

Managing Capability – Providing Feedback

Giving feedback

Feedback can play a significant role in improving performance. Feedback is the sharing of information on an employee's performance with them and on what is required to perform well in the future.

- Positive feedback serves to sustain and reinforce effective performance and is very important to ensure the individual is clear regarding what they are doing well.
- Negative or corrective feedback serves to change performance that is inappropriate or ineffective
- Both should be constructive and lead to positive change in performance or behaviour

Managers may shy away from providing corrective feedback, because they dislike negative interactions and may lack the skills or confidence to deliver it effectively. In addition, if a manager does not give feedback this can:

- mislead the employee by giving the impression that there is no problem
- prolong the problem or allow it to get worse
- deny the employee the chance to improve or put things right
- damage the productivity and efficiency of your business
- lower the morale amongst team members.

Giving feedback is critical in improving an individual's performance and with practice can be incorporated comfortably and quickly into regular interactions with employees. The principles below may assist managers in providing corrective feedback.

Key principles for giving feedback

- Feedback should be given at an appropriate time as soon as possible after the event, and when the recipient is not distracted by emotion or other commitments
- Keep your voice calm and your expression relaxed
- Feedback should be factual and not based on opinions or assumptions
- Use open and probing questions that help the recipient to review the situation and seek possible solutions e.g. What may have caused this to happen? What ideas do you have? What can I do to help you solve this? What could you do differently?
- Solutions must relate to behaviour and outcomes that the recipient has the power to influence or change
- Agree and record solutions. Don't impose your solutions unless you really have to.
- Be specific and concentrate on what actually happened, avoid using 'always' and 'never'

Don't say (generalised statements)	Do say (specific examples)
You are always making mistakes	There are three mistakes in this piece of work
You tend to shout at people	I noticed at last week's meeting that you shouted somewhat aggressively at Jim when he...
You never meet your deadlines	You've missed the monthly deadline six times this year so far, on each occasion by at least two days
Your work is not up to scratch - you'll have to pull your socks up	This piece of work falls short of the standard we require because...
You have a negative attitude towards the rest of the staff	What do you think you could do to improve your working relationship with your colleagues?

A useful model for giving feedback about performance or behaviour

When discussing some particular feedback:

1. Clarify: the performance or behaviour you expect to see
2. Explain: the performance or behaviour that you actually see
3. Discuss: two-way discussion of the situation and the difference between expected and actual behaviour, use open questions to fully clarify and understand the causes and to discuss possible solutions
4. Agree: decide and record what will be done improve the situation
5. Review: make a time to meet to review the results, give feedback and follow-up any further changes that could be made

Remember to balance positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback on its own allows no room for improvement and negative feedback on its own can be discouraging. Feedback should be a motivating factor, leading to improvements in performance or behaviour and more satisfaction in the role