

Effective Communication

Motivational and Critical Feedback

Effective feedback takes little time, improves morale, decreases stress, and raises productivity.

Follow the SMART formula:

S

Specific vs. vague

“You completed your project early on Friday, and, as a result, I was able to finish up my part early, too. That makes you, me and the company look good.” vs. *“Great job! Thanks”*

“The storage area you were responsible for today was untidy --the floor and benches had scraps and tools on them” vs. *“Your area was left a mess.”*

M

Meaningful

Take into account the individual’s personality and values – what is acknowledgement or coaching to you may not be meaningful to them. The most meaningful feedback demonstrates that you are trying to understand someone. Feedback is also most meaningful if it is about something in the receiver’s control, and something they did, not something they have. Share feelings, not just facts: Finally, it’s not about you, but do use “I” statements to make things clear and build relationship.

A

Appropriate

Is it your place to give feedback about the situation? Co-workers need to be aware of the difference between feedback that is mutually respectful and feedback that may appear patronizing. There is feedback that only a supervisor should give – both positive and negative.

“The extra effort you put into that sales presentation really shows your persistence.” vs. *“Good job everyone – you all make my job so much easier when you work together so well”* – if given by a colleague.

Public praise – private criticism

- Supportive coworkers make each other look good
- Supportive coworkers only offer criticism when invited and in private
- Supportive coworkers keep criticism about behaviors not the person

R

Relevant

Is it work-related? Is it related to the work you do together? Is it an important part of their job or is it trivial? We often give compliments to co-workers about non-work related things – *That’s a great looking truck you’ve got there.*” because it is more comfortable than acknowledging work behaviour.

T

Time-bound

Be immediate and specific with feedback (but better late than never). Make time for acknowledgement to make sure it happens.

You can provide feedback to your supervisors as well as peers. A simple way of doing this is to thank them when they have helped you in some way.

Adapted from: Blanchard, Ken. *Leading at a Higher Level.*

Individual
Feedback
Relationship
Responsive
Reactive

Motivational
Acknowledgement

Formative
Criticism &
Coaching

Tips for Giving Critical Feedback

1. Determine if silence is good sense or a cop-out in each situation

- Are you choosing the safety of silence over the risk of being assertive?
- Are you complaining to others about the problem? Is your conscience nagging you?

2. Identify the problem before you confront the problem

- Take the time to reflect in order to select the real or root issue.
- Identify specific behaviours, not qualities or values.
- Be precise – reduce the problem to a single sentence to identify what’s bothering you most.
- Beware of letting emotions move you to action at the expense of careful thought.

3. Avoid defensiveness and build safety

- Make sure your language is not confrontational. Asking a questions is a good strategy:
 - *“I thought we agreed on...”* vs. *“You said”*
 - *“I was wondering if we could talk”* vs. *“It’s clear we need to have a talk.”*

4. End with a question

- After sharing the facts, building safety, and sharing feelings, invite solutions from their perspective:
 - *“You interrupted me at the meeting. I felt disrespected and I want to be able to finish saying what I want. What happened?”*

Adapted from: Patterson, K. et al. *Crucial Confrontations*

On the Receiving End

When you are given a compliment or acknowledgement:

- Say **“Thank you”!**

When you receive a criticism:

- **Pause before reacting** and think honestly about what they say.
- **The best defense is probably *not* a good offense** unless you really believe that you are being unfairly attacked. Even then, it can be more effective to deflect or ignore the comment.
- **Be honest**, if you know that you have done something wrong. *Yes, you're right. I was not paying full attention.* Don't make excuses, although you can give valid reasons for what happened.
- **Ask for more details** as appropriate until you fully understand what happened. *Sorry, I don't understand. Could you explain further?*
- **Ask for help in avoiding such future problems.** Seek first to learn. If you treat the other person as if they are trying to help, then they will likely try to be helpful.
- **Thank them for the feedback** and apologize as appropriate. A simple, sincere *'sorry'* or *'very sorry'* is often enough. If necessary, find ways to fix the problem and regain trust, but do so with dignity– you can still be assertive.