

Guide to Giving Feedback

By IGNIA Partners

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1. Improve Your Feedback Skills

A. Some home truths about feedback

- People are, most of the time, hungry for more love, affection, warmth and respect, particularly at work.
- Sincere appreciation is like an oasis in the desert, like giving water to a thirsty traveler.

B. Give positive feedback four times as much as you give constructive feedback.

- Positive feedback creates a virtuous cycle and motivates people to work harder towards it. Positive feedback also demonstrates that you care about your teammate and ensures that when you give constructive feedback, it is heard and not disregarded.
- One HBR study showed that high-performing teams gave positive feedback 5.6x as much as lower-performing teams.¹

C. Feedback starts with you

- Your success or not with feedback depends on how well you learn to give feedback to yourself. You'll tend to treat others pretty much the way you treat yourself and so the place to start is with the way you talk to yourself, about yourself and about your own results. Learning to give yourself helpful constructive feedback is the single most important change you can make to how you manage others.
- A journal, a learning log or an action learning set can all be very helpful here in beginning the process of giving yourself structured feedback.

D. Consider your role in their results

¹ <https://hbr.org/2013/03/the-ideal-praise-to-criticism>

- before launching into feedback, consider the role that you might have played in creating their results. What could you do differently that would make it easier for them to get the result you want to see?

E. Say it the way you want it

- Remember, your brain can't "don't" something or "not" something, it can only do positive things. When someone says to you "don't think of a purple frog!" what hops into your mind? With feedback, you need to say it the way you want it - "think of a red frog." Feedback really is a gift.
- It's an old cliché but giving people feedback, of the sort described below, really is a gift. And being a gift giver may have powerful affect on your career.

F. Why not ask them to review their own performance first?

- Start with asking them what went well?, then ask
- What would you have done differently?
- Then ask if they would like feedback? If they say “No,” and they rarely do in my experience, ask “when would you like feedback?”
- Then agree with them (if true) what went well and add your own observations
- Then give only one or two areas for improvements.
- Then always finish on a positive (always leave people with hope – for without hope the situation is hopeless!)
- Then ask them what they think - This process always works in my experience.

2. How to Give Feedback Effectively

Google (and others) recommend the following SBI (situation – behavior – impact) framework for feedback, developed by the Center for Creative Leadership.

WHEN....	+	YOU DID....	+	I FELT...
Situation	+	Behavior	+	Impact

e.g. "During yesterday morning's team meeting, when you gave your presentation (SITUATION), you were uncertain about two of the slides and your sales calculations were incorrect (BEHAVIOR). I felt embarrassed because the entire board was there. I'm worried that this has affected the reputation of our team (IMPACT)."

When describing the behavior, you must describe the specific behaviors that you want to address. This is the most challenging part of the process, because you must communicate only the behaviors that you observed directly. You must not make assumptions or subjective judgments about those behaviors. These could be wrong, and this will undermine your feedback. For example, if you observed that a colleague made mistakes in a presentation, you should not assume that he hadn't prepared thoroughly. You should simply comment that he made mistakes – and, ideally, note what the mistakes were. Don't rely on hearsay, as this may contain others' subjective judgments. Again, this could undermine your feedback and jeopardize your relationship.

The last step is to use "I" statements to describe how the other person's action has affected you or others.

After sharing the feedback, you should tell them the behavior you would like to see and why:

I WANT	+	BECAUSE
Behavior	+	Impact

Here are some examples of questions that can help in feedback conversations:

Development Questions

- Where do you want to get to? What are you capable of? What is your vision?
- What do you have and what is missing to get there?
- What do you want to develop? How do you propose to do so?
- Let's make a clear development plan, with milestones and deadlines, how does that sound?
- Show me how you have advanced in your professional development plan.

Probing Questions

- Why is it important for you?
- What do you think the issues or opportunities are?
- What do you think the impact is?
- What do you think needs to happen in order for this to occur?

Clarifying Questions

- What is the result you want?
- What would you like to see happen?
- Where/when do you get stuck?
- What story do you think is getting in the way?

Confirming Conversations

- So in your own words, what do you think the next steps are?
- If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?
- Would you like to know what I see...what do you think?
- I might say it a bit differently

Connecting Conversations

- I am glad you brought that up
- You know what...I am working on that too...
- Great question, say more...
- How would you like me to listen?

Contracting Conversations

- So when will you take your first step?
- Who else should be included?
- By when do you think this could happen?
- What do you think is possible now?
- How/what kind of support do you need from me?

3. How to Structure a Quarterly Review

Feedback Script

1. Let's review the feedback from our last session
2. This last quarter, how would you evaluate your progress?
3. What should we celebrate?
4. Where are you blocked? How do you propose we help you?
5. What do we need to keep working on? What are you going to do differently?
6. Can I have permission to give you feedback?
7. Given everything we've talked about, how would you fill out the three columns below.

Start Doing	Stop Doing	Keep Doing

No one should EVER be surprised in a quarterly review – the trick is to give them continuous feedback in real time (with the 4/1 ratio described above).

During the individual quarterly review, I like to ask the following questions:

This last quarter:

- What have you accomplished during the last quarter? What did you achieve?
- What have you learned?
- What new relationships have you created?

This next quarter:

- What actions are you going to take this quarter?
- What will you learn?
- How can we build on your strengths?
- What new relationships will you build?
- How will you develop yourself?

I take notes of their responses and during the following meeting I begin by comparing what they said they were going to do with what they actually did. It's a good way of helping to prioritize.

At the end of the meeting I ALWAYS ask for feedback.

I really like a book called StrengthsFinder 2.0, by Tom Rath. The real value is in an accompanying digital tool that helps people discover their key strengths. This allows to have conversations about how to build on their strengths, and not only offering observations about their areas for growth, which can be very frustrating.

4. 10 Common Mistakes in Giving Feedback

Feedback can be uncomfortable to give, but with the right technique it can go more smoothly. Avoid these 10 common blunders when giving feedback to others, taken from the Center for Creative Leadership's guidebook *Feedback That Works*.

Mistake #1: The feedback judges individuals, not actions Putting feedback in judgmental terms puts people on the defensive. And you've sent the message that you know what is right or wrong.

Mistake #2: The feedback is too vague. Steer clear of generalized, cliché catch phrases. If you want to really encourage someone to repeat productive behavior, you have to let them know what they did so they can keep doing it.

Mistake #3: The feedback speaks for others. Stick with the information that you know. Dragging a third party's name into the mix only confuses the recipient, who then wonders why others are talking about them behind their back.

Mistake #4: Negative feedback gets sandwiched between positive messages. It may seem like a good idea to unburden the blow of negative comments with positive ones, but the recipient is smart enough to read between the lines, too.

Mistake #5: The feedback is exaggerated with generalities. Avoid those two little words, "always" and "never." It puts people on the defensive because there is usually that one time...

Mistake #6: The feedback psychoanalyzes the motives behind behavior. It could be a divorce, resentment over a co-worker's advancement, or burnout, but whatever you think you know about someone's intents and motives is probably dead wrong.

Mistake #7: The feedback goes on too long. Know when to stop. People need time to process the information they have received.

Mistake #8: The feedback contains an implied threat. Telling someone their job is in jeopardy doesn't reinforce good behavior or illustrate bad behavior. It only creates animosity.

Mistake #9: The feedback uses inappropriate humor. You might use sarcasm as a substitute for feedback, especially if you are uncomfortable giving it in the first place. Keep the snide comments to yourself.

Mistake #10: The feedback is a question, not a statement. Phrasing feedback as a question is too indirect to be effective. And it may even be interpreted as sarcastic. Really?

6. Blue Wing Coaching Feedback Tool

Give and Receive Feedback

From : _____

To: _____

Date: _____

1. My experience working with you has been:
2. What works for me when I work with you is:
3. What doesn't work when I work with you is:
4. In the future what I want / need from you is:
5. Something that you do that "drives me crazy is":

Give and Receive Feedback

From : _____

To: _____

Date: _____

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