



Making **feedback** a key performance driver

The challenge

Telling your team members what you think of their performance is a delicate task, and may make you feel uneasy. As a result, many managers prefer to limit themselves to performing formal annual performance reviews or making comments here and there when someone makes a mistake. Unfortunately, they are depriving themselves of an effective tool to manage performance. Indeed, feedback not only provides people with input on how to improve, but also encourages their efforts by recognizing their achievements and reinforcing the quality of their working relationship with you.

Five key success factors

There is no magic formula for giving feedback: you must adapt your approach to the person concerned, the desired results, and the context. But you can still optimize your chances of success by applying the following tips.

1

Seize every possible opportunity to give feedback

Lasting support is required to help someone grow and develop. Feedback is also much more effective in trusting relationships, which can be established only over time:

- Provide feedback not only on **performance**, but also on **behavior** and **work methods**.
- Feedback can take **different forms**.
E.g.: identifying a problem to solve, suggesting different work methods or behaviors, offering support, etc.
- Remember to express both **what is working** and **what isn't** – while underlining improvement opportunities.

2

Set the stage for success

Rather than talking to people haphazardly when you run into them in the halls, create conditions conducive to effective feedback:

- **Avoid** giving feedback in **the heat of the moment**. Conversely, **don't wait too long** after the event you want to discuss: People must clearly remember what happened and you will avoid giving the impression that you were brooding or hiding your feelings.
- Take the **time needed** to discuss the subject fully and draw appropriate conclusions.
- As much as possible, give **face-to-face** feedback in a **location well-suited to dialogue**.

5

Banish certain attitudes

Throughout the discussion, be careful not to get your counterpart's back up:

- **Avoid judging prematurely**: you may put the other person on the defensive, and thus keep him or her from thinking rationally.
- **Let the other person have his or her say**: don't answer your own questions and avoid closed questions.
- **Restrain your exasperation**. Beware of non-verbal cues (eye or body movements, tone of voice) that could reveal your frustration.
- **Place yourself on equal footing**: you won't get sincere commitment using authority.

3

Dare to express yourself clearly

Ambiguous or incomplete feedback can have an opposite impact from what is desired.

- **Be frank**: avoid euphemisms, use precise terms, and don't water down criticism.
- **Distinguish** between the **facts** and your **interpretations** or **emotions**.
E.g.: "Yesterday, when such-and-such happened, I concluded... This annoys me because..."
- Be **comprehensive**: Support your arguments, develop your analysis, and don't censure certain facts.

4

Ensure real dialogue

Work to arrive at a shared understanding of the situation, rather than merely express your own point of view.

- **Listen** to the other person's point of view: try to **understand** before trying to persuade.
- Be **willing to change** your mind, and even to **receive feedback** in return for yours!
- **Ask** the other person to propose solutions, and what he or she thinks of your ideas.