

HOW TO GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Performance discussions

can be stressful for both employees and their managers. However, constructive feedback goes a long way to confirm roles and responsibilities, define performance expectations, and create an open dialogue between the manager and employee.



Feedback should be used to:

- Clearly communicate to employees which goals and objectives they met or exceeded, or which need to be improved upon
- Create positive change
- Establish trust and transparency

The following strategies will help to ensure feedback discussions are productive and provide a positive experience for the employee.

Provide timely feedback

When an employee does not meet the understood and set objectives, it is important to provide timely feedback to the employee.

Ensure the employee understands how they can improve so they can meet the objectives. This gives the employee an opportunity to improve and ensures they understand what is expected of them moving forward.



Set the tone

To encourage an open dialogue between you and the employee, use an encouraging tone and direct but not harsh language. Be mindful of your body language and be sincere. Ensure they understand that your intention in providing constructive feedback is to support their growth and to enable them to become a stronger performer.



Promote constructive coaching

Use the “stop, start, continue” model to ensure employees clearly understand what they are doing now that is not working, what is effective, and what they should start doing to improve. Focus on the situation instead of personal characteristics and use specific examples. Recommend a solution and establish a plan with regular check-ins to discuss how the improvements are going.



Allow the employee to respond

Provide the employee with an opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns; it should be a two-way conversation. The employee will appreciate that you’re open to hearing feedback. If the employee needs time to process the feedback, allow them the time they need before discussing further. Remember silence is okay – pause, wait to see if the employee responds and then react accordingly.

Offer resources and support

If the employee needs additional resources to improve their performance, work with them to identify what resources are available (e.g., training, coaching, etc.). If the employee needs counselling support, ensure they are aware of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).



In addition to the strategies listed above for giving constructive feedback, the following strategies can be used to ensure performance reviews and discussions are productive:



SET PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES EARLY

It's important to identify objectives and set measurable goals at the beginning of the year, to ensure employees understand what is expected of them and to fairly evaluate their performance. It's easier to hold people accountable when performance objectives are clearly outlined.



SCHEDULE THOUGHTFULLY

Be intentional when you schedule the performance review – it should be at a convenient time for you and the employee. Avoid a Monday morning, a Friday or any day at the end of the day. This will allow time for the employee to reflect upon the discussion and allow sufficient time throughout the day or week to follow up with any questions.



PRIOR TO THE REVIEW

Prior to the discussion, encourage the employee to identify their proudest achievements from the past year. This is a great way to start a conversation. Review your own notes to refresh your memory on what the employee did well and where there are opportunities for improvement. Provide the employee with information about the structure of the performance review before it happens, so they know what to expect and how to prepare.



DURING THE REVIEW

Use the performance review form to guide the discussion, for example, start with the status of the previous year's objectives, discuss major strengths and accomplishments, discuss how the employee can improve, and identify needs for learning, development, coaching, etc.

DO

Be clear about the performance ratings and their definitions. For example, a rating of 3 means the employee is successful in achieving their objectives, but many people don't interpret a 3 that way.

Ensure the employee understands the rating process and that their final rating will be communicated to them once the process is complete.

DON'T

Talk about compensation during the performance review, as this process is about measuring performance.



For more information on strategies for productive performance discussions, refer to the Harvard Business Review's article:
[Delivering an Effective Performance Review.](#)

