

TIPS FOR FEEDBACK

Feedback fuels performance: Whether its praise for a job well done that encourages continued achievement or feedback about inappropriate behaviour that motivates improvement, feedback is the fuel of high performance. As managers we must be great at giving constructive feedback and we should actively seek feedback on our own performance. Here are some principles and TIPS for delivering feedback.

- **Talk straight:** When performance standards are not being achieved – or behaviours are observed that run contrary to our **Values** – you need to have the courage to take the employee aside and tell them the truth. Don't put your head in the sand and hope the issue resolves itself. Yes it can be uncomfortable for both parties – but this is what managers are paid to do. Don't make the mistake of protecting people's feelings at the expense of the truth, because without your honest feedback they will not see the need to improve.
- **Be sensitive to communication styles:** We all have developed communication patterns that reflect our individual identities. These patterns develop over time and become our preferred manner for communicating. Your effectiveness in giving and receiving feedback will be enhanced if you are aware of your preferred communication style and that of your feedback recipient. We tend to give and receive feedback in a manner consistent with our dominant communication style. By recognising strengths and weaknesses of both your style and that of the person you are communicating with you can adjust your style to avoid conflicts and ensure understanding.

Communication Style	Strengths	Potential stumbling blocks	Best approach to feedback
Driver: Direct and task oriented	Direct, practical, decisive, confident, clear and to the point, task oriented.	Challenges others. Impatient, Insensitive Domineering, Overly independent.	Quick, direct, to the point. Focus less on how you are giving the feedback. Focus more on facts and what needs to happen.
Animated: Enthusiastic and relationship oriented	Talkative, friendly, enthusiastic, approachable, open, enjoys the involvement of others.	Overly sensitive. Unwilling to convey perceived 'negative' information, lack of follow-through/details unprepared, disorganised subjective in decision-making	Con conversationally. Allow time for anecdotal support and lengthy discussion. Sensitive. May need reassurance. Balanced. They will want to hear positives as well as negatives. Focus on the impact on relationships.
Amiable: Supportive and avoids challenge & confrontation	Supportive, patient, predictable, easy-going, calm. Listens actively, responsive to others.	Avoids confrontation. Passive, slow to change, slow to initiate, indecisive, withholds feelings.	Patient. Allow time to respond, non-threateningly and clearly. Supportively and privately <i>How</i> you are giving the feedback is very important.
Analytical: Accurate and detail oriented	Accurate, well-prepared diplomatic, analytical, cautious, restrained. Systematic, detail oriented.	Too critical. insensitive inflexible, withdrawn, overly cautious, imposes high standards.	Objectively. Thoroughly, factually, accurately, patiently, allowing time to change. No surprises. Focus on facts, implications, what needs to be done.

- **Remember that we typically resist critical feedback:** Since a good part of our self image is based on how others view us when we find out that someone sees us in a less than positive light we may feel devastated. Make it clear your intentions are positive. If you don't have a positive intent you won't overcome resistance and a positive outcome is not possible.
- **Balance:** If the feedback needed is negative, consider putting it in the context of the positive work the employee does (where this can be done honestly and genuinely). Some people will need the reassurance that the whole situation is not negative if they are to be motivated to accept your feedback and work to improve.
- **Reinforcement or 'Positive' feedback:** Reinforcement feedback should be given as soon as possible to have the most impact. For example, if an employee presents or performs strongly in a meeting, delivers an exceptional result or outstanding service, praise the performance immediately. Be specific, mentioning the precise actions that you commend. Be prepared to take a couple of minutes to talk about the positive effects of what was done.
- **Developmental or 'Negative' feedback:** Speak with an employee privately within 24 hours of a situation requiring you to give developmental feedback (i.e. feedback about a situation where performance or behaviour could be improved). Have the facts ready along with a clear view of how they can improve. Communicate developmental feedback constructively and specifically to enable the employee to improve. Explain the performance or behavioural gap and the consequences of this for those affected.
- **When things go wrong – avoid praising effort:** Don't say "at least you tried hard." Instead, be specific about what needs to happen, and help the employee figure out how to do it right.
- **Listen:** Give the employee an opportunity to share their ideas and concerns after you provide the feedback. Listen attentively to the employee's ideas and consider implementing ideas that might help improve the business.