



Giving Effective Feedback

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Discover how you can identify changes through feedback.

Giving Effective Feedback

The old management and leadership texts used to say that whenever giving feedback, you need to compliment someone or something they did first. This was meant to break the ice and ease any tension. However, what tends to happen is that people know they are coming for feedback, and they can be so focused on the criticism coming up that they do not hear your compliments, or they prefer that you get down to business.

Know your people, and how they prefer to receive feedback, and you will become very effective at delivering it.

Here are some of our best practices for offering feedback.

- ❓ Keep the conversation **positive**. Even when you have to deliver negative feedback (or outright bad news), the conversation should remain respectful, positive, and preserve the integrity of the people involved. Being positive gets the person in a better frame of mind to hear the other side.
- Feedback should be **asked for or agreed upon** ahead of time, rather than imposed. If it's appropriate, let people know that you'd like to give them some feedback and what the agenda for the discussion is so that they can also prepare if needed.
- ❓ Effective feedback is **well timed**. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior.
- Feedback should be **specific** rather than general. To be told that you are dominating would not be as useful as to be told that, "Just now when we were deciding the issue, you didn't listen to what others said, and I felt forced to accept your arguments or face attack from you."
- Feedback should be **descriptive** rather than evaluative or judgmental. Describing one's own reaction leaves the other person free to use that information or not, as they see fit.
- ❓ Feedback should be directed toward **behavior** the receiver can do something about.
- Feedback should **take into account the needs** of both the giver and receiver of feedback. Feedback is destructive when it serves only the giver's needs and fails to consider the needs of the other person.
- ❓ Check that your **feedback is clear** to the receiver. One way of doing this is to have the receiver summarize the feedback in his/her own words.
- When feedback is given in a group, both giver and receiver have the opportunity to **check with others in the group** on the accuracy of the feedback. Is this one person's impression or an impression shared by others?

The performance feedback that you provide your people may be on a group level in terms of how well they are meeting targets compared to other groups, or it may be about individual performance toward

attainable goals. Remember, just as feedback is necessary to keep a rocket on target and interest in a sport alive, it's also an important way of keeping employees interested in their work.

How do you rate your ability to give feedback effectively?

Is there anything you should change? How might you get started?

Feedback Techniques

Feedback Techniques

Feedback has traditionally been given in the “**sandwich**” format.

In the sandwich, you begin by saying something positive about the person’s behavior, such as, “Roger, you are one of the fastest workers in here. You understand computers better than most of the people I work with.”

Then comes the description of the behavior you want to see changed. For example, “I would like you to be more precise with your documentation. You come up with brilliant solutions that never get recorded and I’d like you to change that.”

Back to his value to you and the company: “You have knowledge that the rest of us could use, and you don’t always get credit for the ideas you have. Can I count on you to do more documentation?”

We prefer a more **open-ended approach**. When you use this technique, there is no lead-in. You move right to telling the person what behavior has to be changed. For example: “Roger, I would like you to be

Mastering Your Body Language

In significant (though often misinterpreted) research, **Albert Mehrabian** found that when it came to discussing emotions, only 7% of the speaker's message was communicated by words, and that tone of voice was responsible for about 38% of the meaning and body language about 55%. This means that the words themselves played only a very small part in conveying meaning. In other conversations (not the ones about emotions), we know that tone of voice and body language have a large impact on those messages, too.

We are always sending signals to others, whether we like it or not. Body language combined with vocal tone can override or even cancel the meaning of the words we say. If you want your messages understood, make sure your words and your body are sending the same signal.

Here are some things to keep in mind about body language:

- 🔗 Your **eyes, eyebrows, and mouth** send out the signals that can make a world of difference.
- 🔗 People who smile are happier than those who don't. **Smiling** releases a chemical in your brain that makes you feel good. It's a great way to establish a rapport with listeners.
- 🔗 **Eye contact** helps you carry your message to each person in the audience. It builds trust.
- 🔗 Learn to speak with your **hands**. Draw lines in the air, make a point, count on your fingers, and emphasize length and width.
- 🔗 Work on appearing **sincere and comfortable**.
- 🔗 Let your **hands** do what they want to do, as long as they don't get in your pockets, fiddle with an object, or make obscene gestures to your audience.
- 🔗 Your **body posture** affects your emotions and how you feel determines your posture. If you are confident, happy and ready, your body will show it.

One of the most important things you can do with body language is learn to pick up **cues** from people that you are making them uncomfortable, such as:

- 🔗 Rocking
- 🔗 Leg swinging

🔍 Tapping

These are the first signals of tension and indicate that the person feels intruded upon or nervous. If it escalates, these signals are often followed by:

- 🔍 Intermittent closing of the eyes
- 🔍 Slight tucking of the chin into the chest
- 🔍 Shoulder hunching

Basically, learn to watch for these cues, and then **adjust your approach**. Sometimes just taking one step back, or getting the other person to talk to you instead, will be all it takes to ease the tension. If you sensitize yourself to these simple cues, over time people will feel more relaxed, at ease, and open with you (and to you).

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Giving Effective Feedback*, (2014), By Harvard Business Review
- ✓ *Effective Feedback*, (1998), By Tim Russell