

The Principles of Feedback

1. Choose correct timing for feedback

Praise is most effective when given as soon as possible after the behaviour has occurred. Immediate feedback will help to reinforce a correct behaviour and make it more likely to happen again.

When an incorrect behaviour is not corrected with feedback, the staff member may incorporate it into his or her customer or colleague interactions unknowingly. It is highly desirable to give corrective feedback before the situation occurs again.

2. Ask for self assessment

Beginning by asking the person for self-assessment involves them in the feedback process.

It helps to promote an open atmosphere and dialogue between the person doing the coaching and the person being coached. Often the person is well aware of his or her own strengths and weaknesses.

It is more effective to allow the person to voice opinions before providing your own assessment of performance.

Through self-assessment, the person can gradually assume more responsibility for his or her own abilities and performance.

3. Focus on specifics

When you focus on a specific correct or incorrect behaviour, you remove the feedback from the sphere of personality differences and the other person will be more willing and able to change.

For example, when providing corrective feedback:

Do: "When you were talking to customer xyz, I noticed that you forgot to use her name"

Not: "You are not building rapport with the customer"

When providing praise:

Do: "When you spoke to customer xyz, I noticed that you used really good open and closed questioning techniques"

Not: "You communicated well there"

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4. Limit feedback to a few important points

Good coaches and communicators identify one or two critical areas and help the person address them one at a time.

It is too hard to examine and try to change many aspects of behaviour at one time.

Restrict your feedback to one or two important points so that you do not overwhelm the other person with too many things to consider.

5. Provide more praise than corrective feedback

Positive reinforcement is one of the strongest factors in bringing about change.

Unfortunately a lot of people always focus on the negative.

When you give corrective feedback, remember to point out corrective behaviours first. This is as important as pointing out mistakes and areas that need improvement.

And always end the conversation on a positive.

6. Give praise for expected performance

People deserve to be praised for doing their job to the expected level. Too many people take the expected level for granted. Remember that praising anyone who meets established standards is as important as praising the exceptional performer. Praise is a strong motivator, and enough praise may be what it takes to turn an average employee into an exceptional one.

7. Develop Action Plans

Work together to identify the desired performance or result and how it can be achieved. Decide when the steps will be accomplished and plan regular review dates.

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Useful techniques to use when giving feedback

Now that we have highlighted the main principles of giving feedback, let's look at some useful techniques we can use in feedback sessions:

Open-ended questioning

Use open-ended questions to allow and encourage the person to give more detail and elaborate.

Use words like:

What?
How?
Who?
Tell me?

Avoid closed questions when you are trying to get more information from someone.

Avoid words like:

Do you?
Did you?
Have you?

Also be careful when you use the word "Why". The person may think that you are blaming them or being critical if you use it. They may think that you disagree with them if you use this word.

Reflecting Back

This is about putting what the other person has said into your own words and reflecting it back.

This is called paraphrasing and by doing this it shows that you are listening and more importantly that you are listening and understanding!

For example:

Individual – "I always seem to get the rough end of the stick - no-one listens to me at all....."

You – "You seem concerned that no-one listens to you and that you seem to be getting a dumb deal"

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Maintaining Silence

Encourage the person to take their time.

Always give the other person time to think through their reply to a challenging answer.

Do not feel uncomfortable about silences but do be wary that silence can make people feel very uncomfortable.

Maintain eye contact and demonstrate an interest.

Summarising

Summarise the output of the meeting and action plan to ensure that you have heard correctly and understood from his/her perspective.

Restate the key aspects of the feedback discussion

Conclude the discussion and focus on planning for the future.

Example: "The three major issues you raised were....."
" To summarise then....."

Being Sensitive

Acting sensitive to the needs of the person is important as they may reject the feedback initially. Give the person space to think in his/her time. This may help the person to absorb the feedback

Initiating Action and Offering Ideas

Example:

"Can you think of an action that would help build on your skills in this area?"

Offer ideas without forcing your personal opinion.

"One thing you might do is...."

"Have you thought about....."

"Your options include....."

"What can I do to help?"

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Gaining Ownership

Help the person to integrate the feedback into their own experience and view of themselves.

Link the feedback as much as possible to business results and objectives – this will help increase ownership.

Any change in behaviour will only occur through acceptance and ownership of the feedback by that person.

*** EXERCISE ***

GIVING FEEDBACK

Invite a colleague or friend to role play a difficult feedback situation for you

Take an example of behaviour you wish to correct and role play it with your partner taking the role of the staff member with a behaviour problem.

Afterwards invite them to give you feedback on how you tackled the issue
Ask them to tell you how they felt and what their thoughts were when being given constructive feedback.

Then consider:

What worked well?

What could have been done better?

What will you know for next time?

Practising difficult situations enables you to tackle the feedback more confidently and smoothly. Your staff member will value the effort and thought behind the feedback.

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Receiving Feedback

As long as feedback is given in a non-judgmental and appropriate way, it is a valuable piece of information for learning and for our continued development as a person.

Constructive feedback is critical for self-development and growth; here are some points to bear in mind when you receive feedback.

1. Don't shy away from constructive feedback, welcome it
2. Accept feedback of any sort for what it is – information
3. Evaluate the feedback before responding
4. Make your own choice about what you intend to do with the information

The feedback emotional rollercoaster

Whether you are giving or receiving feedback it is useful to bear in mind the following model when it comes to people who receive feedback.

D A W A

DENIAL

When people first receive feedback, they have a tendency to deny it. Please avoid immediate defensiveness – arguing, denying and justifying. This just gets in the way of your appreciation of the information you are being given.

ANGER

After the denial stage comes anger! So you've been told that your work is not as good as what it ought to be. You've said, "It's as good as always" so you are denying it then you become angry as it stews in your mind and body. The immediate reaction is to fume!

WITHDRAWAL

After the anger has calmed down, the person has had time to reflect and ponder on the feedback. "Well, I have been making more mistakes than normal" This is when time is taken out to mull over the feedback and think about what it actually means.

ACCEPTANCE

The final part of this model is finally accepting the feedback, assessing its value and the consequences of ignoring it, or using it. "I HAVE been making mistakes"

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