

Ten Ways to Provide Quality Feedback (by Joel Garfinkle)

Drake Editorial
Team

Employees want feedback. They want an honest assessment of their behaviour to help them improve their work. They know that if they listen to and take action on clear and constructive feedback, their overall performance will improve. And so will their job satisfaction.

However, most managers feel uncomfortable delivering feedback, especially when it involves a problem or concern. So many managers take a passive approach or are guilty of knee-jerk, “drive by” feedback, which can be counterproductive. Providing feedback that gets results isn’t as difficult or painful as you think. Listed below are ten tips to make it a powerful and positive experience.



- 1. Be positive.** Focus on what the person is doing well when giving feedback (and not just what they can improve upon).
- 2. Focus on the behaviour, not the person.** When discussing a problem with performance, keep your emotions in check. Focus on the actions of the individual, not the person.
- 3. Be specific.** Provide tangible examples of the behaviour in question, not vague, “drive by” criticism like, “You’ve been arguing with customers a lot” or “I’ve been hearing complaints about your attitude”.
- 4. Be timely.** Don’t wait until the employee’s annual performance appraisal to provide positive or negative feedback. The closer feedback is tied to the behaviour in question (good or bad) the more powerful it will be.
- 5. Make sure you are clear on why you are delivering the feedback.** Often, feedback comes from judgment and we don’t want to pass it off as feedback. So, it’s important to pause and think about where the feedback is coming from and how can you deliver it in a way that will be received positively.
- 6. Don’t use judgment as a means for feedback.** Don’t use feedback as a cover for you to share an actual judgment or be critical of another person. Judgment is just your opinion of a person’s character and isn’t neutral.
- 7. Provide feedback from a neutral place.** Feedback is really a piece of information or observation you are sharing. Once a person receives the feedback from a neutral space, the person can decide to change or not.
- 8. Make it a two-way conversation.** Take time to engage the employee and check for understanding. Focus on “partnership,” not “this is what you’re doing wrong” or “this is what you need to change.”
- 9. Follow up.** If your feedback concerns a problem, look for opportunities to “catch them doing it right.” Reinforce positive behaviour.
- 10. Make sure you have these three qualities before delivering feedback.** Feedback can best be received when you have the authority, credibility and trust already established in the relationship. Without these three things, it makes it more difficult to receive the feedback.

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