

How to Give Feedback

January 26, 2022

By Peter Germann
Germann Consulting Group

Creating more frequent and individualized feedback will help both employees and managers meet the goals of the organization. Most employees want to know if they're on track or off track and consistent feedback and coaching conversations are the best ways to help employees feel engaged and important.

When you recognize an issue or problem, giving feedback is the clearest, quickest way to encourage a change in behavior. One of the most important foundational elements is **your intention to help the employee grow, rather than to show him they were wrong**. The feedback should increase, not drain, the employee's motivation and resources for change. Consider what you hope to achieve and what impact you'd like to have on the employee.



Also, no matter how frustrated you are, it's ok to be tough, not mean. And be positive as well. Give as much positive feedback as you do negative, so the person doesn't turn on their threat response and get defensive. Be specific about what you observed without being judgmental. The best leaders start by asking the employee his or her perspective on the situation because there may be information that the leader hasn't considered yet.

Once you've heard their perspective and shared what you've observed, the next step is to explain

the impact and point out the result from this behavior while being as specific as possible. Statements like "I noticed that" are more difficult to argue with and will keep the feedback session from devolving into a debate. Then, after you've shared your observation, stop talking and wait for the other person's response. Give them time to think through what you've said and react to it. This will invite the employee into the problem-solving process. If you don't get much of a response, ask what ideas they have or what they're taking away from this conversation. It's often helpful for you to give a small number of actionable suggestions (ideally only one or two) that the other person can take in the future, to change this behavior. They will appreciate that you're giving them the first step to improving the situation. By the end of the conversation, you may want to be as formal as to determine the steps this person take, by when, and how you will know there's been a change related to the feedback.

Ideally feedback shouldn't be a Big Deal on your team. It should be easy and comfortable to provide immediate, frequent and productive feedback so any of these formerly "difficult conversations" feel more like a collegial discussion to all.