Providing Informal Feedback

Prepare to Provide ‘FAST’ Feedback

The benefits of informal feedback occur when feedback conversations occur regularly—whenever an opportunity for praise or a development situation arises. To help you remember the basics of informal feedback, feedback should be ‘FAST’:

• **Frequent**—Managers should provide feedback on an ongoing basis so that employees have an accurate and up-to-date understanding of their performance strengths and development areas.

• **Actionable**—Feedback should help the employee to do their current job better, or recognize actions or work that were ideal for the current position. Ensure that recommended actions or behaviors are within the control of the employee in his or her current position.

• **Specific**—Managers should identify specific actions the employee took or specific things that were appropriate or inappropriate. Specific and targeted feedback has up to a 6.6% positive impact on employee performance.

• **Timely**—Managers should give feedback as soon as possible to the action or event. This will maximize the impact of feedback on the employee’s performance and minimize the chances of resentment.

Pre-Conversation Checklist

- Is your feedback fair, accurate, and directly applicable to the employee’s tasks?
- Do your comments focus on single behaviors that direct the employee’s attention to a few specific and important improvements?
- Are your planned comments straightforward, without any personal opinions?
- If you are delivering negative feedback, have you secured a private setting to deliver the feedback and set aside time in an undisturbed place for the conversation?
- Were any of the current development areas discussed previously? If so, are you prepared to incorporate that into the current conversation?

When preparing for the informal feedback conversation, it is also important to remember to avoid the following common mistakes associated with manager feedback:

**Avoid Common Mistakes**

- **Making Interpretations**—Limit feedback to the employee’s behavior without using any personal interpretations.
- **Talking too Much**—Once you have acknowledged the situation, behavior, and impact in question, allow the employee to provide his or her opinion on your feedback.
- **Focusing on Weaknesses**—Frame missing skills not as weaknesses, but as obstacles the employee should overcome.
During the Conversation, Identify the Situation, Behavior, and Impact of the Action or Event

After reviewing the basics of what should be covered in informal feedback conversations, use the Center for Creative Leadership’s three step process to increase the quality and effectiveness of the feedback. To keep your feedback relevant and focused, identify the situation, behavior and impact of the action or event. While this method works for both positive and negative informal feedback, any serious performance issues will require a more structured performance discussion. Here are some examples of how to differentiate positive and negative feedback using the situation, behavior, impact framework:

1) **Situation**—Describe the situation in which you observed the employee
2) **Behavior**—Describe the behavior you observed
3) **Impact**—Describe the impact of that behavior on you or others who were present in the situation

### Positive Feedback

- **State the Behavior and Its Valuable Aspects**: “Thank you for helping Mark with that software yesterday.”
- **Note the Behavior’s Impact on Productivity or Environment**: “Helping him really boosted his enthusiasm for the task.”
- **State Your Appreciation**: “I was able to spend time on another important project while you helped Mark.”
- **Provide Impetus for Continuing Behavior**: “As you work towards your next role, I’m hopeful that you will continue to play a crucial role in the team.”

### Development Feedback

- **State Unacceptable Behavior**: “I’ve noticed that your e-mails often have spelling errors.”
- **Note the Behavior’s Impact on Productivity or Environment**: “I worry about what our clients will think when they see a misspelled word.”
- **Describe Alternative Behaviors and Desired Outcome**: “We want to send 100% error-free information. Please spend a minute to re-read and spell-check your e-mails before hitting the ‘Send’ button.”
- **Set Goals for the Future**: “The team needs you to help preserve our image, and sending error-free e-mails is one way to do that best.”

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**Checklist of Daily Reminders of When to Provide Performance Feedback**

- Did any of your employees do anything exceptional today (either good or bad)?
- Did you see your employees doing anything inefficiently?
- Are there development areas where you have seen an improvement or drop off in performance?
- Did an employee’s performance have a positive or negative impact on a client or colleague?
- Have any of your employees missed deadlines?