



Tough Situations

Degree of Difficulty: **Toughest**

SITUATION:

You supervise someone who you believe has much more potential than he/she is currently demonstrating.

YOUR MISSION:

Make sure he/she understands their potential and the future possibilities his/her potential could mean for them.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO OR SAY:

“What do you want to get out of this job?”

“What do you want to be doing a year from now? Five years from now?”

It's not unusual for people to be surprised by questions like these from their boss. Be prepared for answers like, *I don't know*. Or, *I never thought about it*. Other answers you might hear sound like: *For me, this is just a job. I'm happy and don't want to do much more. It seems like if I get promoted I'd have way too many headaches.*”

Special Note: Admittedly, responses like these can frustrate leaders who want people to take advantage of their potential but here's a key lesson for you: IT'S NOT WHAT YOU WANT FOR THEM, IT'S WHAT THEY WANT! Don't project or superimpose your desires for them onto them. Your mission is to cause him/her to realize their potential. However, it's ok for you to let them know you see their potential and that's where you might start. Give them a little homework. Ask them complete the chart below.

Things I do at work that are very important:	Things I can do at work but don't currently do:	Things I'd like to do at work but don't currently do:
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.
What I would like to accomplish over the next year(For example, \$\$\$, home ownership, new car, vacation, promotion, education/certification, raise, etc.):		What I would like to accomplish over the next five years (For example, \$\$\$, home ownership, education/certification, new car, vacation, promotion, raise, etc.):
1.		1.
2.		2.
3.		3.
4.		4.
5.		5.

“After doing the homework, tell me how you see yourself now compared to the potential you think you have.”

Special Note: You have to be persistent without being overbearing. Avoid saying anything that sounds like judging (“You're not living up to what you could be.”) The homework activity serves to ask him/her to think. More importantly, it shows him/her that you are interested in them.

“What I'd like to do is give you some additional responsibilities, work with you as you perform them, and see how you like doing it. Are you open to that idea?”

“I think your potential is significant. There’s terrific upside for you if you are interested. Let’s talk about what some of the possibilities might be for you.”

“What I’d like to do is give you some additional responsibilities, work with you as you perform them, and see how you like doing it. Are you open to that idea?”

WHY IT WILL WORK:

Your purpose is to heighten his/her awareness and knowledge of his/her potential. Leaders get paid to get the most out of people and they sometimes need take an indirect route to get it. It is rare that people, once they are aware of their potential, will not want to achieve it.