

Giving and Receiving Feedback Effectively

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OUTLINE

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- **Opening case**
- **Nature of feedback**
- **Feedback and the Johari Window**
- **Guidelines for providing feedback**
- **Guidelines for accepting feedback**
- **Biases in providing feedback**

OBJECTIVES

- **Understand feedback more completely**
- **Learn how to give and receive feedback more appropriately**
- **Understand some of the problems in providing feedback**

THE NATURE OF FEEDBACK

Feedback is any communication to a person that gives him or her information about some aspect of his or her behavior and its effect on you.

Feedback can be directed at job performance or interpersonal behavior. The two are frequently related and not easily separated.

There are three major types of feedback:

- **Informational--descriptive; how an individual is performing or behaving and its effects on others, especially the feedback provider.**
- **Corrective--information about how to improve performance and develop the individual, not to punish or criticize.**
- **Reinforcing--praise or recognition--positive feedback.**

Feedback can serve a variety of purposes:

- **Help individuals without goals to set them**
- **Provide information about progress toward goals**
- **Reinforce behavior**
- **Increase effort**
- **Lead to changes in behavior and work methods**
- **Promote the setting of higher goals**
- **Demonstrate others' concern for an individual**

Need for feedback whether positive or negative--self

GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK

- **Focus on specific behavior, not personality, attitudes or motives. Be objective rather than subjective.**

Feedback should be specific rather than general and should describe behavior; don't make inferences about personality traits, attitudes, or motives. "You have been talking nonstop during the meeting." (B) "You're a loudmouth." (P) "You have a bad attitude." (A) "You're trying to control the meeting." (M)

- **Be descriptive, not evaluative or judgmental.**

Describe the behavior and your own reaction and feelings to it. This is especially important for negative feedback. No matter how upset you might be, don't evaluate or label the other persons or their behavior. Describe what the person **did**, not how good or bad the person or behavior is. "When you interrupt me, I feel angry and disrespected." (D) "When you interrupt me, you're rude and insensitive." (E) "Your absenteeism hurts our department's productivity." (D) "Your irresponsibility is hurting our department." Or "You're irresponsible." (E)

- **Direct it toward behavior which the receiver can control.**

Reminding people of shortcomings they can't control only frustrates them. Before providing feedback be sure the target can do something about the behavior. A person does not make a persuasive presentation because his thoughts were not well organized versus he is short and has a squeaky voice or even more obvious speech impediment.

- **Focus on the here and now, not the there and then.**

Talk about what's happening presently, not what happened days, months, or even years ago. The more recent the example of a specific behavior, the easier it will be to remember and the more helpful the feedback can be.

- **Provide feedback in a timely fashion.**

In general, feedback is most useful when it's provided immediately or as soon as possible after the target behavior occurs. This, of course, depends on the person's readiness for it, your emotional state, and the amount and quality of information you have. Later is sometimes better than immediately. The important point is don't delay because of the difficulty of the task and then save things up to "dump" later.

- **Share your perceptions and feelings; don't give advice.**

Stating how you see things and feel about them provides information which the receiver can use as he/she sees fit. Giving advice tells a person what to do and is usually not desired. Giving advice can even backfire. Engaging in joint problem solving in the here and now can be much more beneficial than sharing how we once solved a problem. Coaching or providing corrective feedback may also be appropriate under some circumstances.

- **Take into account the needs of both the receiver and provider of feedback.**

Feedback can be destructive if it only considers the needs of the provider. Ask yourself whom the feedback is supposed to help. If the answer is essentially you (that is, if you're "dumping" or "unloading" or "if you have to get something off your chest" or you've been "baggin' stuff"), bite your tongue. Providing feedback under these circumstances will hurt your credibility, harm the relationship, and lessen the effectiveness of future feedback. In addition, asking a person to deal with a large number of issues at once may simply be overwhelming and produce defensiveness. You do not have to tell someone "everything that bothers you" to be "complete" in your feedback.

- **Provide feedback when it's solicited, don't impose it.**

It's most useful when it's wanted and needed.

- **Check with the target to be sure your communication was clear.**

Have the target paraphrase your feedback.

If feedback is given in a group, checks with others' views can be made. Are the impressions shared?

- **Take ownership of the feedback. Use "I" messages and accept responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, and reactions.**

Don't transfer ownership to "upper management", the "rules", "those people", etc.

- **Develop/maintain your credibility (expertise and trustworthiness) and attractiveness**
- **Provide negative feedback in private face-to-face**
- **Develop/maintain high quality relationships with your workers**

- **Be calm and practice self-control**
- **Prepare carefully**

GUIDELINES FOR COACHING OR PROVIDING CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Used to increase skills and understanding of others' expectations and to facilitate job adjustment and career development

- **Help the person analyze his or her performance**
 - **Assess/measure performance--awareness of problems; motivation is not enough**

- **Importance of initial self assessment**
- **Diagnose mistakes step by step--omissions, unnecessary steps, incorrectly performed ones**

- **Encourage and guide efforts to improve performance**
 - **Have person develop an improvement plan and explain rationale for its parts**
 - **Make suggestions as appropriate**
 - **Provide additional instruction if necessary or show person how to do task correctly; get help of experienced others**

- **Provide support and encouragement**
 - **Be patient**
 - **Build confidence**

- **Hold frequent practice sessions with coaching under conditions as realistic as possible**

From Leadership in organizations (1998)

GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING POSITIVE FEEDBACK OR RECOGNITION

Praise, Awards, and Recognition Ceremonies

Giving praise and showing appreciation for effective performance, significant achievements, and important contributions to organization

Primary purpose is to strengthen positive behavior and task commitment

- **Recognize a variety of contributions and achievements--initiative, innovative ideas and helpful suggestions, helping others, personal sacrifices, significant contributions and accomplishments**
- **Actively look for effective behaviors to recognize**
- **Recognize improvements in performance, especially for new workers, workers with new tasks, or those with low self-confidence**
- **Recognize commendable efforts that failed**
- **Recognize everyone who deserves it, not just those in high visibility jobs or the few best performers; recognize many rather than few**
- **Provide specific recognition with reasons why behavior is important to you and the organization**
- **Provide recognition in a timely manner**
- **Use a form of recognition that is appropriate for the accomplishment or contribution, your organization, and your relationship with the person**
- **Recognize the behaviors you want--don't recognize one behavior while hoping for another**
- **Be sincere**
- **Don't overuse a particular form of recognition**

GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING FEEDBACK

- **Breathe deeply.**
- **Listen carefully.**
- **Make sure you understand what the other person is saying. Ask specific questions, making it clear that you are looking for**

descriptive information for personal development, not ego massaging.

- **Help others to own their feelings rather than passing them off on others. Using active listening, help the other explore his or her feelings or clarify for you the consequences of the behavior being discussed.**
- **Acknowledge valid points even if you don't agree with the other person's interpretation.**
- **Acknowledge the feedback and show appreciation for the provider's honesty but take time to sort out what you heard.**
- **Use your feedback skill to help the two of you engage in problem solving rather than attack/defend behavior.**

From The team memory jogger (1995) and NLT readings for human relations training (1982)

BIASES IN PROVIDING FEEDBACK

- **Stereotypes--sets of beliefs about the characteristics of a category of people.**
- **Primacy effect--initial information is given more weight than later information.**
- **Contrast effect--evaluations of people are affected by comparisons with others in the organization or group.**

- **Halo effect--overall evaluation of an individual affects specific ratings of same person.**
- **Similar-to-me effect--individuals who are similar to a person are seen more favorably than those who are dissimilar.**