

LEADERSHIP TIPS

USING FEEDBACK TO GET RESULTS

Feedback can be a powerful tool when used strategically. You can use feedback to reinforce positive behaviors or correct negative ones. Most of us don't change in a vacuum. We need constructive feedback to see our blind spots and to change.

Set a goal to give more positive than negative feedback. This is not easy to do. We see what needs to be corrected, but often fail to express appreciation for what is going well. Use feedback to encourage desired behavior and performance. For example, if you want a team member to continue to send out error-free documents, praise him whenever he does, "I really appreciate your attention to detail in the weekly reports."

When behavior falls short of expectations, use feedback to bring the matter to the other person's attention and discuss any negative impact of the behavior. Be direct when giving feedback. For example, if one of your staff is continually late, do not pass the buck by saying: "My boss noticed you've been late this week and asked me to remind you of our policy." This can undermine your own power and authority because you are simply allowing a message from a higher authority to pass through you. Instead, try saying: "When you are late, I feel frustrated because others have to pick up the slack. How can I support you in being on time?" "I" messages are helpful because they tend not to make the other person defensive. They also give a clear message about the impact of the disruptive behavior.

Give corrective feedback as soon as the behavior occurs. It is easy to overlook small annoyances until a

really negative pattern starts to develop. Don't let negative feelings accumulate. Try to deliver positive feedback and negative feedback at different times because the other person will tend to remember the negative feedback, not the positive.

Giving effective feedback

- Avoid giving feedback when you are angry or upset.
- Use words that directly relate to the behavior.
- Describe the behavior, stating specific details and examples.
- Describe the impact on you, using "I" statements.
- Avoid judgmental statements like: "When you're late, you're not a good team player."
- Give them time to respond.

Whenever you give corrective feedback, be willing to receive feedback from the other person. Feedback can open up a healthy two-way exchange. Welcome the other's comments and input.

Some tips for receiving feedback

- Receive feedback gracefully.
- Do not become defensive.
- Listen without interrupting, justifying, or explaining.
- Ask for specific examples.
- Paraphrase feedback to make sure you understand.
- Be willing to improve.
- Agree on next steps.

Feedback will be more effective if you customize your approach. Consider the person's communication and work style. Understanding styles helps you to adjust your words to fit the other's needs and preferences. In our team building sessions, we teach four basic behavioral styles. We show teams how to appreciate and work with diversity.

by Dr. Marilyn Manning



Drivers take a bottom-line approach, are results oriented, have high ego strength, and prefer to be direct. They are easily bored and enjoy challenges. They are quick, impatient, forceful and demanding. They do not like lengthy explanations. They prefer to get to the point quickly. A slow, more deliberate approach could turn them off. Be brief, focus on the needed results. Don't beat around the bush.

Corrective: "You were late three times this week. Please be on time from now on."

Positive: "Your presentation got the results we needed."

Influencers are social, friendly, and usually optimistic. They enjoy recognition and approval. They are enthusiastic and approachable. They like freedom from detail and control. They are very spontaneous. Don't overwhelm them with detail or impersonal comments. Greet them in a friendly way, express your appreciation for what is going well, appeal to their need for approval.

Corrective: "When you arrived late the last three days, I was disappointed. Others noticed that Sue had to cover for you and got behind in her work."

Positive: "They loved your presentation. You had great slides and your sense of humor kept everyone's interest. Thanks for going the extra mile."

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Steadies are pragmatic, loyal, like a sense of order and tradition, and are non-confrontational. They prefer a secure situation, like to identify with the team, enjoy status quo, and are generally easy going. They don't like a formal, rigid approach that feels rushed. Give them time to think and respond. Show them that you are interested in them as a person and as a team player.

Corrective: "I noticed you came in late three times this week. You are usually so dependable. Is something wrong? How can I help you be on time?"

Positive: "Thank you for doing an excellent presentation. I know it was hard for you to be in front of everyone. You looked very calm and confident. The team and I were so pleased."

Conscientious: They are perfectionists who use precise details. They are systematic and conventional, going by the rules. They do not like quick change. They have very high standards and like to be accurate at all costs. They don't like to be rushed, but they also don't enjoy small talk and over socializing. Stick to business, give very specific details, and spell out your expectations.

Corrective: "You were late 15 minutes the last three days. I need you to be here on time."

Positive: "That was a high quality presentation. Your back-up data answered the questions. Your graphs and charts made the key points."

Always identify the ultimate purpose of any communication or interaction. Win-win outcomes are possible in most human encounters. But it is up to you to monitor and control any of your own negative emotions before engaging. A sense of calmness goes a long way in reducing communication barriers. Using a communication coach can help you and others

develop a style of collaboration which can get better results.

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