

Feedback at Workplace

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“My employee thinks he is doing a brilliant job. However only I know the amount of effort I need to put in to get his work to an acceptable standard.”

“My colleague got offended when I told him how he had botched the client meeting.”

“I was surprised at the low rating I received from my Manager during appraisal.”

“My subordinate has become demotivated ever since I communicated corrective feedback to her.”

“I normally sandwich my corrective feedback between two positive ones, yet it is frustrating to see no improvements in my team member’s work or behaviour.”

Most of us can relate to these common workplace scenarios involving feedback. All the above instances point to feedback not having been communicated effectively.

The importance of giving feedback, whether performance or behavioural, to an employee in a workplace, cannot be undermined. It is not only a key ingredient for professional and personal development of the employee but also serves as a mechanism to check deviations between actual and desired behaviour of the employee.

Managers and subordinates at times dread the process of both giving and receiving feedback, whether it is positive or corrective. Quite often Managers procrastinate giving feedback till the appraisal meeting and even during this meeting, many lack the skills required to give feedback in an effective way that can bring about the desired change.

It is a myth that corrective feedback is mostly not well received by employees. According to Harvard Business Review, in a survey of 900 global employees, 57% respondents stated that they preferred corrective feedback while only 43% preferred praise. As per officevibe/ Forbes statistics, 4 out of ten workers are actively disengaged when they get little or no feedback.

Effective feedback is essentially an interplay of **PET- Person, Emotion and Timing (PET)**

The Person- The readiness of the recipient as well as the position of the person giving feedback is important for the feedback to be effective. Individuals like to receive feedback from a person who they consider worthy and credible of giving feedback. The setting or place in which feedback is shared also plays an important part. Check for feedback receptivity and offer feedback only when the recipient is conducive to listening with undivided attention.

The Emotion- Emotion kills effective communication. Effective feedback does away with sentiments and subjectivity and is balanced. The provider should be able to identify and do away with any unconscious biases (recency bias, spill over bias, halo effect, similarity bias etc.). One on one direct feedback using “I” statements and appropriate body language is recommended for feedback to be impactful. Focus should be on the behaviour or action and its impact and not the person. The intent of feedback should be to help the person and not to do him down or show your power or intelligence.

The Timing- Feedback should be prompt, regular and continuous. There should be a minimum time lag between the incident and communicating the feedback to maintain relevance. Holding on to feedback communication till the appraisal process is not a good practice. It is important to set expectations and offer feedback timely with periodic follow-up in order to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Feedback is only the giver's perspective. Feedback may be verbal or non-verbal, positive or corrective. While there are several feedback models one can follow (SBI, Pendleton's, STAR, BOOST etc.), giving effective and unbiased feedback is a skill that needs patience, understanding and practice.