

How Effective Is Your Feedback

If you are responsible for the development and/or performance of employees then it is your duty to give weighted feedback. By weighted I mean timely, accurate, descriptive and directionalised feedback. The type of feedback that inspires confidence in others. If you are delivering any other type of feedback or a diluted form of feedback then ask yourself why you are not committed to the development and/or progression of your people. An employee has every right to expect regular weighted feedback from their manager.

The single greatest cause of employee resignations is poor management. Feedback is considered one of the most important roles of a manager.



Too often feedback is given flippantly or as an afterthought. Some managers consider a conversation feedback or a spur of the moment chat in the corridor or tea room feedback. Feedback should be considered the backbone of an employees learning and development ongoing. Without weighted feedback an employee does not know what you think, how they are doing or what they need to do to improve. It is like giving a navigator a destination and a compass and expecting them to know which track you want them to head down. They could choose any number of paths but perhaps that is not the path you would have wanted

them to take. The quality of an employees work is directly linked to the quality of the feedback you provide them with.

If you give feedback in a very blunt and honest way it can come across as criticism and be rejected. If you give vague or soft feedback it can be misconstrued as you picking on them or singling them out. If you give long winded feedback and avoid the real issue, the employee can feel lost or unsure of exactly what needs to change.

As you can see giving regular weighted feedback is an art form. Great feedback inspires, motivates, challenges and helps people transform to new heights. If you expect a lot from your team don't think that they don't expect a lot from you too. Feedback and communication bridges this gap.

Taking a Different View:

I suggest that every manager do this exercise now. There is little use just reading this, you need to actually do it to find out what type of manager / leader you really are.

Exercise: Step out of your shoes for a moment and step into one of your employees shoes. You are now the employee. Be in their body and see things out of their eyes. Don't try to think what this person would think but rather just be in that body now and see the world as they are seeing it. Now see the other person (you) giving them feedback. What is this person saying? Notice how this person looks delivering the feedback. Notice their body language, their tonality, their expression and their message. Notice the eye contact or lack of contact. Notice how you are feeling as you receive this feedback. Is it clear? Do you know what you are doing well and what you are not? Do you know exactly what the next step is that you need to take? Notice what you are seeing and what you

are thinking as you hear the feedback.

By honestly stepping into someone else's shoes you can get a very good understanding of how effective you are as a manager or team leader. Honesty is the key here.

If you sensed that perhaps there was room for improvement with your feedback style then you may like to consider the benefits of giving sandwich feedback. Sandwich feedback is used by many great managers. The reason they use this type of feedback is they know it works. They know it helps to develop high performance teams. They know it inspires greater productivity and commitment from people. It is also worth mentioning that Managers who give sandwich feedback are generally accepted as being good managers by their team. They are perceived to be on-top of what is going on and they are considered supportive. People like to work for people who are inspiring, supportive and encouraging. This is not to say that to give great feedback you need to be soft. Quite to the contrary in fact. People respect honest feedback but it needs to be packaged in such a way that it is perceived to be useful and encouraging.

The Feedback Sandwich



Try to deliver your feedback in the same way as a sandwich is constructed. You have two bits of bread and the filing. The filing is the content and the bread is what holds it all together.

The first slice of bread: State what you liked, what was good or what the person did well. The more sensory based you can be the better. For example if you are giving feedback about a presentation that the individual just gave you might say; "I really like the way you opened the presentation. You managed to draw people into the concepts via the use of the story you told. You used your voice effectively to create curiosity and the way you used the document to support the more complex ideas was not only clever but strong."

Then move onto the filing.

The Filing: This is where you share the areas for improvement. The meat of the sandwich. You want to be specific, factual, not personal, strong and clear. You need to make sure the person understands what you are saying. You should look to phrase this in such a way as to directionalise the changes that need to take place. For example: "I think that to improve what you did even further you could be a lot more succinct in your illustration of x. You need to be watching the audience to notice when they are drifting off as it was clear that you lost them in the detail which caused some confusion. I also think you could improve your style as a speaker by following up with the people who ask questions after you've delivered the answer just to check that they have all the information they need."

Then move onto the next piece of bread.

The second slice of bread: Your role here is to future pace their experience to build confidence in their next attempt. You are setting in place suggestions for future success in all attempts. You want to build their confidence and motivation to keep trying. For example: "With what you

know now about pacing the audiences experience you will be better able next time to control the presentation. I know that you will be able to judge when the times are to be succinct and when perhaps you could elaborate to give the audience further clarification. I look forward to seeing your next presentation as I know you'll be even more engaging with these new abilities".

Think now of a really good sandwich. It does not have one massive slice of thick bread and one thin flimsy piece on the other side. The filing is fresh and healthy not full of baloney. The contents are not spilling out the sides but rather it is nicely balanced just as your feedback sandwich should be.

This method of feedback is weighted and it frames the experience as positive. It also explains exactly what needs to be done better next time. The individual knows that you recognise the areas that were good and they are also aware that there are precise areas for improvement. You leave the feedback at a high point with positive suggestions for future success. This lets the employee know that you support them in their ongoing success. This type of feedback will inspire the individual to want to do even better next time.

Timing of Feedback



Finally the timing of your feedback is critical. Always give the feedback as close to the event or activity as possible. You want to catch the person in the state in which they were performing the task/activity or event. By giving them the feedback whilst they are still in the state under which they performed the task, the feedback will integrate easily into their sub conscious and allow them to develop and learn effectively and quickly.



Martine Snow
Performance Coach
Become Coaching

Enabling Optimum Performance in People.

