

# Let's Talk: Providing feedback

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Many managers feel uneasy about giving feedback, especially if it's not positive. But as a manager, one of your most important roles is to help your employees improve their performance and advance their careers. If you're not telling your employees what they're doing well and what they can do better, it's going to be really challenging for them to grow under your supervision.

Giving feedback is a critical part of your role. It can help your employees grow, and it can also improve the overall performance of your team. Here are some tips that can help give feedback.

## **Be constructive, not destructive**

Positive feedback, or praise, or negative feedback, or criticism, can both be delivered in a constructive way. What makes it constructive is that your comments show that there's room for change and improvement. On the other hand, destructive feedback feels like an attack. It has little intent to help improve work or behavior. It really has no value but to cut someone down.

## **Remember that feedback is powerful**

When you talk to an employee about their performance, it can really make an impact. Workers appreciate knowing that their good work is noticed. And if negative feedback is given in a constructive way, they'll value knowing where they can do better.

## **Prepare your comments**

It's important to think before you speak. Consider the ways the employee succeeds or contributes to the team. Then think about specific actions the employee can take to improve their performance or their behavior. You're going to feel a lot more comfortable being prepared for that conversation versus "playing it by ear." You may also want to jot down a few of the key points that you want to talk to, before you have that conversation.

## **Be specific**

The most helpful feedback is specific. Rather than saying, "You seem to have trouble making decisions," you could say, "I want you to practice making decisions on your own and we can review

them at end of each day." Instead of saying, "You can be very positive," you could say, "I was impressed when you came in early to start on that important project." Whether you're talking about something positive or negative, being specific and constructive and offering comments that allow for positive change, that's going to be the best way to help your employees understand and receive your feedback.

## **Avoid "you" statements**

Statements that start with "you" sound like an accusation. "You are always late." It's a finger-pointing statement, right? Instead, try saying something like, "I understand what it's like to be late. Let's talk about what's causing this, and see if we can find a solution." The "I" statement conveys the same message, yet changes your role. You are there to help, instead of criticize.

## **Give feedback in a timely manner**

If an employee misses a deadline, don't wait six months to give them that feedback in their annual review. You don't have to sit down in a formal setting to provide feedback. Instead, try taking them aside and saying something like, "It's important for us to meet our project deadlines in order to meet our overall project goals. How can I help you prioritize your workload?" It's so important to give employees this kind of feedback along the way in real time, versus waiting until those reviews.

## **Remember that feedback is meant to be helpful**

Feedback opens up a conversation in which both parties can learn. With constructive criticism, employees can receive that validation about the things that they're doing well, and they can also learn about the things that they can improve in. When you give feedback, you're really helping to motivate employees by providing specific and observable feedback.

When it comes to giving feedback, remember, you're there to help collaborate and point the way to greater success.

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