



Giving and Receiving Feedback

A Guide for Employees



**Questions that may encourage you to seek feedback:**

* How do you know that the impact you have been having on others is what you’ve intended?
* How good do you think your skills are? What have others said about them?
* How much do you really know about what your boss / peers / team thinks about you?
* What can you do to be sure that you have a current and objective gauge on your abilities or the effectiveness of your behaviours?

Seeking and listening to feedback is vital for improving self-awareness and development

**Using the Johari Window**

This is a simple model to illustrate how receiving feedback improves your awareness of how others are receiving your actions and behaviours. Without feedback this information will remain unknown to you.

**Things unknown to others**

**Things about me known to others**

 **Unknown to self Known to self**

 

Tips for **Giving** Feedback

1. Think about what is triggering your need to give feedback. What are your motives and desired outcomes? To punish? To fix? To control? Or to provide honest observations that will help an individual to achieve a desired goal?
2. Has the feedback been requested? Will it be welcomed? You may need to position it by saying that you wish to talk about… (issue), then agree how this is done.
3. Feedback should be timely so that the person can easily connect the information to their actions. The only caveat is to avoid giving feedback when emotions in a situation are still running high. It is important to choose a moment when the person will be receptive.
4. Be careful to judge whether public or one to one feedback is more appropriate. Appreciation may be appropriate in public but communicating unmet expectations may not be.
5. Try to make feedback a day to day conversational activity about small things. This means the practice becomes easy and expected and not an awkward process when feedback about a bigger issue is required.
6. Although feedback may be given with the intention to improve performance or outcomes, the receiver always has a choice about what s/he does with it.
7. In some situations particularly in giving performance feedback it may be accompanied by the consequences being set out for the receiver not taking action on the feedback, but ultimately only the individual themselves can decide to make a change.
8. Giving feedback is about letting the person know from your own position how their actions or behaviours are impacting (positively or negatively). Feedback can therefore often be most effectively delivered using the first person ‘I’.

Also, feedback is more effective as a description about actions or behaviours and their impact, not about the attributes of the person themselves.

“I thought the way you dealt with the situation led to a really positive meeting”.

“I felt under attack and harassed when you were shouting”.

“I sense you get irritated when I ask you these types of questions”.

1. Don’t be tempted to soften feedback to make it more palatable. This often confuses rather than helps. Using first person phrasing allows you to express your perspective in an honest and impactful way. Similarly, the ‘bad news sandwich’ where a piece of negative feedback is contained between two positives can sound false and confusing.
2. When delivering feedback avoid personal criticism or judgement. These tend not to be helpful and will likely result in a defensive reaction. Feedback can still be a robust view of an individuals behaviour or actions which is more helpful and actionable and more likely to create a ‘listening’ reaction.
3. Be as specific as you can about the details of the feedback, illustrating with examples if possible, so that the feedback is actionable for the receiver.
4. Example format for performance feedback:

Observed behaviour > Impact > Desired behaviour > Desired impact

“Here’s what I saw / heard / learned”.(Observed behaviour)

“This made me feel / think…” (Impact)

“In future I’d like you to/not to…” (Desired behaviour)

“And this will mean that I will…” (Desired impact)

1. If the receiver starts to defend their behaviour, argue or deny etc, do not enter into this argument. Reiterate that your feedback is about your own observations, feelings and views which are intended to be useful for them. It may be appropriate to encourage them to seek feedback from elsewhere to get other perspectives.
2. Sometimes after giving feedback it is helpful to stop and disengage from the discussion, especially if there is a defensive reaction. Some learning styles are more reflective in nature whereupon the individual will take time to think about what you have said. This may lead to a conversation at a later stage where the feedback is discussed in a more useful way.

 

Tips for **Receiving** Feedback

1. Be approachable and open to feedback and ask for it, particularly if you think there is feedback available but not being given.
2. Control your initial reactions and possible defensiveness.
3. Realise that feedback may not necessarily be imparted skilfully, so you may want to prompt with questions to help this.

“Can I check that the issue is about (?)”.

“When I took this action, how did you feel?”

“How could I have done this better?”

1. Suspend judgement and reflect on what you are being told.
2. Actively listen to understand and ask questions to clarify and explore.
3. It is often useful to summarise back to the individual what you think you have heard from them.
4. Show appreciation for the feedback. It is information that you would not otherwise have received and it may have been difficult for the person to discuss it with you.
5. Feedback is information about one person’s observations or impact and is correct from their perspective. It may be useful to check with others what you have heard and get their feedback as well.