

Giving Exceptional Feedback

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Feedback can be a powerful way to develop others and improve efficiency on your team. When done well, it fosters trust, engagement, and growth. However, when done poorly it can present the opposite effect and destroy working relationships. Effective feedback requires careful thought and intention.

The most effective feedback occurs on a regular basis and does not require formal meetings or reviews. Feedback can be given informally or formally, but is often most helpful when provided in a timely manner.

Feedback that fosters engagement is often **frequent, focused, and future oriented** according to a 2022 [Gallup study](#). It also showed employees were more engaged and energized about their work when they received regular (weekly) feedback over annual feedback.

To deliver effective feedback, we will cover some of the most important feedback practices and habits you can start today.

Active Listening

One of the first steps to growing your feedback competency is the ability to actively listen. Go into feedback with an openness to listen.

When someone else is speaking, active listening requires the ability to

1. set aside pre-conceived ideas of how the conversation needs or should go
2. what you want to say, and
3. what responses you need to have ready.

Practice giving more time and space for silence after speaking. Allow the other person more time to speak. Avoid interrupting and be mindful of the need to defend yourself. Summarize what you hear the other person saying and ask clarifying questions.

Regulating Your Own Emotions

Feedback conversations will only remain effective if you are able to regulate your emotions. Giving feedback and receiving can feel uncomfortable, provoke anxiety, and bring up a lot of emotions that some people don't know how to manage.

- Take deep breaths and pauses when needed.
- Name what's showing up and provide a solution:
 - *"I'd like to process this and follow up later."*

- *“This is something we both feel really passionate about, let’s take some time to think about it further and come back at a later date.”*
- *“That’s an interesting idea, I need some time to think about that. Let’s return to this tomorrow so I can provide a better way to talk about this.”*

Relate Feedback to Goals

Whenever possible, relate feedback to specific and relevant goals that can be measured. Consider if the feedback is going to help this person get closer to or farther from their desired goal(s).

Shifting Your Mindset With Developmental Feedback

Shift your perspective from person-centered problems to behavior-centered opportunities for growth. If there is a behavior you’d like the person to change, focus on it as an objective behavior and explore potential solution with them.

This view means the behavior is the problem, not the person. This presents an opportunity to explore what’s getting in the way to find workable solutions. This helps diffuse defenses and helps you see the person as a human who can change if given the opportunity, environment, and tools to succeed.

Balance Positive and Developmental Feedback

- Reinforce strengths by acknowledging what’s working.
- Encourage growth by focusing on behaviors that can improve.
- Use the 80/20 rule: 80% reinforcement, 20% constructive.

Use a Clear and Constructive Framework

Feedback that is specific, tied to goals, and addresses impact can be very helpful. Use the SBI model to help frame your feedback in an easy to communicate and understand way.

SBIS Model (Situation-Behavior-Impact-Solution)

1. **Situation:** Describe the specific context.
2. **Behavior:** Focus on observed actions, not assumptions.
3. **Impact:** Explain the effect on the team, project, or organization.
4. **Solution:** Explore potential solutions.

Example:

In yesterday’s team meeting (situation), I noticed you were excited about sharing your responses to team member’s discussions. However, this led to frequently interrupting team members several times (behavior), which made it hard for others to contribute and slowed down decision-making (impact). What might be some helpful ways for you to share your ideas without interrupting others? -or- What might be some ways to allow others to finish their thoughts and ideas before speaking up? (solution)

Step Into Coach Mode: Foster Dialogue and Ownership

- Invite the other person to share their perspective.
- Ask open-ended questions like:
 - “How do you see the situation?”
 - “What support do you need to improve?”
- Focus on solutions rather than dwelling on problems.

Giving Feedback Checklist

Before giving feedback, ask yourself the following questions to ensure it will be effective and well-received:

1. Clarify Your Intentions

- Is my goal to help the person grow, improve, or succeed?
- Am I giving this feedback to support, not to vent or criticize?
- Have I reflected on my own emotions to ensure I'm calm and objective?

2. Assess the Timing and Setting

- Is this the right moment, or would a different time be better?
- Is the environment private and supportive (if the feedback is critical)?
- Will the person be in the right mindset to receive this feedback?

3. Ensure the Feedback is Constructive

- Can I describe the situation with **specific** examples rather than vague statements?
- Am I focusing on observed **behaviors**, not assumptions or personal judgments?
- Can I clearly articulate the **impact** of their actions?
- Am I prepared to offer suggestions or discuss next steps?

4. Prepare for a Two-Way Conversation

- Am I ready to hear something even if I don't agree?
- Am I open to hearing their perspective and making it a dialogue?
- Am I willing to ask open-ended questions to encourage reflection?
- Do I have the patience to allow them time to process and respond?

5. Plan for Follow-Up

- Am I ready to support them in making changes or improving?
- Will I check in later to recognize progress and provide ongoing feedback?
- Am I committed to fostering a culture of continuous feedback and growth?

If you can confidently check off most or all of these, you're in a great position to give feedback that will be constructive, supportive, and well-received. If not, consider adjusting your timing, approach, or mindset before proceeding.