



Training Managers to Give Effective Feedback

Who should read this paper?

This whitepaper is for organizations who are looking to shake up and modernize their performance management processes by harnessing the power of continuous and proper performance feedback but are unclear on how to guide managers to give quality feedback and open productive dialogue.





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Feedback is a needed and necessary aspect of people development.

The way feedback is presented is essential to how effective it will be, or how likely it will be heard.

It reinforces what people do well and points out areas of improvement or growth that can enhance an employee's skills. The way feedback is presented is essential to how effective it will be, or how likely it will be heard. **Constructive feedback, both positive and negative, should be information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observations.** Review the following steps to assist you in providing quality feedback and productive dialogue.

Self-Assessing

What is the purpose of the feedback? Am I praising somebody on a job well done or pointing out an area of improvement? If praising a job well done, make sure your intentions are clear and you are praising all parties associated with the project or task that was well performed.

If you are considering giving feedback for improvement, make sure you have identified the specific issue and the effect the issue is having on productivity or teamwork. Review the feeling this issue brings up for you. Check for any emotions that might be inflated or out of line with the reality of the situation. If you are having a strong emotional response you might be pulling up an old similar situation that does not necessarily belong to the employee or in the feedback. Challenge your assumptions about the situation; ask questions and make sure you have enough factual information to make a clear assessment.

Creating a Positive Environment

Setting the stage for improvement feedback is crucial.

Set the stage so your feedback can be received. When praise is being offered, ask the employee to come into your office or go to his or her office and ask for a moment of time. This sets up a very specific focused time to acknowledge their efforts. Be specific, maintain good eye contact and speak in an assertive manner so the praise can clearly be heard. If you make the moment special, it will have more meaning and will reinforce the behavior and action on a deeper level. This type of praise leads to continued improvement and high quality performance.

Setting the stage for improvement feedback is even more crucial. So you can both be prepared, schedule time in advance. You may want to hold the meeting in your office, a conference room or away from the office altogether to avoid interruptions. Create a positive, non-threatening, and private environment. Start the meeting by setting a positive tone that sets the employee at ease. Briefly discussing personal topics like family or recent vacations can help establish a comfortable environment.



Providing Specific Content

When praising, make sure the content is specific to what you want to acknowledge. "Sue, you did a great job on the sales graph. It was clear, well-documented and easy to read." This is better than, "Job well done, Sue." Specific praise lets the employee know what works and helps him or her focus future efforts.

Focus on behaviour rather than personality. State the problem and effect.

When offering improvement feedback, remember to focus on providing specific content that pertains to the employee's behavior rather than personality. After you have arranged a safe environment, solicit the employee's participation in solving the problem. For example, "David, I need your help with something." This not only sets a collaborative tone, but it also often dissolves a defensive posture. Continue with I-statements to remain focused on the issue and deal directly with the specific behaviors: "I have observed," "I have noticed," or, when you need to discuss feedback given to you by others, "I have had reported to me."

State the problem and then the effect the problem is having. This will help the employee understand the ramifications of their behaviors or actions. For example, "David, I need your help with something. I have noticed that there are daily errors on the credit report and as a result a few employees have been staying late to repair the logs." Or, "Chris, I need your help with something. I have observed that the deadlines are not being met on a regular basis and it's affecting our delivery time with our clients."

Encouraging Open Dialogue

Beware of feedback de-railers.

Once you have stated the issue and the effect, ask questions to encourage open dialogue. "What do you feel are contributing to the errors?" or, "How could we be more effective in meeting our deadlines?" Avoid Yes and No questions. Focus on "How" and "What" versus "Why" or "You," which can often denote blame and solicit a defensive response instead of a collaborative discussion.

Stay focused on the person and watch for signs of withdrawal or a defensive response such as sarcasm, making points in a directive manner, or over-exaggeration of the facts. If any of these feedback de-railers come into play, remain calm and try the following:

- ✓ Actively listen to the employee's views. Ask questions to further understanding.
- ✓ Acknowledge feelings. Remember that acknowledgement is different than agreement; you can acknowledge the employee's feelings even if you do not agree with his/her position. "I hear that you are frustrated by the situation."
- ✓ Stay focused on the issue. Repeat relevant information or give additional examples.



- ✓ Acknowledge areas that may not have been within the employee's control.
- ✓ Keep a positive tone and reinforce that you want to work together to resolve the issue.

Deciding on Action Items and Follow Up

Wrap it up by restating the issue and the reason the issue appears to be occurring

Wrap up the conversation by restating the issue and the reason the issue appears to be occurring. Then agree on specific action items that can be performed to resolve the problem or improve the issue. For example, if a change in behavior is required to resolve the problem, cite what behavior is desired and provide an improvement timeframe: "John, we both agree that we need to adhere to our deadlines and prioritizing workflow and clearer team expectations will help to reduce scope creep. Let's meet weekly to discuss where we are to deadlines and provide me a progress report on individual and team performance."

Once you have set action items in motion, make sure to follow up at agreed upon times.

This paper was prepared by The Inside Coach. www.theinsidecoach.com



Feedback at your Fingertips

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Located directly within emPerform's powerful [online performance management solution](#), tag allows employees and managers to send instant feedback throughout the year. tags can be archived and are accessible directly within performance reviews – giving managers the rich performance feedback needed to deliver accurate and timely performance assessments and giving employees the valuable feedback needed for improvement and to be recognized.

- Capture continuous real-time performance feedback
- Engage managers and employees in performance management
- Access historical feedback from within appraisals
- Acknowledge and reward performance year-round

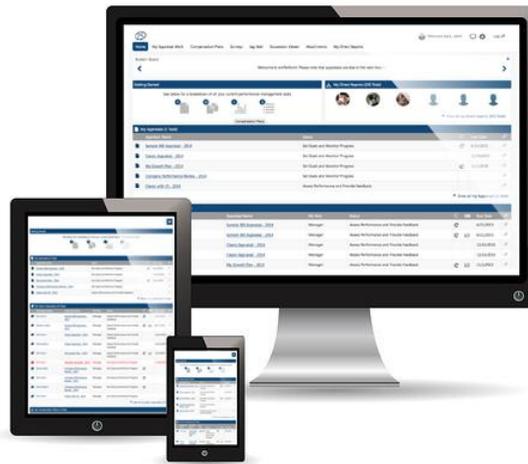
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emPerform's offers configurable, easy-to-use and effective performance management for organizations seeking to align, develop, reward & retain a world-class workforce.



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