

Coaching and Feedback

Follow the Guidelines for Effective Interpersonal Communication

There are fundamental strategies that should always be part of interpersonal communication in the work place.

- ✓ Don't personalize the situation or behavior, concentrate on the facts.
- ✓ Be considerate and respectful of the other person.
- ✓ Develop productive alliances with others in the work place.
- ✓ Be an example.

Don't personalize the situation or behavior, concentrate on the facts:

By focusing on facts, you minimize blame, reduce defensive reactions, and encourage cooperation.

In difficult or negative situations,

- Avoid using “**You**” statements and making judgements.
 Let's look at ways . . .
 Let's talk about . . .
- Get the **facts** about the situation.
- Don't blame or point fingers. Focus on the issues, not the person.

“You vs. I” statements

“You” statements tend to be received defensively—they blame, judge, and assume things that may not be true. “I” messages let the employee respond with his or her perspective on the situation.

“YOU did this.”

“This is what I observed.”

“YOU shouldn't have done that.”

“Here's how I think . . .”

“YOU must be crazy.”

“It's important that we talk about this.”

Simply beginning a statement with the word “I” doesn't make it an effective statement.

“I feel frustrated when you don't get your reports to me on time.”

Vs. “I feel frustrated when I don't have the reports in time for the 2:00 meeting.”

Be considerate and respectful of the other person.

Employees work best when they feel they are making a contribution to the client and the company. Each person needs to feel confident that they can do the job. As a supervisor or manager, the confidence you show (or don't show) in your employees affects their performance.

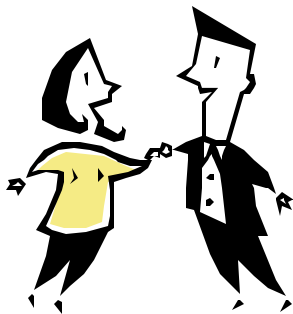
It's important to give positive feedback to others in the organization based on their efforts, as well as their results. Show them that you believe they have the ability to do the job well.

Say "Thank you" to others to show your appreciation for the contributions they make to the organization.

Remember . . .

- How you say something is as important as what you say!
- Notice your nonverbal communication—body language, facial expressions, gestures.

How you say something is **SIX TIMES** as important as **what** you say.



Communication is made up of three parts—

55% non verbal—expressions, gestures

38% tone of voice

7% actual words

Instead of giving orders, make requests

Look at the following phrases:

“You’ll have to take this to George.”

“You’ll have to have it ready in time for the meeting.”

Any time you tell someone they “have” to do something, he or she usually reacts with the “3 Rs”:

Reluctance
Resentment
Resistance

Only when you **want** to do something will you do something voluntarily. That is why it is important to change orders into requests or recommendations.

What part of your job is the most exciting to you?

How much freedom do you have to perform this part of your job in your own way?

Does the amount of freedom you have contribute to your motivation and satisfaction with this part of your job?

What was the last task you gave to one of your employees?

Did you allow your employee the amount of freedom to determine the best way to perform that task as you enjoy?

What could you have done differently?

What difference might it have made?

Develop productive alliances with others in the work place.

- Collaborative relationships are more successful than adversarial ones.
- Good relationships reduce stress, build trust, and help you get the job done.

- The quality of your product or service is improved if there are strong relationships within the company and with suppliers and customers.

Take advantage of opportunities to show your co-workers and others you work with that you are interested in them. *Be courteous and appreciative.* Treat them the way you want to be treated.

Handle small problems while they're small—don't let them build into bigger problems. Keep focused on the future. It might feel good to unload occasionally, but generally it's not worth it.

Keep the goals of the organization in mind, and continue to develop collaborative relationships between co-workers, departments, and governing agencies.

Be an example.

What you **do** is often more important than what you say.

“Actions speak louder than words.”

In your leadership role, your actions show others:

- ❑ The priorities of the organization and your work group.
- ❑ How to deal with change.
- ❑ How to consider department goals and objectives to make good decisions.
- ❑ Whether it is worth the risk to suggest improvements.
- ❑ What you value.

The way you handle situations and issues is looked at by others as a guide to what you think is important and what is important. Employees model their behavior based on what they see you do.

First, be sure you understand what your department's and your priorities and goals are.

Second, look for opportunities to show your commitment to those priorities and goals.

- Spend time on what you say is important.
- Make sure your employees understand your priorities.
- Recognize the efforts of your employees as they attempt to follow your example.

- Recognize that lots of little things done correctly add up to success.

Coaching for Results

Coaching is frequent, specific feedback designed to raise the level of performance. It has many important applications and functions:

- To improve poor performance
Look for patterns in the employee's behavior. If you see a performance problem or a potential performance problem, determine if the employee understands what is expected, what obstacles might be preventing good performance, and whether there is a lack of skills, training, or motivation.
- To maintain standard performance
Give praise to keep performance on track.
If the person wants to expand skills, allow for appropriate training.
- To encourage employees to exceed performance standards
Praise to keep performance on track.
Provide training to expand skills.
Mentor for increased responsibility.
Assign special projects, if possible.
- To assist employees in developing new skills
Provide training.
Give feedback to reinforce learning.

Effective coaches help others to achieve results by building on their strengths, developing their skills, providing encouragement, and increasing their confidence. It requires getting the employee to examine his own performance and find ways to improve performance. Coaching uses informal work progress discussions, formal performance reviews, and workday “coachable moments.”

1. **Identify opportunities to help another employee improve his or her skills, knowledge, and abilities.**

Learn to identify coaching opportunities and act on them—person asks, is struggling or stuck, expresses the desire to improve, has a negative attitude, etc.

2. **If the person doesn't seem to be ready, show why improvement will benefit the individual's development and the team or company, but don't force the issue.**

Would you be interested . . .? Would you like to discuss . . .?

3. **Ask questions to clarify the situation.**

Encourage the employee to analyze his own performance. The employee's input might give the coach new information about the problem.

Ask “How much . . .” or “What happened as a result . . .” questions rather than “Why” questions.

4. Help the person come up with possible solutions or actions.

Assist in developing concrete action plans
Minimize defensive reactions by having the employee participate
Give the employee a better feel for how he’s doing

“What steps could you take . . .”
“What actions can you think of . . .”

5. Arrive on a course of action agreeable to both of you.

Show how their ideas might affect their performance
Give other options to consider
Reinforce positive ideas

“What are you going to do . . .”

6. End on a positive note.

Show that you have confidence in the employee
Offer your support.
Don’t take over for the employee, let them take responsibility.

Task-Specific Communication

In many instances, an employee’s ability to achieve outstanding performance depends on how effectively supervisors communicate on distributing tasks. This is a very complex subject, involving orienting the employee to the work group and responsibilities, training, and providing on-going guidance and direction, as necessary. When specific projects or tasks are distributed, supervisors are well advised to use the following model:



- Describe the **scope** and **requirements** of the job to be completed. This communication orients the employee to the project, providing parameters.
- Describe **timelines, deadlines, schedules**. Any project or task that is time-dependent should be planned with the employee to identify periodic and/or final deadlines and to schedule necessary resources.
- Describe the **attributes** or **characteristics** of the project. Employees need to know what the task's outcome or project outcome should look like. For experienced employees, this definition may be enough for them to complete the work. Less experienced employees, or employees learning new tasks, may need more guidance to specify the various elements of the work.
- Describe **resources** that will be available for the task. If the employee is on his/her own, the employee obviously needs to know that. If the employee will be working with others, he/she needs to know that. For some tasks, employees may need to know the budget assigned to the job, or staffing levels for the job.
- Describe the **rationale** or **reasons** for each of the above elements. For example, a scope may be defined in a particular manner because a client has to work within certain software configurations or hardware requirements (all Mac, all PC, for example). A deadline may be necessary because a system conversion will occur.

Performance-based Feedback

Performance-based feedback should be balanced; it should reflect the array of activities, behaviors, and progress employees have made related to their work assignments and responsibilities. Feedback can reflect positive performance, competent performance, or needs improvement performance. In any of these cases, it should be **direct, specific, and reasonably assessed**.

Frequent, specific feedback is designed to raise the level of performance. It has many important applications and functions:

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Give praise to keep performance on track.
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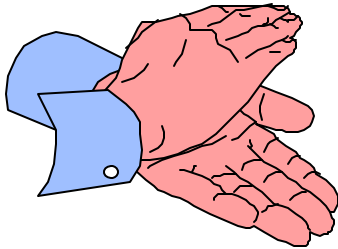
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➤ **To assist employees in developing new skills**

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Providing Positive Feedback



Rarely do employees receive more than enough feedback, let alone more than enough **positive** feedback. Conditioning theory and practical experience tell us that positive feedback and praise produce more of the desired behavior. For employees learning new tasks or doing good work, providing positive communication is invaluable to continuing the learning or good work. Here are some examples of positive communication that is **specific, constructive, and reinforcing**:

“I want to thank you for the work you’ve done on... The user reports that their productivity has greatly improved since you worked on their tracking system.”

“Good work on improving the proposal. You have done a much better job of assessing your audience, defining problems, and developing specific, doable recommendations.”

“It has been difficult learning this material. It’s clear to me from your application reviews that you’ve got a good eye for the details of the application process. That will help our clients.”

These simple statements, which do not cost any money to give, will produce positive results in productivity and future quality work.

Give praise

- For improvements in performance.
- Frequently and honestly, not reluctantly.
- As soon after the performance as possible.
- Sometimes privately, sometimes, publicly; depending on the employee and the circumstances.
- As often as it is deserved.
- Fairly and consistently.

Notice Improvements!



For people trying to change behavior or improve their learning, reinforcement is critical. People often do not know whether they've made the right decisions or performed correctly unless they receive guidance or feedback from others. Your job as a supervisor is to help people, especially when they're trying to make changes, know they are improving.

"I noticed that you made some significant changes in your proposal from the last time. These are good changes. Your sentences are shorter, your word choice is simpler, and your statements better supported."

"I can see that you've worked hard to reduce the number of errors in this process. It looks like your double checking has brought the error level to zero. I appreciate that."



Without consistent, fair reinforcement and positive verbal feedback, people will revert to their comfortable behavior, not necessarily because they do not want to perform capably, but because they aren't sure **what** that is.

Feedback on Problem Performance



Analyzing Problem Performance

Sometimes employees have on-going performance problems that require analysis as to their source, reason, and resolution. The following questions will help you to define critical issues related to performance problems:

1. What is the employee doing wrong?

2. What specific behavior do you want from the employee?
3. Is the problem worth dealing with?
4. Does the employee **know** what is expected?
5. Does the employee **know how** to do what you want done?
6. Are there obstacles (work or personal) which prevent them from performing at the level you want?
7. Does a negative consequence follow good performance?
8. Does a positive consequence follow bad performance?
9. Could the employee do it if they wanted to?
10. How does the employee's performance affect others?
11. What are the consequences to the employee if poor performance continues?

Use the Willing/Able – Unwilling/Unable Matrix

Your performance evaluation process may benefit from figuring out whether your problem performer has a “willingness” or “ability” problem. Look at the grid below:

The employee is:

<p><i>Willing and able</i> <i>What characteristics demonstrate this condition?</i></p>	<p><i>Willing, but unable</i> <i>What characteristics demonstrate this condition?</i></p>
<p><i>Unwilling, but able</i> <i>What characteristics demonstrate this condition?</i></p>	<p><i>Unwilling and unable</i> <i>What characteristics demonstrate this condition?</i></p>

Your solution to employee performance problems will depend on whether the employee has the ability or willingness to do the job. If the employee cannot do the job because he/she doesn't have the skill, your solution will be more training and skill development. If the employee can do the job but will not, you will have to discern the obstacle to performance.

Guidelines for Constructive Feedback in Difficult Situations:

After answering your planning questions, you are ready to use your best communication skills to have your feedback session with your employee.

- **Show that your intentions are constructive, not critical.**
"I'm concerned about the completion of your project. I want to make sure I'm doing everything I can to help you make the deadline." Use "I" statement strategies.
- **Describe your observations.** Point out the difference between what you have observed and the standards you agreed on.
"The due date is next Wednesday, and from what I can tell, it looks like it's going to slip by about a week."
- **Tell how the behavior or action affects you, the work group, and the company.** Be specific, objective, timely, and honest. Focus on behaviors or actions, not the person.
"If we miss the deadline, that will be a problem for the user who's relying on the system changes before the end of the month."
- **Ask for a response.** Use listening and questioning skills to reach a mutual understanding of the problem. When you get excuses, show understanding, but get the discussion back on track. Distinguish between reasons and excuses.
"What do you think about this problem? What ideas do you have to meet the deadline?"
Use acknowledgment and clarification skills to make sure you and the employee are on the same page.
- **Concentrate the discussion on solutions.** Ask for ideas. Focus on the problem, not the employee. If the person becomes emotional, give them time to calm down. If appropriate, ask for the change you want. If you make suggestions, don't come across as an expert.
"So it sounds like you think we need to put more resources into..."
- **Tell the employee what you are going to do and why.** Documentation or formal disciplinary actions should be explained.
"We agreed at the beginning of the project that you would keep me informed if any slips occurred. If you had told me about this earlier, I could have gotten more resources for you sooner, and we wouldn't be in this situation. As it is, I have two other projects going that need attention. Since this happened in the last project we worked on, it's become a serious issue. I would like to see immediate improvement in this area, or I will begin the disciplinary process with a written warning."
- **Agree on an action plan and follow up date.** Get commitment.
"So at this point, I will allocate one more person to the project full time. As we've discussed, you'll get back to me tomorrow after you've fully assessed the issue to let me know whether this will be sufficient."
- **Show that you support the employee.**
"It's important to me that you succeed with this project. I want this to come out well for you and the user. So tomorrow I want you to come fully prepared with your assessment so we can make sure that we meet the commitment we made."

Giving Constructive Feedback

Feedback is open, honest, timely, two-way communication between people. Frequent constructive feedback in the work place increases performance and provides motivation for continuing improvement. It doesn't cost anything to use except taking the time to pay attention to employees and co-workers.

Feedback is given to improve performance and encourage goal achievement, **not to blame or criticize.**

"When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported back, the rate of improvement accelerates." --Thomas S Monson

The old saying, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease" usually applies to feedback. The exceptional performers, *good and bad*, get noticed, and the rest of the workers just plug along. The greatest return for your efforts is in motivating and improving the performance of this 80% of your work force.