
Negotiated Performance Appraisal Clips



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Just as it was useful to “listen in” on a real mediation, we now have the opportunity to read clip highlights of several Negotiated Performance Appraisal transcripts. The identities of the individuals involved in the process have been obscured.

Special thanks go to the participants and facilitators who permitted the session recordings. Rodrigo López was the facilitator for Clip 2 and Clip 3, while the remaining eight clips were provided by Macarena Pons.

PRE-CAUCUS: LIST I

The first list in the Negotiated Performance Appraisal is an attempt to underscore the positive contributions of the individual being evaluated.

Clip 1. Business Executive and Facilitator Discuss List I

In this clip, we join an executive who has given much thought to the positive qualities possessed by a subordinate manager. Rather than interrupting, the facilitator permits the executive to share his complete list before asking for examples of each positive characteristic being raised. Because an important purpose of List I is to celebrate the accomplishments of a subordinate, it is better to expand the number of categories rather than diminish them. It is not uncommon for individuals being interviewed to punctuate the end of what they have to say, as we see below.

[. . .]

FACILITATOR: Let us begin with List I, Aalim, regarding where you think that Kai's performance has been outstanding.

AALIM: All right! First of all, Kai has made an effort to organize the unit he's responsible for. He's attained the integration of the team, involving everyone in the work of everyone else, that is, being a support . . . creating a sort of synergy among those whom he's responsible for.

FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.

AALIM: He's also demonstrated a leadership quality. Let us say, he's been a leader for the team, and that can be seen in terms of the respect he has obtained from his work team. Let us say, they respect him as a boss, and basically—I believe this is one of those critical matters—that they recognize his knowledge and that he has contributed to the overall know-how. Mmm, do I continue?

FACILITATOR: Yes.

AALIM: He's adapted himself quickly to the workgroup. That is, he's not been with us for a long time yet he's quickly made himself a part of the enterprise—and that, without any problems of adaptation. He has a good handle on computer matters, which is key for us. Within a short time he had designed an information process . . . and has also known how to organize a work flow within the enterprise. That permitted us to reduce a series of risks and errors on the one hand, and on the other hand, organize the functions of each of the staff. For that very reason, he's been able to organize the internal administrative procedures of the enterprise, which in turn have permitted him to partially implement the new computer system, confidently moving forward with each module that has been incorporated. He has a good understanding of the computer software, which is an important thing, as one can begin to apply procedures as one understands them. He's been 100 percent involved in each step of this project, which gives me peace of mind. That is, let us say . . . the things he's implemented, he's done so taking personal responsibility for them . . . in terms of the development of the procedures.

FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.

AALIM: Another positive characteristic he possesses is his analytical thinking. Before making a change or implementing a strategy, he reviews it and puts it to a test. That is, he just does not jump in to do things which he later needs to undo. It's clear that he has a capacity for analysis and comprehension of procedures that need to be tested . . .

FACILITATOR: Tested . . .

AALIM: . . . tested before we begin to make changes, because there are individuals who are very good about making changes, but things end up not

moving forward. Mmm . . . What other positive qualities does he have? Well, he has a good sense of humor—is likeable. He maintains a good work atmosphere, which is no small matter when one works with people, especially when one has to supervise people. Until now, I’ve not had complaints that he’s an annoying boss. On the contrary . . . he’s been well received by his work team. His dedication, his commitment, his knowledge, and how he’s responded to the challenges he’s had to face during his short time . . . confirm that we were correct in selecting him. He’s been with us only four months . . . or three . . . and to date we’ve seen progress, progress, and progress. That’s it!

The facilitator begins to read over her notes and check her understanding of what the executive has said thus far. We pick up the conversation towards the end of that process.

AALIM: I’m missing another quality, it seems. I don’t know if I mentioned it—that he’s clear in terms of teaching and transmitting his knowledge to those he supervises.

FACILITATOR: Mmm . . . [Looks at her notes.]

AALIM: . . . which has something to do with what has been said: the ability to engage his people. That is, besides being able to organize, he has the ability to educate. He’s able to transmit his knowledge, which is no small matter, let us say. One thing is to know something and keep it to oneself, and another is being able to share it . . . and being able to get the most out of it. And that, let us say, is what’s being accomplished.

[. . .]

After completing the outline of positive issues to discuss, the next step is to plan a strategy to deliver them and drive the points

home with force, including at least two examples of positive critical incidents. After doing so, the facilitator may ask the superior to role-play the discussion of one or more topics, as needed.

Clip 2. Front-End Supervisor and Facilitator Discuss List I

In this clip, the facilitator conducts a pre-caucus with a crew leader. The facilitator makes much use of his role as a coach, especially since the crew leader has little experience with any type of performance appraisal. This facilitator chooses to get examples after each type of positive attribution, rather than building a list first. The facilitator is carrying out this pre-caucus as a demonstration, in front of several managers, with some time constraints.

[. . .]

FACILITATOR: As we had mentioned earlier, we now want to begin the process of increasing our goodwill deposits. We want to do so with specific examples—not only say that he does something well, but ask such things as “When? Where? What?” so that when we speak with José, he will perceive that what you’re saying is sincere, that it’s something concrete that you’ve noticed and value in him. What will we do to to have him feel good about his accomplishments, in order to be able to address more difficult issues later and, as a result, come up with a plan of action? Remember that, in the end, I’ll be a spectator, and it’ll be your role to speak directly to your subordinate. We will also do some role-playing later. So, let us begin with some positive qualities you see in José.

RAMÓN: His positive attitude to do things. You just tell him what you want done, and he’s willing to do it. He never puts on negative airs or complains. None of the “Hey, boss, why me?” sort of attitudes. That would be one of the first positive things.

FACILITATOR: Excellent. Now, let us obtain some details through examples, such as, “When I told you to do such a thing, you agreed,” or some such thing.

RAMÓN: For example, sometimes a crew worker doesn’t come on time . . .

FACILITATOR: Mmm.

RAMÓN: . . . and you tell him, “Hey, José, you need to take a co-worker’s ladder out to the field, to the spot where your crew was switched.” That’s where this positive attitude shows up. Because there are people who say, “Hey, how is that my problem?”

FACILITATOR: He has a positive attitude, then, and we have a specific example of the ladder . . . Let us make it even more specific. What were you harvesting when this happened?

RAMÓN: Granny Smith.

FACILITATOR: Ah, then, let us add this detail to what you’re going to say: “We were harvesting Granny Smith, and when a co-worker was late, I asked you to take out a ladder for him and you did it cheerfully.”

RAMÓN: Yes, and what’s more, the co-worker never showed up so it meant that José had to take the ladder all the way back to the shed at the end of the day!

FACILITATOR: Excellent! Now we’re being very concrete. Here we have a perfect example. The idea is to try and have another example of how José’s positive attitude shows at work. [The facilitator models for Ramón the complete example and how it could be delivered in the joint session.] We want José to say to himself, “Hey, Ramón really has noticed my efforts!” It is as if you were saying to José, “I’m giving you two concrete examples, and there are more, but you get the point, that I’ve noticed.”

RAMÓN: There are different tasks that take place through the year, and I give instructions to the crew workers, and they go to different spots in the farm . . .

- FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.
- RAMÓN: Well, he has a positive attitude . . . he understands what I am saying to him. Does that make sense? Because I may tell him, “You have to do this specific job in such and such a place.”
- FACILITATOR: Let us be concrete. For example, “I sent him to prune” or . . .
- RAMÓN: The example would be when he went out to train the plant and bend some limbs . . .
- FACILITATOR: OK. Train . . . What happened?
- RAMÓN: To be specific, it was in block seven . . .
- FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.
- RAMÓN: To bend some limbs in the Pink Lady variety.
- FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.
- RAMÓN: He immediately understood the idea, when we spoke in the shed, even though we were not even looking at the trees.
- FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.
- RAMÓN: That would be the positive characteristic.
- FACILITATOR: Let me see. I’m understanding that . . . he’s technically competent and able to understand instructions given at the shed, where instructions were given before the whole crew, and he understood. He thought of the Pink Lady, the training process . . . “I have to do such and such” . . . and he understood right away. I see that more as a technical skill, certainly an important one to add to the list, such as being able to give him instructions without having to repeat them as one might have to do with others.
- RAMÓN: Precisely what I was trying to say.
- FACILITATOR: We can consider that as another item in List I. [The facilitator thanks Ramón for the new item for List I, and asks for another example of José’s positive attitude.]
- RAMÓN: Another thing . . . It’s very difficult to find him depressed.

- FACILITATOR: He's always positive?
 RAMÓN: Right.
 FACILITATOR: He's an optimist . . .
 RAMÓN: Yes.
 FACILITATOR: . . . and cheerful. For example? Tell me about a situation when he was being optimistic or cheerful.
 RAMÓN: . . . or cheerful . . . he suddenly will tell a joke.
 FACILITATOR: To cheer up the crew? OK, try and give a specific example.
 RAMÓN: When we began the Fuji pruning, he was willing to say, "Let us give the new piece rate approach a try," rather than being negative about it.

[. . .]

The pre-caucus continues in this vein, as the facilitator prepares Ramón to provide his comments from List I.

Clip 3. Role-Play List I

The facilitator explains, in this continuation of the pre-caucus, that Ramón will have only one chance to impress José during the joint session. That is why careful preparation is so critical. The facilitator suggests (1) showing enthusiasm with the tone of voice, (2) making sure to explain why each particular positive quality makes a difference for good in the enterprise, (3) giving the specific examples that accompany each positive area, (4) addressing the subordinate by name, and (5) speaking to him directly rather than to the facilitator. This pre-caucus, again, takes place in front of an audience.

[. . .]

- RAMÓN: I'm not very expressive that way. It is hard for me, as I'm much more of a reserved type of a person. Furthermore, I'm not accustomed to this type of thing. It isn't me.
 FACILITATOR: Uh-huh. Understood. We can certainly say to the difficult things in life, "That isn't me!" But it's also good to push ourselves, to push the envelope of what we think we can do. It can make such a

huge difference in our roles as supervisors. José knows that you're not an effusive type of person, but he will notice your effort—that you're trying—and put a great value on your effort.

RAMÓN: True. The things we've been talking about are things I've not told him before.

FACILITATOR: Yes, you can even use that and say something like: "I have some things to say to you, that I have wanted to say but never have. This isn't easy for me." It is good to permit yourself to talk about your feelings. We want you to forget that I'm here, also, and truly talk to José.

RAMÓN: OK. "José, look, there are some work-related as well as personal matters that I admire in you. These are things I have never told you. You have a positive outlook on work, you worry about your co-workers, and you show concern for your family.

FACILITATOR: Yes, excellent! Now let us include the examples. Ramón, it's OK for you to read from your notes. Don't feel that you have to somehow memorize this whole thing and everything you want to say.

RAMÓN: OK. I'll make sure to add the examples, then.

FACILITATOR: Good. Let us practice that.

RAMÓN: Look, José, here we are. We've been looking at—evaluating—many of the positive things you bring to the enterprise. Both in terms of things at work as well as others that are more personal in nature. When it comes to work-related matters . . . uh . . . you've a great attitude . . . about fulfilling the assignments given to you—for instance, your willingness to go to other farm locations to work when needed. And in terms of items of a more personal nature, he does do well for his family.

The facilitator has been trying to encourage Ramón to visualize that he is addressing José, but occasionally Ramón reverts to addressing the facilitator instead. This time, he is not

interrupted and naturally goes back to pretending that he is addressing José in this role play.

RAMÓN: And, when it comes to friendliness, you have a good way of showing friendliness to co-workers. You're capable of helping them and cheering them up when they have problems they bring to work. These things are those which you excel in. These are things I had never said to you, but this is an opportunity that has presented itself for me share these things with you.

FACILITATOR: Excellent! This is really good. Now, we need to add the examples.

RAMÓN: He's not going to read my notes?

Facilitator: No. No, he will not. While it needs to be as natural as possible, don't hesitate to read from your list, along with the examples: "José, thinking about the positive things, here is what I wrote," and then just read it.

[...]

Little by little, this crew supervisor gets the idea of what is expected and has a productive conversation with the facilitator about how to speak of positive qualities. Also, he understands that it is fine to show affect when complimenting. Ramón goes through every item in his list, becoming more effective at his praise and needing fewer interruptions as he proceeds.

Clip 4. Subordinate and Facilitator Discuss List I

Here, we take a brief clip from a conversation between a facilitator and the subordinate she is preparing for a joint session with an executive. We join them as they come to the end of a discussion on List I.

[. . .]

KEVIN : And the last item from my list would be emotional intelligence . . .

FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.

- KEVIN : . . . in day-to-day-circumstances. For example, conflict resolution, interpersonal relations, and reaching objectives.
- FACILITATOR: Could you share with me a specific case where you obtained a resolution to a conflict, one that your supervisor might recognize and say, “Oh, right, I remember that one”?
- KEVIN : Ah . . . Yes, I experienced one of these yesterday. [Laughs.]
- FACILITATOR: OK. Let us see. Tell me about it.
- KEVIN : One of our technicians wanted to quit right in the middle of a critical procedure. I had the opportunity to act as a quick mediator in the matter . . . talked to everyone involved. I was able to convince him to stay until the end of the day. I’ve set up several follow-up appointments for today, and I’m hoping we can arrive at a positive resolution.
- FACILITATOR: Perfect! Do you have another example?
[. . .]

PRE-CAUCUS LIST II

List II points out the areas in which the subordinate has improved.

Clip 5. Supervisor and Facilitator Discuss List II

In this brief clip, the subordinate explains how he has found it necessary to acquire knowledge outside of his area of expertise.

- [. . .]
- GORDON: You see, my degree is in another field, so I’ve had a lot of catch-up work to do. That’s what I mean.
- FACILITATOR: How have you accomplished it?
- GORDON: Well . . . uh . . . based on experience and reading a lot.
- FACILITATOR: Studying.

GORDON: Studying the literature in the field as well as spending hours in on-the-job training.
[. . .]

Clip 6. Subordinate Explains He Did Not Fill Out List II

It is important that the subordinate fill out all lists, perhaps with the exception of List II. Rather than insisting the subordinate move in an orderly fashion from one list to another, the facilitator has the flexibility of coming back to a list later.

[. . .]

PAT: Before we begin, I just want to tell you that, of the four lists, I only filled out three.

FACILITATOR: Mmm.

PAT: I filled out those things that I do well. I skipped the one where I've improved recently.

FACILITATOR: How come?

PAT: In my opinion, the amount of time I've spent with this firm is so short . . .

FACILITATOR: How long have . . .

PAT: August, September, October, November, December, January . . . Six months.

FACILITATOR: Mmm.

PAT: The "good list" and the "to improve list" get mixed up a bit . . .

FACILITATOR: . . .with . . .

PAT: . . . the "recently improved list."

FACILITATOR: Mmm.

PAT: That intermediate point, I believe, is somewhat difficult to define.

FACILITATOR: OK, we will see how it works out.

PAT: And the fourth list . . . I also filled that one out.

FACILITATOR: Perfect. Let us begin with List I, and when we get to List II, I can help you there.

PAT: Excellent!

The facilitator eventually brings the conversation back to List II and is able to help Pat gain a better perspective.

- PAT: So . . . from here we move on to List III.
- FACILITATOR: One moment. Let us take a look . . .
- PAT: OK.
- FACILITATOR: . . . at List II . . .
- PAT: OK.
- FACILITATOR: I understand that you've been here for a short time . . .
- PAT: Uh-huh.
- FACILITATOR: That . . . it's difficult for you . . .
- PAT: Uh-huh.
- FACILITATOR: But in five months—if you begin to analyze things by stages—your relationship with the rest of the firm (your supervisors as well as subordinates) has been the same since day one?
- PAT: Uh. Let us see . . . Not really . . . We began with a slight sense of obvious distrust. Strictly speaking, there has been an improvement there. But I don't place it as an item on the list, because even before coming here . . . I consider myself an individual who doesn't have interpersonal problems with people . . . While it involved improvement, I knew it was not something that was going to be difficult for me.
- FACILITATOR: It wasn't your problem . . . but rather, one related to the organizational change that had taken place . . .
- PAT: Exactly.
- FACILITATOR: . . . within the firm. Well, they had to have gone through an interview process . . . and asked for referrals, and all of that.
- PAT: Uh-huh.
- FACILITATOR: But do you think that the trust and credibility level placed on you has improved?
- PAT: Yes. Yes, without a doubt.
- FACILITATOR: OK. What would you say was responsible for that?
- PAT: When it comes to my bosses, I have nothing but positive things to say . . .

FACILITATOR: Mmm.

PAT: They have always been very open with me, and I haven't had any problems in that regard. But, yes, in terms of those I supervise, the whole issue of communication, trust . . . the fact that one gives out signals at work . . .

FACILITATOR: But you . . . your communication . . . Has it improved or been constant?

PAT: It did improve in relationship to the first few weeks, in terms of my subordinates. It was quite complicated . . .

FACILITATOR: So, we could add it to the list.

PAT: Yes . . . We could add it.

FACILITATOR: We could add it.

PAT: Yes . . . Yes.

FACILITATOR: Communication with the . . . subordinates . . .

PAT: Exactly . . . has improved since my arrival. [Writes on his list.] I wrote down [Laughs.]: "The ice is broken!"

FACILITATOR: Excuse me?

PAT: That the ice is broken. [Laughs.]

FACILITATOR: Ah.

PAT: At the beginning, it was much more complicated, without a doubt.

FACILITATOR: A concrete example with someone . . . or . . .

PAT: Yes . . . Well, I'm not going to name the individual by name.

FACILITATOR: No, of course . . .

PAT: At the beginning, the interpersonal relations with some of the supervisors who work for me was quite distant. They had taken a "wait-and-see" sort of attitude. We didn't have a good team relationship where this individual could count on me as a support. I wasn't getting results. I was just a person who was there. Now, I can be more proactive . . .

FACILITATOR: Perfect.

PAT: . . . in terms of communication.

[. . .]

PRE-CAUCUS LIST III

List III involves consideration of areas in which the subordinate needs to improve.

Clip 7. Subordinate and Facilitator Discuss List III

Kai, the accountant in Clip 1, has carefully and methodically prepared each of the four lists. The facilitator has little need to participate, other than to let Kai know he is being listened to. The clip begins as Kai pauses at length and taps his notes against the table.

[. . .]

KAI: Uh . . . I separated this one from the last issue and have called it financial management.

FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.

KAI: Yes . . . I must improve on the financial management . . . That is, more or less, the explanation, despite the fact that we've advanced, and can *outline* the future of the cash flow . . . but we're not at the point where we can *draw* or *paint* it. For the moment, it's only an outline—something that isn't too clear. For example, there have been sufficient funds in the last two weeks to be able to execute some short-term, flash-type investments . . . to be able to get some interest. But we have not because of the lack of clarity as to the amounts we will need and when. If I had a clearer picture, I could have . . .

FACILITATOR: Right.

KAI: . . . invested in a mutual fund for the two-week period and recovered . . .

FACILITATOR: Perfect.

KAI: Another issue is that of sales . . .

[. . .]

It is not sufficient for the subordinate to expose areas of weakness. Before the pre-caucus is finished, the subordinate must be enabled to come to the joint session with a specific improvement plan. This preparation, for instance, may entail attending a seminar, reading a book, shadowing another manager, or agreeing to submit specific reports. Each proposal for improvement should be something that can be measured in follow-up interviews.

PRE-CAUCUS LIST IV

List IV revolves around those areas in which the supervisor can make changes in order to facilitate the performance of a subordinate, as viewed from the subordinate's perspective.

Clip 8. Subordinate and Facilitator Discuss List IV

It is often difficult to get subordinates to suggest something their supervisor could improve. In this clip, a subordinate is ready with an example, and a facilitator attempts to see if additional items can be added to the list. It is important to have at least one substantial item on the fourth list. Sometimes, during the pre-caucus, subordinates incorporate additional items, once they see what will be expected of them.

[. . .]

FACILITATOR: Now the difficult . . .

CARLOS: The difficult.

FACILITATOR: Now to the difficult, the good . . . [Light tone.]

CARLOS: The easy . . .

FACILITATOR: That which will help . . .

CARLOS: Well. [More seriously.] In this area . . .

FACILITATOR: What changes can Isaac make, so you can improve your performance?

CARLOS: I defined it in one sentence, but . . .

FACILITATOR: Yes?

CARLOS: I consider it very important, and that is for him to participate in at least one meeting with the sales department . . .

FACILITATOR: Uh-huh.

CARLOS: . . . with the end of creating a relationship similar to that which exists with the production team. Let me explain myself. I'd like him to participate . . .

[. . .]

FACILITATOR: Anything else you'd like to see in your supervisor?

CARLOS: [Laughing.] That he doesn't change. That's all.

FACILITATOR: You had previously mentioned that you needed additional technical training. Is that something that he could support you in?

CARLOS: He's supported me, already.

[. . .]

JOINT SESSION

Finally, we examine two clips from the performance appraisal joint session. In Clip 10, the third party introduces the lists. An alternative is for the facilitator to prompt the supervisor to do so.

Clip 9. Joint Session: List I

This is an example of a successful celebration of what the employee is doing well, one in which the subordinate jumps in to help the supervisor underscore the positive. We have already met Pat, the subordinate in Clip 6, who had not completed all the requested lists. At the end of the conversation, both subordinate and supervisor are happily interrupting each other, underscoring what is positive.

[. . .]

CHRISTIAN: The dedication you've shown, your commitment, your knowledge, and how you've responded to the challenges we've placed in your way, confirm that we made the right decision when we hired you. I'm very, very happy. Very grateful. Another thing would be your sense of humor. It is a good thing.

- PAT: [Spontaneous but reserved laugh.]
- CHRISTIAN: You are a person who has brought humor to the workplace . . .
- PAT: [Reserved and joyful laugh.]
- CHRISTIAN: . . . and that has lifted up people's spirits. That is something you didn't know, because you didn't know how we were before.
- PAT: [Laugh.]
- CHRISTIAN: But the work environment has changed within the management team . . . a merit that is purely yours. This all has to do with being a leader, having knowledge, and having the capacity to extend knowledge . . . to teach. When people see that, it shows them how to do something and demonstrates it. [Taps three times on the table with the hand for emphasis.] This makes it so people become aware . . . and be at peace . . . that what they are doing, they are doing well. Another thing that is important, is that you're good at . . . I've heard it—that you motivate people through your expressions, you congratulate them, you say, "Well done!" That sort of thing is something they were not accustomed to . . . hearing that sort of thing from previous supervisors. They just felt pressured, besides the inherent pressure of the job. But with that characteristic of being on top of things and there to provide positive feedback, well, this has given them a confidence that I hadn't seen before. I see that people are now willing to take on challenges. That's something meritorious on your part. That's what I wanted to say.

The facilitator summarizes the key points of what has been said and thus continues the process of celebration. Both participants concur with her interpretation. She has afforded them the opportunity to continue celebrating before moving on to List II.

- CHRISTIAN: I'm very pleased that Pat mentioned leadership. Sometimes one knows things but doesn't believe it.
- FACILITATOR: Doesn't believe it . . . Or doesn't dare say it.
- CHRISTIAN: Or doesn't dare say it. I think that is really important, Pat, that you had the confidence to say it. I believe you have the leadership capabilities that we need. That is good . . . good when you have a person next to you who is confident that what he's doing, he's doing well and that he can move forward with the people he's managing. That is a superb positive quality.
- PAT: Yes. As you know, I've worked up through various jobs, so I feel confident in telling people, "This is this way," because it's that way! It isn't that I sort of believe something, but rather, there are facts that I know about . . . and so I have a bit of knowledge-based leadership, the experience in those things, perhaps something that might be considered routine, or small within the context of the whole enterprise, but . . . but that . . . gives me that level of leadership.
- CHRISTIAN: But leadership is more than that!
- PAT: Yes. It's much more than that, but with that . . .
- CHRISTIAN: Yes, of course.
- PAT: When someone makes a mistake . . .
- CHRISTIAN: A leader . . .
- PAT: However, from a technical perspective, then leadership . . .
- CHRISTIAN: Absolutely. Knowledge of the material is very important, but you have a leadership ability that goes beyond knowledge. You are also a person who transmits knowledge . . .
- PAT: Well, it's because I also like to explain things.
- CHRISTIAN: You see, then. The persons you work with are anxious to learn . . .
- PAT: Yes, of course.
- CHRISTIAN: . . . and every time they perceive . . . that they are being taught something . . .

- PAT: Uh-huh.
- CHRISTIAN: . . . they absorb it and they want it. Well, that is something very good—that you have people who want to learn and a supervisor who wants to teach.
- PAT: Yes.
- CHRISTIAN: In the past, we've had people who guarded what they knew and waited for people to fall down so they could correct them and come to the rescue . . .
- [. . .]

Clip 10. Joint Session: Lists III and IV

Macarena Pons, the facilitator in this session, permits the parties to discuss both lists III and IV before asking them to narrow down the agreements. By doing so, all needs are assessed and everything is on the table.

Jason—the supervisor—gives few verbal signals, or positive minimal responses, that he is listening to Daniel. When Jason speaks, in contrast, Daniel makes sure his supervisor feels heard. Jason was instructed not to agree with Daniel on items mentioned in List III. Jason can, however, show interest by taking copious notes.

In one instance, after we come to List IV, Daniel tells Jason that he is feeling “somewhat emboldened” by the conversation. If Jason expects certain improvements from Daniel, there are changes Jason can make to facilitate these—suggestions that would rarely be raised in a more traditional performance appraisal. Jason begins to reflect on the subject and realizes that he needs to work on being a better communicator himself, but not before becoming a bit defensive. Facilitators need to prepare superiors to deal with defensive feelings.

For the sake of brevity, the following transcript eliminates some of the specific examples provided by Jason.

- [. . .]
- DANIEL: I knew that I was correct regarding the data-entry procedure but mentioned it in a very unassertive manner. Waldo had a different opinion, and I didn't defend mine, so his approach was taken instead.

After three weeks, I brought it up again, in a more assertive fashion . . . and that is what was done! Because of the way I framed the issues, well, we permitted three weeks to go by, whereas we could have done it correctly from the beginning. I should have been more assertive. At first, I wasn't capable of convincing you, Waldo, or anyone else. It was difficult for me to finally be more assertive. The next issue where I expect to improve is in taking less time in the execution stage. I was telling Macarena that I've noticed that this job entails a lot of putting out fires. One is under constant bombardment. Which I have liked, actually. In my previous jobs, there came times when, well, I frankly had nothing to do and had to get on the Web and try and find something to do. Not here. Every minute here is used more profitably, but what does happen, however, is this "putting out fires" syndrome. I've lost my capacity to act in a more strategic way. So, that is what I mean. By the time I notice something needs to be done and get it done, much water has flowed under the bridge.

I also believe I've been somewhat weak in my organizational skills. You know that this whole thing escaped my hands. I need to also increase my follow-up in terms of those whom I supervise. I prefer to give very thorough instructions and not leave until I'm sure people have understood me. Then, I can be at peace when I walk away. The challenge is that—because of the fires I'm putting out—I'm not checking people with the needed frequency. This is where I notice that, although I thought I had given clear instructions, my subordinates end up doing things very differently from what I thought I had instructed them to do. Some of the managers don't have this problem, but others certainly do. I need to improve on my follow up.

Another item: [Pauses and turns over a page.] I need to better manage myself, especially when it comes to time management. I need to be more proactive. I've failed to verify some critical issues. I need to set priorities, delegate, and act in more strategic ways. That is a little bit . . . where I'm coming up short. [Gestures to make it clear that he has finished his list.]

FACILITATOR: Jason, anything you have to add to Daniel's list?

Jason begins by giving an example of a difficult challenge that Daniel was able to deal with and expresses his confidence in Daniel's ability to handle the issues at hand.

DANIEL: Uh-huh.

JASON: I believe you can improve in the following matters: being responsible for a budget, as well as a monthly review process as to where we're at.

DANIEL: Uh-huh.

JASON: I believe you're capable of doing that at this point in your career. I'd like for you to keep better track of human resource costs through a computer spreadsheet. Nothing fancy. I'd like us to establish a more regular or formal communication, where I can be kept up to date with advances, costs, and so on. Maybe through that spreadsheet.

DANIEL: So we can show progress.

JASON: As indicators. I'd also like to see you come up with a timeline for each managerial team member. This way, each one of them will have clarity as to what they have to do and can carry out a self-appraisal as to how they are doing and know that they can proceed with confidence. And all of this needs to be tied to the budget, also. [Jason continues to add items to List III, with Daniel's encouragement and give-and-take between the two.]

[. . .]

FACILITATOR: Now, Daniel will read List IV.

JASON: [Smiling.] List IV?

DANIEL: [Laughs and pauses.] The truth is that I don't have much in the way of suggestions for you. Nothing but the truth. [Laughs.]

JASON: Nothing but the truth. [Laughs.]

DANIEL: But, there are two issues . . . and perhaps I'm feeling somewhat emboldened, but something from List III—the importance of organizing myself better—really depends to some degree on you. Despite the fact that I didn't come up with very specific cases . . . For example, often you've told me about important matters that were coming up with almost no notice. "Hey, such and such is on their way . . ." This sort of thing can add quite a bit of stress. Second, you've made some changes—excellent ones—but didn't notify me. So when I came back from my classes at the university, I found all of these changes and didn't know how to react to them. No one was able to explain what had happened until you arrived. This gave me a feeling of "What am I doing here?" These are the only things I could say about you . . . You are busy and just forget to tell me . . . That's all.

JASON: What was item number one, again?

The facilitator reads the summary of what was said, and Daniel notes his agreement with her understanding.

JASON: Yes . . . That's very much like me to do that. [Long pause.]

FACILITATOR: Both issues revolve around communications.

DANIEL: Yes.

JASON: I don't quite agree with the communication—we actually communicate a lot.

DANIEL: Uh-huh.

JASON: Sometimes you're not here, and a decision has to be made . . .

- DANIEL: Yes.
- JASON: We communicate a lot. We just need a more formal communication process.
- DANIEL: Yes.
- JASON: Such as, “How are things going?”
- DANIEL: Yes, taking stock of where we are.
- JASON: I’d be upset if a change is taken the wrong way . . .
- DANIEL: Of course. Not at all.
- JASON: I think of myself as a good communicator . . . but now I’m beginning to question myself. [Laughs.]
- FACILITATOR: Am I that good of a communicator? [Laughs.]
- DANIEL: I believe you’re a good communicator but that you sometimes forget. You have a thousand things going through your mind.
- JASON: Yes, this is important. We will have to be careful about this. [Laughs.]
- DANIEL: [Laughs.]
- JASON: I’ll accept that . . . I’ll accept it.

Daniel and Jason continue their jovial conversation for a while.

- FACILITATOR: OK. Now we will develop a timetable of agreements by which these will be accomplished or evaluated.
- DANIEL: Yeah.

The facilitator mentions the list of items on which the two men agree. Daniel notes his understanding or agreement by saying, “Yes,” “Exactly,” “Uh-huh,” or the like. The facilitator then turns to Daniel.

- FACILITATOR: So, speaking about the budget, what do you suggest?
- DANIEL: We need a monthly budget review: a history of what we’ve accomplished and what we ought to have accomplished. So, the first thing we need to do is to give order to these things through a timetable that includes when specific tasks were accomplished as well as the allocated resources.

I'd suggest, Jason, that I have a monthly meeting with you in which we can review the budget. This would include a review of what has been done as well as future events. All of these could be seen in the context of the allocated budget. Hmm . . .

JASON: I've something to say.

DANIEL: Uh-huh.

JASON: We have to turn in a yearly budget by the end of February.

DANIEL: Uh-huh.

JASON: I'd like it if you could work to turn this in by the 15th and give us time to review it.

DANIEL: And thus say, "This is what we've agreed upon."

JASON: This is what we've agreed upon. [Bangs desk with hand and makes a noise of explosion with his mouth.] Pshhhh!

DANIEL: This means I'll have to speak to the department heads, to each one of them.

JASON: Yes.

DANIEL: But I need an assurance that they will be committed.

JASON: Absolutely.

DANIEL: Yes, then we would have the commitment of the enterprise: mine, yours, and the department heads.

JASON: But the bulk of the responsibility would fall upon you to coordinate all of this.

DANIEL: I agree to have it done by February 15 so you can have time to review it.

Jason adds specific details of what the budget needs to contain.

DANIEL: In order to accomplish that, I need for us to come to an agreement regarding some other matters ahead of time. What do I mean by that? For example, making a decision now about the investment plan . . .

JASON: Exactly . . .

- DANIEL: Because what I intend to do this year, and I've conversed about this with Ulrich, and everyone . . .
- JASON: Perfect.
- DANIEL: . . . that we need an operations budget besides an investment budget.
- JASON: Yes.
- DANIEL: Then I'll need to know ahead of time our goals regarding . . . [Goes into detail on operational matters.]
- JASON: Yes . . . I commit myself to get answers for you on these items, but you agree to come up with the questions.
- DANIEL: Exactly. Perfect. I have a good handle on costs but not on revenues.
- JASON: Yes . . .
- FACILITATOR: OK, then . . . I hear an agreement, and I'll ask both of you to help me make it more detailed, so it meets your needs. You will develop a yearly budget with monthly controls.
- JASON and DANIEL: [In unison.] Yes, a yearly budget with monthly controls.
- JASON: And we could have the meeting the third Tuesday of each month.
- FACILITATOR: Next point: having a monthly meeting in order to formalize the communication process. Is that something you want to do at the same time?
- JASON: Well, we also meet every Monday of every week, so this Tuesday matter is more about the budget.
- FACILITATOR: About the budget . . .
- JASON: About the budget . . . Yes.
- FACILITATOR: OK. Planning surrounding the visits of the external consultants.
- DANIEL: Exactly.
- FACILITATOR: How often do these external consultants come?
- DANIEL: Look . . .
- JASON: Once a month . . . or . . .

- DANIEL: This isn't a problem. This is very well planned.
I'm completely clear on what I have to do there.
- JASON: Uh-huh.
- DANIEL: As Jason says, I have to be clear on what was done, why was it done, or why was it not done, and be clear on what we will be asking from these individuals.

[. . .]

It is interesting to note that, beginning with the documentation of agreements, Jason provides a lot more support with affirming comments such as, "Yes," "Uh-huh," and the like. The conversation continues, with the individuals hammering out specific agreements. The role of the facilitator here is to make sure that all of these agreements are detailed and that everyone involved has the tools to accomplish the objectives. A follow-up meeting a few months later will be vital.