



5 Principles of Effective Feedback

In a literal sense, we define feedback as “a reaction or response to a particular process or activity.” For meaningful feedback, you should focus on the connection between the activity and its resulting reaction. In training or performance reviews, these five ways can ensure you’re giving effective feedback.

PLAN YOUR MEETING THOROUGHLY

When we say thoroughly, we mean think ahead and think through potential reactions and be prepared. It might not happen every meeting, but at some point feedback will generate an emotional effect on the person sitting at the other side of the table. Practice empathy and put yourself in their shoes: “How would this news make me feel?”

Basically, if you’re giving feedback to another coworker, often you’ll need to help them through it. Good news needs guidance as well! Even with promotions and positive team changes, your employees look to you for suggestions. Thoroughly thinking ahead for feedback outcomes will improve our culture and productivity.

BE WILLING TO LISTEN

Good communication requires effort from both members of a feedback meeting. In this context, the person in a position of authority should always really listen. What does listening mean?

A good way to listen is to start off the meeting by discussing what happened. To discuss means that more than one of you is talking. It rules out you lecturing, talking at or “briefing” the other person. So you could ask the other person for his or her version of events, and then ask questions to get to the heart of the matter, for example.

It’s all about respect. You’ll find feedback takes on a new dimension when it’s an involved conversation among all parties. Achieving this won’t happen overnight. It will take focus and work in the form of training, but you’ll see great benefits from it.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME

Remember the earlier point about feedback being tied to its timely context? Well, you might want to slow it up just a bit. The most effective feedback has a nuanced delivery,

time, and place. In all situations, the timing of the feedback hinges upon the severity. Leadership experts suggest a maxim to use in all aspects of your company: “The goal is to correct the problem; not to inflict pain on the person who is guilty of it... You’ll increase the chances of successfully fixing the problem if you make this your rule of thumb.” Coach and direct during a shift, give feedback afterwards.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE

Place matters just as much as time, so the office or in DT or standing next to the manager station isn’t always the best option. Spectators and gossip can only complicate the situation. The best place is usually seated at a table so that everyone else knows a private conversation is taking place and not to interrupt. Remember, each opportunity for feedback presents a new chance to make a positive impact on your employees.

AIM TO MAKE THE MEETING A WIN-WIN

As mentioned earlier, feedback is a two-way street. When employees do something good or bad, they should expect feedback from their leaders. This doesn’t mean that the leaders can’t encourage feedback from their employees. When companies uncover unforeseen issues, sourcing these ideas for change through feedback meetings between managers and employees really increases employee engagement and improves overall company culture. In this way, you’re really “correcting the problem, not inflicting pain.” If both the leadership and the employee emerge from a feedback meeting charged up to do better work, you’ll be surprised how much difference it will make on your company’s working environment.