



Providing Meaningful Feedback with Respect and Grace

Human beings need feedback. Meaningful feedback nurtures performance, builds trust, and increases your credibility as a leader. No one wants to be messing up and not be guided to better performance. Likewise, no one wants their hard work and achievements going unrecognized. As a leader, you can influence the engagement and success of your direct reports, peers, and even boss by providing meaningful feedback.

For constructive feedback, do all five steps outlined below. For positive feedback, do the first three steps. Following the five steps, is an easy-to-use planning tool to help you prepare for either conversation.

Step 1: Convey your positive intent

Conveying your positive intent sets the stage for the conversation. It will make it easier for the other person to hear your feedback and stay present.

- **Have a positive frame of mind.** Ask yourself: *What is the positive outcome I desire?*
- **Briefly state what you'd like to cover.** Open with *"I have some thoughts about..."* or *"Let's take a look at..."* or *"I want acknowledge an important contribution you made."*
- **Point to a common goal/objective.** It's not "you versus them." Common goals can be as simple as having a positive attitude, meeting operational objectives/deadlines, or avoiding extra work.
- **Pick a good time.** For you and for them. Agree on a time to meet.

Step 2: Describe what you've observed and use facts/figures/specifics

For feedback to be meaningful, the other person needs to believe that what you say is real and valid. Being specific and concrete allows this to happen.

- **One issue at a time.** Be brief and to the point. Use facts, figures, and clear observation.
- **Offer how you've contributed** to the issue perhaps by avoiding it or not being clear in expectations.
- **Focus on the behavior or action, not on the person.** Avoid using "you."

Step 3: State the impact of the behavior or action.

Understanding the impact of a behavior or an accomplishment helps contextualize its significance. Don't assume there is shared understanding about this, as there may not be.

- **State the impact** to you, the team, colleagues, clients, or the business.
- **State only one or two of the most important impacts** so that you keep it purposeful.
- **Maintain an objective tone.** You might want to practice this to avoid sounding angry.

Step 4: Ask the other person to respond.

If performance is going to improve, you need the recipient involved in creating a new approach or solution.

- **Invite the other person to respond.** Ask *"What do you think?"* or *"How do you see things?"*
- **Listen objectively to what the other person has to say.** Even if you don't agree, keep an open mind.
- **Summarize the other person's key points.** This enables you to confirm your understanding.





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Step 5: Focus the discussion on solutions.

Solutions are the whole point of your conversation. By focusing on solutions, you are moving the conversation away from right and wrong, to a place of change and action.

- **Ask them what solutions they may have in mind.**
- **If he/she says doesn't know how or resists change**, offer to help with *"What could we try?"*
- **If he/she becomes emotional**, be supportive and allow time for him/her to re-center.
- When appropriate, **ask directly for the change you want.**

Planning Questions for Providing Meaningful Feedback

Doing a bit of planning before you provide meaningful feedback will allow you to gather your thoughts, be more focused when you have the discussion, and demonstrate a higher level of seriousness and credibility.

For constructive feedback, use all five steps. For recognition, use the first three steps.

For whom is the feedback intended:

Step 1: What will you say to convey your positive intent?

Step 2: How will you describe your specific observations? How have you contributed to the situation?

Step 3: What will you say to state the impact of the behavior or action?

Step 4: What will you say to draw out the other person's reactions?

Step 5: How do think the other person will respond? What will you do to handle their response? What change will you ask for or what suggestions will you offer?

