

## Why Do I Avoid Giving Feedback?

### *Self-evaluation*

Supervisors have many reasons for not giving feedback. Check all of the reasons that describe why you avoid giving feedback. Circle the number of your top reason for not giving feedback.

#### **I avoid giving feedback because:**

- 1. I don't have time.
- 2. I don't know how to give feedback.
- 3. I don't want to demotivate my employee.
- 4. It feels awkward.
- 5. I never received feedback and was able to figure it out.
- 6. I have too many employees reporting to me.
- 7. I wasn't clear with the employee about setting goals and performance expectations.
- 8. I have tried giving feedback in the past and it has not helped.
- 9. The employee knows what to work on.
- 10. The employee is already a top performer.
- 11. The employee may get defensive.
- 12. I may feel intimidated by the employee's reaction.
- 13. The employee is engaged and motivated and doesn't need feedback.
- 14. The employee needs more time to get acclimated and learn the job.
- 15. I have trouble controlling my emotions when questioned about providing specific examples of performance issues.
- 16. I don't care if the employee is developed.
- 17. I don't like conflict.
- 18. I don't have faith that the employee can improve.
- 19. Employees are responsible for their own development.
- 20. I don't want to damage our relationship.

## Reasons You Should Give Feedback

For each item you checked on the previous page, review and consider the reasons you should give feedback and suggestions to improve your approach.

1. **I don't have time.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Employees want and need feedback to grow and develop. Having short, regular, and frequent 1:1 meetings with each team member allows you to get to know them, find out what's important to them, discuss progress and barriers, and build trusting relationships. It's better to take the time to provide feedback and support to prevent small performance issues from becoming larger and more complicated. If not addressed, individual issues can become team issues and effect morale.

2. **I don't know how to give feedback.**

**Reason to give feedback:** The university provides a variety of instructor-led and online professional development courses and resources to improve your feedback and management skills. After learning the basics, you will need to practice and apply your skills to increase your confidence and skill level.

3. **I don't want to demotivate my employee.**

**Reason to give feedback:** By giving balanced feedback on the areas that are going well and areas of concern, you will be helping your employee to improve and become even more productive. The feedback and support you give employees can positively impact their performance by clarifying expectations, acknowledging them for their strengths, and empowering them to close skill gaps.

4. **It feels awkward.**

**Reason to give feedback:** It's understandable that giving feedback can feel awkward, especially if you have not given feedback before or have not been the recipient of helpful feedback in the past. Just like with anything new, the more you learn about giving feedback and participate in feedback conversations, the more comfortable and confident you will be with your new skills.

5. **I never received feedback and was able to figure it out.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Your success as a manager is directly tied to the success of your employees. While many employees can and do figure things out, it isn't the most effective approach. Employees have a better chance of achieving desired results and developing new skills quickly, when they are guided and supported by their managers. Creating a partnership and having frequent feedback sessions with your employees helps to ensure they are focusing on the right things, accomplishing goals, and progressing with their development.

6. **I have too many employees reporting to me.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Having a lot of direct reports can be challenging, but part of your role as a manager is to develop and provide feedback to your direct reports. Feedback can be given both formally or informally, but having regularly scheduled 1:1s and a standard format for your feedback sessions can help you better manage your time. Typical topics covered in 1:1 meetings includes: progress on goals/development, things that are going well, areas of concern, and career management.

7. **I wasn't clear with the employee about setting goals and performance expectations.**

**Reason to give feedback:** While it's best to set clear goals and expectations at the beginning of the performance cycle, updates can be made at any point. Clarifying expectations helps employees to focus on the things that will have the greatest impact and ensures there won't be any surprises in the annual review.

8. **I have tried giving feedback in the past and it has not helped.**

**Reason to give feedback:** If you have attempted giving feedback in the past that hasn't been effective, it may mean the feedback was unclear or presented in a way that made it difficult to hear. Try sharing your thoughts, observations, and feelings more often. Be clear about the purpose of the feedback and provide specific examples of what the employee does well and what needs to improve. Use open-ended questions to determine if the employee's perspective is the same as yours. Invite the employee to brainstorm strategies for to use in the future. Before ending the feedback session, make sure there is a clear plan about what needs to be achieved and what measures will be used to measure progress before your next meeting together.

9. **The employee knows what to work on.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Employees may know what to work on, but your feedback, advice, and guidance may be needed to help them be more efficient and productive. If your employees are highly successful, praise and acknowledgement can help them to feel valued and respected for what they are accomplishing and helps to increase employee engagement. Ongoing feedback also ensures there won't be any surprises for anyone, at the end of the cycle.

10. **The employee is already a top performer.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Everyone needs feedback, even top performers. Feedback helps all employees stay focused, motivated, challenged, and engaged. While your top performing employees may have mastered what's required for their current positions and are achieving results, your feedback could assist them to develop skills to prepare for the next level. Before giving feedback, ask your top performing employees *how* they are achieving results. Your top performers may be so focused on the drive for results that appropriate concern for colleagues, teammates, or direct reports is neglected. Assess if the strengths that are enabling success might be overused. As with all employees, your feedback should focus on current performance, progress on goals/development, things that are going well, areas of concern, and future career goals and aspirations.

□ 11. **The employee may get defensive.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Fear of how an employee will respond to feedback is one of the top reasons managers avoid or delay giving feedback. An employee may become defensive when feedback sounds like criticism, fault-finding or disciplinary, especially if it is the first time the employee is hearing the information. When employees are confronted about poor performance, it may trigger feelings of self-doubt, mistrust, and insecurity.

A more effective approach is to focus on the positive desired performance rather than highlighting shortcomings. Managers should define the positive performance in specific terms and detail the benefits for making the change.

For example, for an employee who lacks professionalism when interacting with clients, the manager might say:

*“I’d like to see you develop a more polished and professional approach when you’re working with clients. What I mean by this is when you meet with clients, I want you to wear a suit, be on time to meetings, be reliable with your word and work product, and accurately describe deliverables. The reason I’m asking you to focus on this, is I believe these things will increase the number of positive client interactions you have and your client will have more confidence in your ability to produce results for them.”*

□ 12. **I may feel intimidated by the employee’s reaction.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Understanding possible employee reactions to feedback and how to handle them will make you better equipped to provide any type of feedback. You can reduce the number of negative reactions by using precise, accurate language and specific examples to support the feedback. Allow the employee to speak openly, observe signs of emotional reactions, and remain calm and composed. You can learn more about how to address negative employee reactions to feedback through a variety of instructor-led and online professional development courses and resources offered by the university.

□ 13. **The employee is engaged and motivated and doesn’t need feedback.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Don’t take engaged and motivated employees for granted. While many employees are intrinsically motivated, research has shown one of the top reasons employees leave an employer is because of the relationship with the manager. Having frequent conversations can head off potential retention issues including the employee feeling undervalued and having stunted growth and development.

□ 14. **The employee needs more time to get acclimated and learn the job.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Employees who are new to the organization or role need more frequent feedback and guidance to support them as they get acclimated to their new positions. While it may take time for new employees to reach their full level of productivity, clarifying performance expectations from the beginning helps them to know what to strive for and focus on during the introductory period. The introductory period sets the tone for the working relationship between the manager and employee; having feedback conversations from the start of the relationship gets both of you in the habit of talking about performance.

- 15. **I have trouble controlling my emotions when questioned about providing specific examples of performance issues.**

**Reason to give feedback:** If you will be providing feedback on performance issues, you should be prepared with specific examples prior to having a feedback session. Providing factual data helps the employee to see the feedback is objective and not based on your personal opinion. If you or the employee get too emotional to continue a productive discussion, acknowledge the emotions and tell the employee you will continue the discussion when you or the employee is feeling less reactive. Remember, the goal is to provide feedback the employee can hear and use; the collaborative discussion should be solution oriented and not punitive.

- 16. **I don't care if the employee is developed.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Consider your employee's success as your own success. Employees who receive feedback and are developed are more likely to be successful. An important part of your role as a manager is to monitor performance and develop your direct reports. Your own performance evaluation may suffer if you are not fulfilling that important part of your role.

- 17. **I don't like conflict.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Giving feedback does not necessarily mean the conversation will end in conflict. Many times our own negative experiences of receiving feedback impact our own perspective on giving and receiving feedback. The goal of feedback is to support the employee to become more responsible, effective, productive, creative and successful. We all have areas we need to improve upon – the information you provide may assist the employee to improve and excel.

- 18. **I don't have faith that the employee can improve.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Your expectations for your employees largely impacts their performance outcomes. The Pygmalion Effect, described by J. Sterling Livingstone in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1998, illustrates the way managers treat their subordinates is subtly influenced by what they expect of them. Managers communicate expectations consciously or unconsciously. Employees pick up on these expectations from the manager, either consciously or unconsciously. Employees will then perform in ways that are consistent with those expectations.

In contrast, those managers who believe employees can succeed and assists employees to believe in themselves, can help employees exceed their own expectations. What the manager believes can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When you express your faith in the abilities of your employees, their morale, self-esteem, and performance can increase. Encourage employees by providing opportunities for success and development before increasing the level of challenge of assignments. Hold frequent, positive, coaching sessions that reinforce your commitment to the employee's success and emphasize your believe in the employee's ability.

- 19. **Employees are responsible for their own development.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Employees do play an important part in their own development and are responsible for taking advantage of the opportunities the employer provides. As a manager, you will help your employees focus on meaningful development opportunities based on needs for each of them. Employees may not be aware of their own development needs and can benefit from your advice and guidance.

- 20. **I don't want to damage our relationship.**

**Reason to give feedback:** Feedback can be used to strengthen and build trust in an existing or forming relationship when you and the employee have shared expectations for the experience. Set the stage at the beginning of the cycle to indicate you will be giving focus to those things that are done well and those things that need improvement. Positively describe the results that you want and approach the sessions as solutions-focused. Employees will be more receptive to feedback if they view you as a partner that supports their success.

## Your Experience With Feedback

Recall a time when you received appreciative, developmental, or evaluative feedback that you were able to hear and use.

1. What was the feedback?
2. How did the feedback make you feel?
3. What were the factors that made that environment unique so you could hear and use the feedback?
4. How did the feedback impact outcomes for you?

## INFORM Feedback Model

Intention	Technique	Example of Behavior
<p><b>Inform and orient:</b> prepare person for session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Inform person ahead of time.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Select appropriate time/location.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▸ Provide relaxed respectful atmosphere.</li> <li>▸ Explain/negotiate agenda.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>Let's make an appointment to review your performance.</i></li> <li>▸ <i>What are your goals for this year?</i></li> <li>▸ <i>Remember the stated expectations for this procedure/process?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Navigate towards understanding:</b> ask person for self- assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Ask what was done well and what could be improved.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Ask how person felt.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▸ Use open-ended questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>How do you think this goal is going?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>What was done well?</i></li> <li>▸ <i>What could be improved?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Formulate a response:</b> decide what needs to improve and how much feedback is appropriate; give reinforcing and corrective feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Offer your response to observations of specific behaviors, approach or style.</li> <li>▸ Give your reasons in the context of well -defined shared goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>When you did/said... I was ... (pleased, relieved, excited, concerned, upset, etc.), because...</i></li> <li>▸ <i>Also put in the context of the impact that it had or has on others.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Offer plan for improvement:</b> develop specific strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Invite person's suggestions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Give your suggestions</li> </ul> </li> <li>▸ Provide resources (books, classes, other experienced staff)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Teach (discuss, demonstrate, coach)</li> <li>▸ Offer support</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>What could you do differently?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>This is my suggestion...</i></li> <li>▸ <i>Where will you get help?</i></li> <li>▸ <i>Let's reframe the problem.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>Let's talk about this.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>▸ <i>What can I do to assist you?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Request application:</b> apply strategies to real situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Apply planned improvements to current or future dilemmas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>What will you do next time?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>Show me!</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Motivate to action:</b> confirm person understands and agrees with what has been discussed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Person reviews his/her behaviors needing change</li> <li>▸ Specify consequences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>What do you do well?</i></li> <li>▸ <i>What changes will you make?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ <i>By when?</i></li> <li>▸ <i>What if you don't?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Adapted from Hewson, M., Little, M., & Hewson, H. (1998, February). Giving Feedback in Medical Education: Verification of Recommended Techniques. *JGIM: Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 13(2), 111-116.



*INFORM Feedback Model Worksheet*

**Inform and Orient**

Ask yourself	What topic do I want to discuss? What do I want to achieve with this discussion?
Your words	
Possible response	

**Offer plan for improvement**

Ask yourself	Have specific strategies been discussed and developed?
Your words	
Possible response	

**Navigate towards understanding**

Ask yourself	Do I have a clear understanding of the situation? Is my perception the same as the employee? As others'? As my supervisor's?
Your words	
Possible response	

**Request application**

Ask yourself	Is there an opportunity for application of strategies to real situation?
Your words	
Possible response	

**Formulate a response**

Ask yourself	What needs to improve? How much feedback is appropriate? Is my approach balanced by giving both reinforcing and corrective feedback?
Your words	

**Motivate to action**

Ask yourself	Did I confirm understanding and agreement with what has been discussed?
Your words	

Possible response	
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Possible response	
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