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Better Feedback

A framework for managers and teams

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10 Principles for better feedback

Follow these ten guiding principles of feedback to ensure that your communication is effective and well-received. Remember that feedback, whether positive or constructive, is only as effective as how it is processed by the receiver. This means that your preparation, reflection, and thoughtfulness before offering feedback are key to the success of your message. Practice giving and receiving feedback with your team using these pillars.

1. The giver and receiver must have consensus on the receiver's goal.

Offer feedback that is geared towards something the receiver actually wants to improve (a goal).

> *Ex: "Since you are working on your presentation skills, I would love to give you feedback that I think can help you reach your goal."*

2. The giver should emphasize strengths, not shortcomings.

Focus on what the receiver can do more of that works, rather than less of. Using enabling, strengths-based language in your feedback is empowering.

Ex: "You excel in X, but I notice you have been working more on X. How can we work towards improving this?"

3. The giver should be concrete and specific with their feedback.

Give feedback on observable behaviour, not vague generalizations. Clarity renders feedback easier to process.

Ex: "I noticed you fumbling a bit during the middle of your presentation last Thursday. Did you notice this?"

4. The giver and receiver should express constructive motives.

To establish trust, make sure your motive is clear before offering feedback.

Ex: "My intention in giving you this feedback is to help you reach goal X, and to see how I can better help you achieve it."

5. Don't withhold constructive feedback if it's relevant, but offer authenticity as well.

Be vulnerable and authentic in why a specific behaviour affected you, and be clear that your goal is to find a resolution.

Ex: "This might be difficult to hear, but it's important to me that we speak because I care about you and our working relationship."

6. The giver should own observations, feelings and judgments.

Use "I" statements to own that this feedback stems from your perception of the experience.

> *Ex: "When I saw things move slower than planned, I felt anxious. I believe we could have managed things differently."*

7. Feedback should be timed to when the giver and receiver are ready.

Ensure that all parties are ready to enter into the feedback process. You never know the state of mind someone is in, so give them the choice of hearing feedback now, or later.

> *Ex: "I have some feedback to offer you, is this a good moment for us to talk?"*

8. It is directed at changeable behaviour.

Focus on behaviour rather than personality traits. People can improve things they do, but personality traits tend to be more ingrained.

> *Ex: "When you interrupt me I feel unheard," rather than, "You are rude when you interrupt me."*

9. It should be checked for understanding.

Ensure that your message is understood by asking the receiver to explain it back to you. While they can hear your words, they may

create alternate meaning from them.

> *Ex: "How is this all landing with you? Is my example clear? Can you share what you understand from this?"*

10. When possible, the receiver validates feedback with others.

If you are unsure of how to process a specific feedback, validate it with a trusted colleague.

> *Ex: "I have received feedback that I can be long winded in my speech. Have you noticed this? "*

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Key takeaways

- Is the receiver ready?
- Check your intent
- Be descriptive
- Clear is kind (the key is specificity)
- Own your judgements
- Check for understanding
- Validate the feedback

Questions to solicit effective feedback

Asking for feedback can be as difficult as giving it. To receive effective feedback, phrase your needs clearly and be specific with your request.

Option 1

"I would like some feedback from you about my ability to (name a specific behavior/skill)."

Option 2

"I would like feedback on something I do that serves the team well." "What would like to see me do more of?"

Option 3

"What do you need to tell me that is important for me to know that you think might hurt/challenge/confront me?" OR "What am I doing too much of?"

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Framework for giving effective feedback

The best feedback is well thought out. Take the time to reflect on your feedback and prepare what you will say using this conversation framework.

WHEN YOU...

Describe behavior based on your observation

I FEEL...

Emotional reaction

BECAUSE...

This is the story I am telling myself (self-disclosure)

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