

KEYS Productive Feedback: Best Practices for Giving & Receiving Feedback

Knowledge and Education for Your Success

When requesting feedback

- Know what you want to gain from the feedback: What do you hope to learn? What specific information would be useful to you? When would you like the feedback?
- Know what will make the feedback useful for you and include that in your request for feedback.
- Ask for feedback on a topic that you want to work on immediately and that will yield a payoff for you and the organization.
- Ask for both positive and constructive feedback.
- Thank the person for being willing to have the conversation.

When receiving feedback

- Be open to learning and remember everyone has room for growth.
- Remember to breathe. Remain calm. Ask for a break if needed.
- Listen carefully and let the person finish what they are saying. Ask questions to confirm you understand.
- Take time to understand what's being conveyed before responding.
- Ask the other person if they are open to learning about your views and experience.
- Allow time for pauses so you and others can gather your thoughts.
- Take time after receiving feedback to sort out and to evaluate what you heard.

When responding to feedback

- Get curious about small comments that could be doorways into larger, more important revelations. Ask that the topic be clarified. Ask the person to explain more of their thinking and assumptions. What led them to these conclusions?
- If only positive feedback is given, ask for suggestions on how to improve effectiveness. If feedback is entirely things to improve on, ask what behaviors work well and should be reinforced.
- For strong areas of performance, ask what specific actions contribute to effectiveness.
- If feedback is not helpful, ask questions to elicit it in a more helpful way (consider **Situation-Behavior-Impact-Consequences** model).
- Make sure you understand the result or behavior that the other person would like to see in the future (you don't have to agree to it.)
- If you do not agree with the feedback, calmly accept the possibility that there is some truth in what you have been told, without becoming anxious or defensive. You can decide later what to do about the feedback.
- If you do not agree with feedback: (1) Neutrally state what you heard the other person say (2) Share your perspective on your performance followed by specific supporting situations.
- Count to six before responding. Try not to let emotions overwhelm you.
- Acknowledge the feedback, valid points and periodically summarize what you are hearing.

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When preparing to give feedback

- Anticipate the employee's response to the feedback and plan for it, especially if it is a difficult message or if there are different perspectives involved.
- Check your motives before giving feedback. Do you want to improve effectiveness, motivate, explore possibilities, explain your thinking, increase awareness or understand rationale?
- Consider what factors are in the employee's control, including the impact and roles of the supervisor, peers, and others. How effectively does the employee influence those factors to achieve the results at hand?
- Reflect on:
 - What behaviors are productive to continue? What behaviors would increase the employee's effectiveness or the quality of results?
 - What assumptions and conclusions are you making about intention and performance? What assumptions and conclusions might the other person have about behavior and results?
 - How open are you to shifting your assumptions and conclusions based on the conversation?
 - What actions do you take based on your beliefs?
- Provide a balance of both praise and constructive criticism. Focus on behaviors and results, not attitudes. Provide specific observations/examples. Note areas for continued development and be specific about what success looks like. Note areas and reinforce where areas the employee is skilled.
- For constructive criticism on issues previously discussed, is this related to misdiagnosing the cause, a lack of effort of the part of the employee or a lack of ability on the part of the employee?

When giving feedback

- Be aware of your own emotions during the conversation – what you bring into the meeting and reactions you are feeling. Pay attention to nonverbal clues and respond to them. Be calm, honest and sincere.
- Weave feedback into a dialog rather than lecturing; make it a 2-way conversation. Listen to and acknowledge/address the employee's perspectives about his or her performance. Show your thinking and rationale in an appropriate way. Confirm that they understand what you are saying – look for understanding, not necessarily agreement.
- Stay away from labels (e.g., immature, unprofessional, irresponsible), and avoid extreme language like always/never. Don't focus on only a single behavior/outcome, whether good or bad.
- For issues of great concern, be explicit about the consequences of continued poor performance. Convey that change is necessary, you will be supportive, and the employee will be held responsible for performance.
- Ask the employee to update you on actions taken as a result of the feedback/plan.