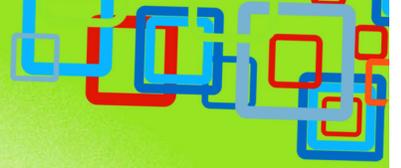


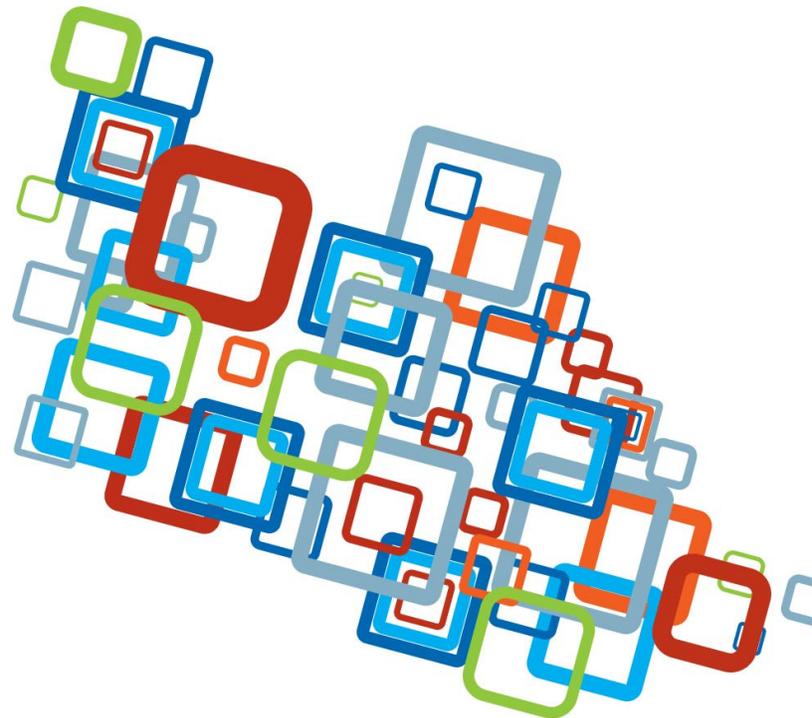


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A Guide to Giving & Receiving Performance Feedback



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Feedback is critical for enhancing both individual and organisational performance.

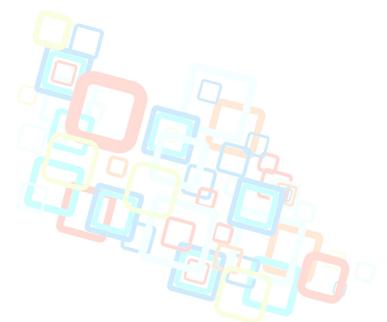
There are 3 easy and important things you can do during the year to ensure performance is productive:

1. At the start of the year set clear goals for the individual and ensure they are clear about their goals responsibilities;
2. Constantly review and keep detailed notes of performance. Write down specific examples of good and poor performance (noting down as many details as possible). This will help you to remember facts about performance and
3. Provide regular feedback. This will ensure objectives are on track and that small issues are dealt with early, before they become large problems.

Feedback works best when it's a continual process, and not saved up for one or two formal feedback sessions throughout the year. Both giving and receiving feedback are fundamental skills for managing and improving performance and link directly to the Performance Management Plan cycle. In this guide we'll explore:

- Methods of collecting feedback;
- How to give feedback;
- Types of feedback; and
- How to receive feedback.

It's important that you provide regular, ongoing feedback to all of your staff against their documented Performance Plans. The formal six and twelve monthly discussions are not a substitute for regular feedback that should occur on weekly, or even daily basis, but a formal addition to it. This ensures that the feedback you provide is timely and immediate and ensures there are no surprises during the formal discussion. It also ensures that the feedback is not delayed or reliant on memory, where it may lose its impact or significance.



Where can I collect reliable information to be able give effective feedback?

There are many ways to gather information. You could:

- Observe an individual's performance in the workplace;
- Review the individual's performance against the agreed work objectives;
- Ask the individual to complete a self assessment; and
- Undertake discussions/surveys with customers, colleagues, etc.
- Use the [NTPS Capability Leadership Framework](#) to start a conversation.

Everyone who supervises people should be skilled at giving feedback. It does take practice and if it is not done correctly, it can:

- Result in conflict;
- Impact an individual's self esteem;
- Be destructive to the team and result in competitiveness; and
- Be subjective.

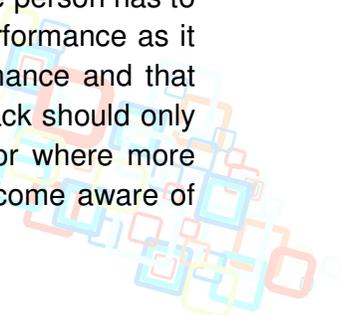
To overcome these problems you need to ensure that you provide feedback that is:

Helpful - Feedback should be directed towards behaviour the person can change. Frustration only increases when people are reminded of shortcomings. Feedback should be given using positive, constructive language and tones that contribute to learning or development. The environment should be free from distractions. Feedback should be given to help, not hurt. Telling staff members what you think of their motivations or intentions will tend to alienate them and contribute to a climate of resentment, suspicion and distrust.

Specific rather than general - The more specific the feedback is, the more useful it will be for the staff member. Ensure specific examples of good and poor performance can be provided and the consequences of the performance should also be discussed.

Suggestions for how to improve performance should be shared AFTER the person has been invited to share how they think they can improve performance.

Immediate - Feedback should be provided immediately after the event or project. The longer the time period, the less impact and credibility the feedback has, the harder it is to remember specific incidents and the less opportunity the person has to improve before the next project/job/event. Providing feedback on performance as it occurs ensures that action is taken immediately to improve performance and that there are no surprises at the formal performance discussion. Feedback should only be delayed where it would embarrass a person in front of others or where more information is required about performance. Occasionally you will become aware of



work after its completion; in this case, provide feedback after you have witnessed the finished task.

Balanced - Feedback should contain both positive feedback and constructive criticism. Always start with the positive, then provide constructive criticism and discuss areas for improvement, then finish on a positive note and remember that overloading a staff member with feedback reduces the likelihood that it will be effective. Remember to give the staff member an opportunity to respond to the feedback.

Constructive - Where performance meets or exceeds expectations, positive feedback will help to reinforce and enhance performance. Where performance has not met expectations, or a task has been performed incorrectly, the person should be told what happened and how it could be done correctly. This ensures that they understand where and why their performance did not meet acceptable standards, which aspects need to be changed and how this change could occur.

Objective - Your feedback should focus on facts, not opinions. *Facts* are real, concrete proven incidences of performance, eg incidents which you saw or heard, incidents reported to you by clients, incidents which would be corroborated by any impartial observers. *Opinions* are judgements that are not based on fact are often about the person's characteristics or traits rather than demonstrated performance (eg lazy, unmotivated, and slow). Referring to what a person does is more important than referring to what that person seems like to you. Feedback should be provided when there is evidence to back up your thoughts or opinions.

What's the difference between Positive, Constructive and Negative Feedback?

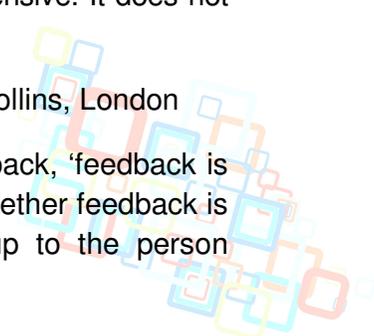
Positive Feedback applies to situations where the person has performed well. It consists of simple praise, but is more powerful if it highlights why or how the job was done well. The more specific the feedback, the more the individual learns about their behavior and their ability to meet expectations.

Constructive Feedback highlights how a person has behaved/performed and how they might do better next time. When describing the person's action it is important to focus on specific observable facts.

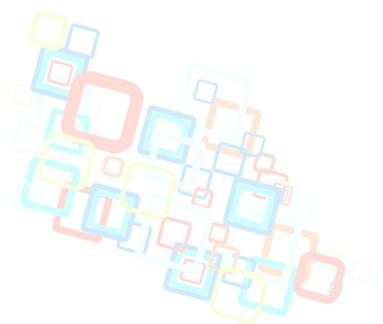
Negative Feedback is replaying something that went wrong without intent to make it constructive. It's essentially destructive for the staff member. Negative feedback is unhelpful in that it tends to leave the person feeling judged and defensive. It does not improve skills and leaves people feeling unmotivated.

Source: M. Landsberg "The Tao of Coaching" (1996) Harper and Collins, London

It is important to note that regardless of the label we give to feedback, 'feedback is feedback' and to a large extent, it is in the eye of the beholder. Whether feedback is considered to be positive, constructive or negative is largely up to the person



receiving it and the extent to which they accept it.



How do I ensure my feedback is descriptive and specific?

Effective feedback describes specifically what a person has done, rather than making broad generalisations or judgments. Examples of positive feedback might be:

- “The effort you put into ensuring the information for tomorrow’s meeting was distributed so promptly was greatly appreciated by everyone who attended”;
- “The Director has just called to say the research paper you prepared on skills shortage areas was very useful at his meeting with the CE today.”
- If a person has not acted appropriately, it is more useful to say: “You have interrupted three people in the last half hour”, than to say, “You’re bad mannered”. The statement should clearly indicate what is inappropriate, unacceptable, or needs to be changed.
- Constructive feedback needs to identify behavior that the person can control, rather than personality characteristics or physical mannerisms that may be difficult to alter.

How do I give constructive feedback?

This is sometimes a challenge for people, but the tips below will help make the process easier.

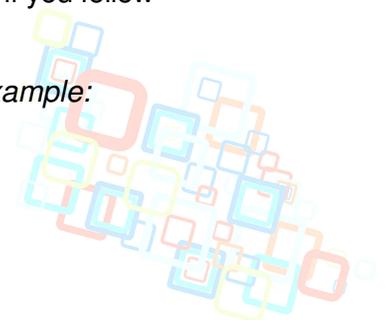
- Be courteous and ask if you can give the feedback. Don’t assume that the person will want to receive the feedback at the same time that you want to give it.
- Avoid giving constructive feedback at every possible opportunity – select issues that are directly related to performance and are important.
- Check the accuracy of the information – don’t rely on word of mouth.
- Be specific about the behavior or action that was inappropriate and explain why it is inappropriate. Provide examples of inappropriate behavior/action that has been observed.
- Focus on the future - determine strategies for improved performance and gain agreement on how to handle the situation if it was to occur again.
- Try to deal with one issue at time and select the aspect of performance that is most critical to achieving the objectives.
- Develop a team that is open to and accepts constructive feedback.

How do I raise an issue or concern with a staff member?

This is often the hardest thing for supervisors to do, but it can be easy if you follow these steps:

1. *Introduce your concern(s) directly and matter-of-factly, for example:*

- I have a concern I would like to raise with you ...
- An issue I want to talk through with you is



- We appear to have a problem with ...

2. *Describe why it is of concern to you, for example:*

- I'm not sure if you are aware of the broader impact of
- I have noticed that has occurred
- My concern about it is that
- The result of this is that
- As you are aware, this is of concern because....

3. *Discuss their experience or view of the situation to get their perspective, for example:*

- How do you see it from your perspective?
- How do you see what has happened?
- What was your experience of this?
- What are your thoughts about that?

4. *Depending on the matter and what their response is in 3., negotiate an agreed point of view about why things have occurred the way they have and agree on a way forward.*

- Agree on what has happened and why.
- Plan a way forward.

How do I give feedback with confidence?

Giving feedback takes practice, so:

- Start small and positive
- Practice giving positive feedback
- Analyze the behavior and the effect it's having on you, others and on the work
- Describe the behavior
- Describe the impact of the behavior
- Prepare what you are going to say in advance
- Expect and prepare for the other individual's reactions
- Offer feedback in an appropriate environment
- Provide balanced feedback
- Ask the person how they feel about the feedback
- Work with the person to determine strategies to improve their performance
- Monitor progress and give positive reinforcement

What should I do when receiving feedback?

When most managers think of feedback, they imagine that they are the person offering it to others. The reality, however, is that you will also receive feedback from your manager and, if you have a positive working relationship with others, your colleagues and staff.

The following strategies are designed to assist you in receiving feedback.



When receiving feedback:

- Allow the person giving the feedback to talk and listen attentively while they do so.
- Ask for specific details; make sure you understand the behavior about which you are receiving information.
- If the feedback relates to personality characteristics or other personal attributes, ask the person to describe the behavior.
- If the feedback does not appear constructive, say so, and ask the person to provide some constructive comments that would help you to make some changes.
- Thank the person for their feedback.

When seeking out feedback:

Sometimes, people may not be forthcoming with feedback so you'll need to seek it out. When seeking feedback:

- Select someone you trust and the right person for the topic. e.g. If you would like feedback on your managerial skills it would be a good idea to get feedback from someone you manage.
- Give the other person time to prepare for their discussion with you. Don't expect an immediate answer.
- Be open to the feedback, ask for specific examples and respond after you have reflected on the issues raised. Be prepared for both positive and constructive responses. Respond graciously. Responding defensively to comments will only make the other person uncomfortable giving you feedback.
- Where appropriate, follow through on the advice and suggestions given to you.
- Thank the person for their feedback.

Whether giving or receiving feedback, it is essential that you remain solutions-focused. Gather your evidence and ensure you follow through on anything you agree to.

Remember, feedback is vital to your organisation's success. Use your agency's Performance Management system to set clear goals and expectations for your team members at the start of the year and ensure they are clear about their responsibilities. Constantly review performance and provide ongoing feedback throughout the year. That way, small issues can be dealt with early and easily and performance can be productive for the individual and the agency.

