

Fact Sheet – Effective Feedback

Feedback - introduction

The provision of feedback on performance is an essential part of the communication process. For most of us, giving and receiving performance feedback is a difficult task. However, with some easy to follow guidelines, “feedback” can become a very positive and motivating factor in our working relationships.

Ground-rules for feedback	
Feedback should be of benefit to the receiver, not a release to the giver	
When giving feedback	When receiving feedback
<p>Be timely. Give your feedback as soon as possible after the event.</p> <p>Be specific. Describe specific behaviours or areas of performance, particularly those they should keep and those they should change.</p> <p>Ask for their evaluation of the performance.</p> <p>Be descriptive, not judgmental. Describe the performance (that is either effective or ineffective). Praise and criticise the act, not the person.</p> <p>Own the feedback. Speak for yourself, not for others.</p>	<p>Ask for it - Ask the person to be specific and descriptive. Ask for plenty of examples.</p> <p>Direct it - If you need information or answer to a question, ask for it. Tell the person what your goals are and the kind of feedback that will be particularly helpful.</p> <p>Accept it - Do not defend or justify your behaviour. If you disagree and it is an important point, ask for further examples. If you still disagree, ask “Why?”</p> <p>Use what is helpful - discard the rest</p>

Responding to Criticism – Some Golden Rules

- ❖ We all have our “Comfort Zones” and getting feedback that does not line up with our perception of “who we are” or “what we did” can often cause us to feel under pressure or threat.
- ❖ The secret to overcome these natural responses is to first seek to understand rather than be understood. This means that before responding to criticism, seek clarification about what the other person has said and where they are “coming from.”

A very effective technique for seeking clarification is to use ‘I Statements’ such as:

“What I hear you saying is is that right?”

“What that means to me isis that correct?”

“What I think you are saying is is that right?”

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Apply your newly developed active listening skills to seek to understand why they believe what they do or feel the way they do. When out of our comfort zone, it often feels as if we are under threat and have to justify our actions. Taken to extremes, these can be some of our responses:

- ❖ Deny
- ❖ Justify or Rationalise
- ❖ Lay Blame
- ❖ Withdraw from Reality.

Each of these responses can initially assist us to keep from feeling threatened. Yet taken to excess, they only get in the way of developing trusting relationships, a willingness to learn and grow, and feelings of personal dignity and self-esteem.

“Remember, outstanding communicators are response ...able”

Use your new skills to question the other person, to clarify what they mean, believe or feel. Encourage them to be specific with you, ask for specific examples. Question deeper (probe) to find out how much of a concern particular issues are and, what this means to them. Also, remember that sometimes the feedback is coming from a person whom you do not respect and might not even be valid – in which case, ditch it!

Giving feedback to a poor performer

There are many times where we have to give feedback to a person who is not performing the task or role to the required standard. Equally there might be a behavioural issue that needs addressing. In these situations, the person receiving the feedback is not going to be as receptive, yet it is still important to know the message has been received and the direction for improvement has been set.

The feedback delivery technique is essentially the same regardless of reason for giving the feedback; there is only a difference in so much as the reaction might be less favourable than when delivering positive (development) feedback. In these situations, it is vital that at the end of the feedback you have shared clarity of YOUR expectations.

Being prepared is essential. Ensure you collect good evidence. Evidence has to be factually based, not an opinion, it has to be indisputably true. Lack of seeing or hearing something is also evidence of course. Make sure you consider any standards that are laid out and what expectations have been set already. Deliver the evidence factually and without emotion, although having empathy and compassion in the delivery is vital, you are speaking to a human after all!

An effective method of delivery is:

- ❖ Evidence
- ❖ Effect
- ❖ Change
- ❖ Continue

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Example: “Last week during the board presentation you spoke over me on three separate occasions. The effect of this was to devalue my contribution, which I understood later from the members confused them. I need you the change that behaviour, but I welcome your continuing constructive challenge and if in future we can do that prior to the meeting then that would be my expectation.”

If the behaviour and anticipated responses is more severe, then it is likely the person might go through a few phases:

- ❖ Shock
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Rejection, Retaliation, Rationalisation
- ❖ Acceptance
- ❖ Help

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It is pointless trying to improve performance where the person is still in shock or anger, so be prepared for this and plan additional space in your diary and hold additional meetings. The first phase is to help the person come to terms with the feedback, and then you must follow on to help improve the performance with a combination of supporting and directing leadership styles. Leaving it as simply a piece of feedback with no follow up will only delay a repeat, and possibly worse event.

Get your house in order first

This course is not about formal disciplinary process, but a short look forward is welcome at this stage. At times performance feedback becomes a precursor to sanctions and a formal disciplinary process. In 2011 the Morton-Fraser report indicated 87% of dismissal claims never go to tribunal, due to lack of evidence. Of the remainder that do go to court, the panel usually dismisses 30% of cases in the early stages due to procedures not being followed.

Behaviours and performance have to be managed. Staff look to managers to manage these situations, but in a fair and just manner. A survey by Forbes and supported by evidence from the CBI indicated that most performance intervention failures could be attributed to seven reasons:

1. Is the task designed for success?
2. Have I clarified and checked understanding of my expectations
3. Do I give regular honest 1-1 feedback?
4. Does this person have the skills and knowledge to perform the task?
5. Do they understand the importance of the task?
6. Is the person capable and willing to do it?
7. Are there any personal issues that could be affecting their performance?

The organisation and often directly the leader are responsible for the top six. Ask yourself these six questions before you proceed to any form of sanction. The survey went on further to state that 66% of the failures happened at steps 2 and 3. So by ensuring you have clarity of expectation by using the techniques of communication discussed early and by providing effective and regular feedback you will resolve many issues long before they run the risk of becoming formalised management issues.