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8 Ways For Leaders to Provide Awesome Employee Feedback



How do you feel when your boss tells you that you have a performance appraisal appointment coming up this Friday? Most of us feel a pit forming in our stomach. No one likes their performance appraisal session, even if they are great employees. Most managers don't like conducting performance appraisals, either.

Feedback should not be a surprise, and yet, many managers wait until the once-a-year performance evaluation to give their direct reports any guidance. Not only does this waste employees' time, but it is also discouraging when employee's are not sure they are being successful.

Helpful feedback, provided to employees on a regular basis, is imperative to the success of any business. However, conducting performance feedback in a positive manner is challenging, especially when trying to encourage an employee's behavioral change and increase productivity.

How can managers make sure feedback is delivered in the most effective way possible?

1. Provide More Feedback More Often

Managers shouldn't wait until the required yearly performance evaluation to have conversations with their direct reports. Business is changing so quickly that leaders have to be in constant communication with their teams. Helpful feedback, provided on a frequent basis, helps teams members stay focused and energized.

2. Focus on the Task, Not the Individual

It is all too easy for an employee to interpret feedback as a personal attack when corrective comments are not task-oriented. Feedback should be specifically focused on what the employee has said or done as it relates to his or her tasks in a calm and rational manner. Feedback should never be delivered when either party is angry or emotional.

Managers need to focus on the types of behaviors they want to see more of such as, “I know you enjoy working with our clients on the Jones project, but the critical project this week is the Smith project, and I want you to spend your time and attention on that.”

3. Create a Two-Way Conversation

The conversation must be open and active on both sides, with both the manager and employee fully engaged in the details. According to [Harvard Business Review](#), great leadership involves creating engagement with employees that resembles ordinary conversation instead of dictating a series of commands. When employees are engaged in what feels like a more casual conversation, instead of a formal counseling session, they are more likely to feel more comfortable, and are more open to what’s being discussed. When both parties are relaxed, employees are also more likely to ask clarifying questions, increasing the likelihood of understanding and engagement.

4. Be Direct and Specific

Managers' need to understand what they need to improve, and they need specific examples of the contrary. The employee must understand the manager’s concerns for any changes to take place. Do not over-generalize by making statements such as “You’re just not reliable.” Instead, point out specific incidents in which the employee has failed to meet certain standards. [Forbes](#) describes effective feedback as being both specific and understandable. Employees need to internalize that these suggestions for improvement are to help them be better, and that continued failure to improve could result in termination. The manager’s directives, while they may sound like suggestions, are not optional.

5. Balance Critical Feedback with Praise

According to [American Express](#), and anyone who has ever been criticized, criticism has a far greater impact on an employee than praise. To that end, managers need to balance criticism with appropriate positive statements. Remember, it takes several positive comments to offset just one critical comment. Praising employees on a regular basis is an important habit to develop, and it helps the employee be more receptive when critical feedback is necessary.

6. Provide Avenues for Success

If an employee needs to do something better or in a different way, a manager should provide helpful avenues for success. Merely telling someone about the areas where they need to improve is not enough. Guidance needs to be specific, and employees need a path.

Millennials, proportionally, are very open to feedback. They actively seek out mentorships and they crave the knowledge they need to improve. What frustrates them are vague statements without specific guidance on how, and why they do to work differently.

Providing training and coaching is part of that path to succeed. Sometimes specific step-by-step plans, with employee input, can be mapped out. Other times it is more cost-effective to outsource training programs or leadership coaching. Whether in-house or external, employees need to be constantly improving.

7. End With a Positive Agreement to Work Together To Improve

It is easy to feel attacked when you think you have been doing a great job and you are surprised by negative feedback, even that is only a sentence or two. When debriefing others, sure the conversation ends with positivity. A positive ending lets the individual know that even though certain areas need improvement, management is happy with his or her

performance, and that they are valued members of the team. [Fast Company](#) reiterates that showing confidence in an employee and looking forward to their future contributions to the organization is a good technique.

8. Follow-Up

Whether it's scheduling an official meeting or just briefly connecting with an employee at a later date, follow-up by the manager is essential. The establishment of specific, easy-to-define goals during feedback makes it easier to gauge progress during a follow-up meeting. Not following up in a timely manner may leave employees feeling that their supervisor was not serious about helping them succeed.

No matter what type of business we are in, those in leadership positions will inevitably need to deliver critical feedback at some point. Creating a plan for this process helps managers fairly and effectively provide feedback to all of their employees, resulting in a happier, more productive workforce.

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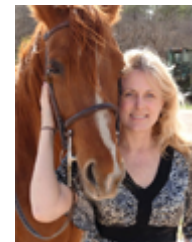
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