giving Directions

Here are some common mistakes that TLs make when asking staff to carry out tasks.

- Issuing orders in an aggressive tone. While certain circumstances, including emergencies or life and death circumstances, may merit orders, unless you are in the military, resist this urge.
- Responding to, "Why?" with "Because I said so." This is a poor approach for parenting and a worse approach in the workplace.
- Asking in a vague manner.
- Asking multiple people to complete the same task.
- Failing to recognize when an instruction is required prior to the individual completing the task.
- Failing to recognize that individuals may have conflicting priorities and deadlines.
- Failing to offer thanks and positive feedback for a job well done.

7. Case studies

Potential reasons for **working at Rainbow**:

- Like the people / staff / colleagues / manager
- Feels valued
- Opportunities to train and develop
- First job found
- Logistically convenient
- Fits with a life-plan

There are some general techniques for **motivating staff**:

- Create a Positive Work Environment. Motivate employees by offering an upbeat, positive work environment. ...
- Set Goals. ...
- Provide Incentives. ...

- Recognize Achievements. ...
- Share Profits. ...
- Solicit Employee Input. ...
- Provide Professional Enrichment.
- Show them trust
- Be transparent
- Motivate individuals rather than the team
- Learn what makes each person 'tick' – understand what is important to them
- Reward based on feedback
- Have 'open door' policy – encourage staff to speak to you about 'anything' without judgement
- Give opportunities for individuals to 'take the lead'
- Share 'the bigger picture' with team members
- Provide opportunities to learn new skills
- Train and mentor individuals
- Lead by example
- Operate flexibility where possible
- Encourage 'choice' so sometimes staff can 'choose' their preferred task or activities
- <https://blog.bonus.ly/20-simple-ways-to-increase-motivation-in-the-workplace/>

How to **show staff you value** them:

Employees who feel valued and appreciated by their leaders are infinitely more likely to go above and beyond for the company and hold themselves accountable for their part of a project. Most importantly, they will be happier in their roles. If leaders disregard the importance of connecting with employees, they lose the benefit of a dedicated, long-term team.

- Go above and beyond to personally help them
- Relate to them; don't act like you're above them.
- Show you care about their personal life
- Show interest in their significant others.
- Back them up with clients
- Be real and transparent with them
- Make time for them
- Little things do matter
- Create opportunities for new experiences.
- Challenge Them
- Listen to any concerns, and show you take them seriously
- Show you take their views into account when making decisions
- Celebrate birthdays (staff birthdays) in your team
- Write a thank you note
- Do not miss the anniversaries. – celebrate with the team when someone hits their 3, 6 and 12 months. When they have been working for 100 days, or been 3 weeks without oversleeping!
- Take staff out to lunch, or coffee – all team leaders can raid the petty cash tin for lunch money to take out one of their staff!
- Recognise non-work achievements.