

## Feedback - the oxygen for the development of people

The process of review is important to us all - we can all learn from both our mistakes and our successes. Successful review requires an ability to give and receive feedback honestly, clearly and effectively. Giving constructive feedback is an essential skill for any manager. It is the process for relaying the effects of behaviour for the individual's benefit and learning. Without feedback it can become difficult to progress. The purpose of giving feedback is to improve performance in the future.

The following tips apply equally to both Managers and Jobholders. Remember every review meeting is a two-way communication process, with the Manager giving and receiving feedback and the Jobholder also giving and receiving feedback.

- ✦ Feedback should always be positive and supportive.
- ✦ Start and end the meeting with **positive** feedback on achievements
- ✦ Do your **homework** in advance. Don't try to wing it.
- ✦ Consider **the needs** of the person receiving the feedback
- ✦ Feedback is non-judgemental; give clear information to the other person.
- ✦ Use your own thoughts, feelings and opinions by making 'I' statements (rather than 'you' statements).
- ✦ You speak directly to the other person (rather than talking about them to others).
- ✦ You comment on the behaviour, not the person.
- ✦ You are specific in your comments.
- ✦ Reinforce the message you are delivering about performance by highlighting the positive or negative impact of their actions on the outcome or on other people e.g. staff or clients. For example, "When you worked late to process those extra claims, it meant that the two clients got their issues addressed before the Bank Holiday."
- ✦ Feedback should be **timely**. In general, feedback on performance is most useful at the earliest opportunity. Storing it up for meetings three months later is less effective, even when the message is very positive
- ✦ You may suggest constructive ways of improving behaviour/performance.
- ✦ Feedback should be **balanced** – focusing on both achievements and areas for improvement. The balance does not have to be 50-50 but 85-15 is out of balance

- ✦ When specific feedback is delivered, summarise and check to ensure it has been clearly understood and give the person the opportunity to respond

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## **Receiving Feedback**

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When you are receiving feedback from others, whether criticism or praise, do not let your feelings get in the way of using the important information which is being offered.

- ✦ Listen actively without comment until the other person has finished speaking (avoid interrupting with explanation or defence).
- ✦ Accept compliments assertively - own your strengths.
- ✦ If the feedback is 'loaded' in some way, do not immediately rise to the defensive or crumple in dismay. Express your feelings about the statement: 'I feel angry/upset/confused when you say that'.
- ✦ Ask for comment on your behaviour rather than your personality.
- ✦ If the feedback is vague, ambiguous or generalised, ask the speaker to be more specific: 'what exactly was it about my behaviour in the situation which you liked/disliked?'
- ✦ Ask the speaker how they would rather have you behave.
- ✦ Maintain eye contact and non-verbal assurance that you are interested in them
- ✦ Listen with your eyes as well as your ears – notice their non-verbal message
- ✦ Clarify your understanding by reflecting back - paraphrasing and summarising
- ✦ Allow the person to hold their point of view – even if it's different to yours
- ✦ Empathise – 'get into their shoes'

Do not swallow criticism whole; look for consistent feedback from a number of people before you do. Take responsibility for which aspects of the feedback you will act on - it is your choice to change your behaviour.

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## **Giving Feedback to Poor Performers**

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It is recognised that feedback directs behaviour and motivates performance at work - no matter how good or effective your staff are they can always get better.

With poor performers we owe a legal and moral obligation to give feedback. We are required to do the following:

- ✦ Establish the standards of performance and behaviour required by the job
- ✦ Give feedback when performance falls short of those standards
- ✦ Develop a joint action plan to get them back on track

One of the regular difficulties experienced by organisations with formal appraisal systems is that managers have a habit of saving up their feedback for the once a year meeting. A good ground rule if you have appraisal is "NO SURPRISES". Twelve months is far too long to leave someone in the dark about their performance, whether good bad or indifferent.

A more effective approach is to give continuous feedback throughout the year and supplement the annual interview with a series of short mini appraisals. This will make sure that nothing is missed, will keep the channels of communication open throughout the year and as a result, the final review will be more effective.

Ideally, the more immediate the feedback, the better it will be. By giving feedback as soon as possible after the event or during the progress of the work, the better both manager and job holder will be able to recall the performance and the circumstances and the more concrete will be the information on which to build.