

Tips for Ongoing, Effective Feedback

Feedback involves treating each other with respect. Constructive feedback reinforces the positive and tries to change any negatives by:

- Identifying what was done well or poorly
- Describing what action or behavior is desired
- Explaining the effects of the observed behavior and
- Reinforcing the type of behavior that is desired.

Feedback should be given as quickly as possible after the event and be delivered in person (so that the person has a chance to respond). Feedback that is significantly delayed is rarely (or much less) effective. Especially avoid delivering negative feedback via e-mail.

Appropriate expectations for the conversation should be set. Establish the proper climate by:

- Scheduling a meeting time
- Finding a private space and guarding against interruptions
- Allowing enough time for the conversation
- Creating a sincere, open and constructive atmosphere
- Making clear that this is a joint discussion and
- Being open to giving and receiving feedback.

Feedback involves both parties listening carefully. Check to ensure clear understanding. Ask and then listen for the other person's point of view. Confirm that you understand what the other person is saying.

Good feedback should be specific. Generalized feedback does not explain what behavior to repeat or avoid. Describe exactly what was done well and/or what could be improved. For example, saying "This report is well organized and the summary clearly states your conclusions and proposed actions." is more helpful than saying "Good report."

Good feedback should be objective. Use factual records and information whenever possible. Include details that focus on specific actions and results rather than individual characteristics. For example, say "this happened" rather than "you are" ... Saying "you hung up the phone without saying good-bye" is better than "you are rude".

Feedback should be documented (even informally). Make sure to document what was discussed and any outcomes or follow-ups that are needed. Certainly, do this for yourself but also note the key take-aways via e-mail (or otherwise) for both parties.