hopes to get an employee to redirect his or her behavior and achieve a permanent change, a supervisor must master the process of gaining employee agreement.

The following dialogue illustrates how a supervisor might use the points covered above to gain an employee's agreement that there is a performance issue requiring improvement. The scenario involves an employee who has been turning in status reports late.

"Painting the mental picture"

S*upervisor:* As I said in my message, Alan, I wanted to meet with you this morning to talk about the turning in of your weekly project status reports.

E*mployee:* Oh, I know I've been a little late with a few of them recently, but I think I've got everything under control now.

S: I'm glad to hear that, but I wonder if you're aware of exactly how many reports have been late the past two months?

E: Geez, I'm not sure, I suppose two or three. At least I remember your talking to me about them two or three times before.

S: You're right, I have mentioned it to you three times before. But, I wonder if you're aware that during the past two months six out of eight reports have been late and the time late has ranged from one to three days. I also thought that during our previous conversations I had made it clear that my expectation was that the status reports would be turned in on time.

E: Boy, I guess I didn't realize it was quite that much.

S: So, do you think this is an area where there is some room for improvement?

E: Well, I guess that probably sounds like a lot, but I think it's also important to keep in mind that the primary focus of my job is installing and debugging computer systems, not filling out reports.

S: I couldn't agree with you more. But I'm curious, Alan, on a scale of one to ten, with ten representing the most important aspects of your job, where do you see the completing of the weekly project status reports?

E: Oh, I don't know, I would guess somewhere around three or four.

S: Okay, so you're aware that completing the reports on time does have some measure of importance for your job.

E: Oh, sure, but the installation and debugging aspects are far more important — like say nine or ten.

"Tilting the scale"

M: Yes, okay, I would agree. But I'm wondering if you're aware of what some of the consequences are when you don't turn in the project status reports on time?

E: Hum, let's see. You get on my back about it, of course.

S: You're right. We have talked about this before. But, besides that, what else do you think happens?

E: Well, a couple of people have jokingly said that they thought I was getting some kind of special treatment because I didn't have to turn in my report at the beginning of each week like everyone else. But I certainly don't think that's the case.

S: I certainly hope it's not. Because that's not my intention. Can you think of any other consequences?

E: No, not right off the top of my head.

S: Then, do you now see this is a problem that needs attention?

E: Well, I suppose I can understand why some people might feel like I'm getting special treatment, but as I said earlier, my job is to install computer systems — not fill out reports.

S: Again, I agree that that's the main focus of your job, but I think we also agreed that completing the weekly project status reports on time was part of your job too.

E: Yes, but not nearly as important as the other part.

S: Yes, true. Well, what else do you think happens when you turn in the status reports late?

E: I'm not sure.

S: Well, let me share a couple of things with you. One thing that happens is that on Monday afternoons I frequently get calls from the department managers we're working with, wanting an update on what we've accomplished. If I don't have your status report, I can't answer their questions.

Types of Excuses and Their Solutions

Category	Excuse: Employee Says...	Solution: You Do This...
Diversions Employee redirects blame for performance problem back to supervisor.	"That's not my job." "I didn't know that's what you wanted." "You never told me that." "No one ever told me it was a priority." "I thought someone else was going to do it."	• Accept partial responsibility for not making expectations clear. • Clarify your expectations for the future. • Note date and time of conversation.
Discounts Employee minimizes importance of performance problem by referring to past or pointing out that others do the same thing.	"It's been done that way for years." "I've never done it that way before." "My previous boss never said anything to me about this." "Other people do the same thing."	• Acknowledge that you see how your expectations could be a surprise if there haven't been similar expectations in the past. Or, agree that others have done the same thing. But point out that you're bringing it up because the employee has done it more frequently (cite specifics). • Clarify your expectations for the future. • Note date and time of conversation.
Denials Employee rejects responsibility for problem.	"It's not my fault." "I hope you're not blaming me." "It didn't happen on my shift."	• Let employee know you are not trying to cast blame. But you do want to talk about the situation and find a solution to prevent the issue from reoccurring. • Note date and time of conversation.
Half truths Employee points out possible obstacle as cause for performance problem.	"I got sick." "I didn't get the paperwork." "I forgot." "The equipment didn't work." "I didn't have enough time." "I didn't have enough help." "I had personal problems." "I didn't know how to do it."	*1st Time:* • Acknowledge excuse. Clarify your expectations. • Note date and time of conversation. *2nd Time:* • Remind employee of previous conversation. • Restate your expectations. • Turn into problem solving discussion. • Note date and time of discussion. *3rd Time:* • Remind employee of previous conversation. • Restate your understanding of agreement. • Ask for agreement on problem.