

Ten Tips For Giving Effective Feedback

Feedback helps people to learn and improve. It is important to give feedback and also to receive it. Here are ten tips for giving feedback that makes a positive impact on your people.

1. **Give formally *and* informally** - Offer regular informal feedback throughout a project. But, also organise regular one-on-one meetings to sit down and discuss the employee's strengths and weaknesses in more detail.
2. **Focus on behaviour** - Particularly when making negative comments, pinpoint the behaviour rather than generalising as a personality trait. So, instead of saying "You are apathetic and need to focus on your work more", say, "I've noticed you spend a lot of time making personal phone calls, which means deadlines are not always met on time. "
3. **Establish standards** - Your employee should be clear about what is expected from them. Use performance goals as a basis for assessing their role.
4. **Be clear and specific** - Let the employee know clearly what you mean, using straightforward language and specific examples, like "Your sales are 30% higher than average, and you really listen to the customers. Last week you did an excellent job of negotiating the deal with Acme, because you asked them what they wanted."
5. **Be positive and constructive** - Even when giving negative feedback, try to be positive and constructive. Work together to find solutions. For example, "I noticed that almost half of your deliveries have been late this month. Is there any special reason for this? Have there been any problems you want to talk about?" Be prepared to listen and collaborate, without casting judgement.
6. **Use 'I' statements** - Relationship counsellors constantly tell their clients to use 'I' statements, rather than 'you' statements. The same applies at work. Instead of saying: "You disappointed me", say: "I felt disappointed..."
7. **Give at an appropriate time** - Praise employees for good work as soon as it is produced - whether you make your comments in the tearoom or in the lift or more formally in a meeting room. When giving negative feedback find the right moment, such as organising a brief meeting in a private office.
8. **Give the right amount** - Don't overwhelm the recipient with an overload of criticisms. Focus on one or two key areas.
9. **Verify understanding** - There is little use sitting down to discuss an employee's performance if they aren't listening or simply don't care. Ask for the employee's commitment and that they understand your points. By engaging them in the discussion, you will both understand each other's positions better.
10. **Develop an action plan** - A one-on-one feedback session should finish with a list of behavioural goals. The employee should be clear about what to continue doing and to start doing. Try to end the session with the employee feeling motivated, not personally attacked.