



# Delivering Effective Feedback

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*Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.*

—Winston Churchill

Anyone who manages people, leads a team or runs a business understands the importance of delivering feedback to others. Feedback, when delivered effectively, can positively change behavior. In all instances, providing feedback (whether it is positive or negative) is always done to accomplish the same goal: to change behavior and improve performance. .



A recent study found that \_\_\_\_\_ was the number one reason people gave for leaving their jobs.

How bosses interact with their employees can have a significant effect on the happiness level they have with their job. The ability to provide honest, constructive opinions about another person's performance is another skill that is essential to being an effective communicator. Being able to clearly and concisely deliver feedback to members of a team is an essential skill needed for effective employee development.



Please detail a recent instance where you had to provide feedback or criticism to an employee or team member.



## Providing Negative Feedback

No one likes to deliver bad news. It is an uncomfortable situation for both the sender and the receiver of the message. Delivering difficult news and offering constructive criticism is something that effective communicators must be comfortable doing. Whether informing a team member she is being terminated, delivering a negative financial statement or explaining why an employee will not be getting a raise, delivering this type of information in a meaningful and compassionate way will help make this challenging communication easier for all parties involved.

Here are some tips to consider when providing feedback:

1. **State feedback in clear and absolute terms.** Be very clear with the criticism or feedback so there is no confusion or opportunity for your message to be misinterpreted or misconstrued. Let the other person know that your points are not up for debate. They are facts that need to be addressed and that is why you are there.
2. **Address only the feedback at hand.** Resist the urge to lump other issues or concerns into the same conversation. Stick to the points you are there to discuss and only those. If the other person starts to bring up unrelated topics, steer the conversation back to the business at hand.
3. **Keep feedback professional and not personal.** Make the feedback or criticism about the person's performance or abilities and not about his personality or character. This will remove the emotional aspect from the conversation.
4. **Ensure feedback is timely.** Don't wait until it is too late to provide criticism. Try to deliver feedback so that the other person has a sufficient amount of time to improve upon the areas being discussed.
5. **Maintain consistent eye contact.** You can't be assertive without making eye contact with the other person. The information you are providing him may be hard to hear. Have the courtesy to look him in the eyes while you are providing it.
6. **Monitor body language.** Keep an eye on the other person's body language for any intention cues that show how he is feeling about the information you have just delivered. Remember, a person's face and body are billboards giving off dozens of specific messages. Make sure you are reading them the information covered.
7. **Anticipate comments and questions.** After hearing criticism or feedback, people will often have questions and comments regarding the information that has just been shared. Be prepared and open for that. Once you have delivered the feedback, allow the other person to share his thoughts and ask questions about what he has just heard. Don't interrupt until he has completed his thought, otherwise you run the risk of appearing defensive.



8. **Use examples and anecdotes to show relevance.** If possible, use stories or anecdotes from your past experiences to show empathy and help describe a path forward. Personal stories are even better, if there is a core theme that relates to the person's current situation.
9. **Offer support and guidance.** End your communication by offering help or guidance to the person. If there is a possible path forward, help put together a plan for improvement. Remember, you are creating a final impression in the eyes of the other person. He is looking to you, so be assertive. Control the moment to ensure the perception you are creating in that person will elicit the reaction you seek.

## The Sandwich Technique

For those who are uncomfortable providing criticism or delivering difficult news, it can be helpful to utilize a three-step process called the “sandwich technique” to assist you in the delivery of this type of information.



By “sandwiching” your critical feedback between two positive statements, you soften the blow for your listeners and provide a useful structure for the message itself. However, if you do choose to use positive statements before and after your feedback or criticism, be sincere about what you are saying; after all, your credibility depends on your veracity. Keep the positive remarks short. Be direct and resist spending too much time on small talk before getting to the challenge or criticism.



### EXERCISE: Delivering Feedback