



Feedback
WORKSHOP GUIDE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Using feedback to fine-tune what staff do and the way they do it is so central to performance that 'feedback' is an essential skill for every manager. To be effective, however, feedback does not just need to be given – it needs to be discussed.

The quality of that discussion determines the effectiveness of the feedback. It even affects the quality of the relationship between managers and their staff. Consequently, managers need to tailor feedback discussions to specific situations. This programme shows them how.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- Three styles of feedback
- Asking for feedback about oneself.
- Third party feedback.
- How to receive feedback.

INTRODUCTION

This guide will help you lead a short workshop featuring videos from the Video Arts' Management Conversations programme. Each video comes with a series of activities designed around the following structure:

Look – watch the video.

Think – reflect on the content and consider how the messages link to your own experience and goals.

Remember – summarise the key learning points.

These activities will take about 30 minutes to complete. At the end of the Guide is a practical exercise to help bring together all the learning points.

FILM 1 – THREE STYLES OF FEEDBACK

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

One style of feedback does not provide the flexibility managers need to tailor feedback to specific situations and people. Three styles of feedback, however, provide that flexibility and are easy to remember. They have the added advantage that discussing feedback can sound like a natural conversation rather than like a 'technique'.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Ask the group to think about their own experiences of giving and receiving feedback by discussing questions such as:

- When you have been given feedback that feels too general, too vague or too personal:
 - How did it make you feel?
 - To what extent did you change what you did or the way you did it (your performance) as a result of the feedback?
 - How did it make you feel about your manager?
- To what extent, and in what kind of situations, do managers need to clarify what they want a staff member to do as a result of the feedback? What are the risks of giving feedback and 'leaving it hanging'?
- How would a staff member's motivation and experience affect the way you give and discuss feedback?

REMEMBER

Feedback is more effective when:

- It describes specific behaviour or outcomes that have been observed, rather than being vague, general or assumptions about personality.
- It includes and clarifies what the staff member is expected to do next, rather than being 'left hanging'.
- The style in which the feedback is given and discussed fits the situation – factors such as the staff member's willingness to perform well, whether or not they are still learning, etc.

FILM 2 – ASKING FOR FEEDBACK ABOUT ONESELF

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

When staff are reluctant to give feedback to their managers, managers miss a useful source of information that could improve your performance. Obtaining useful feedback from staff is easier when you ask for it the right way, at the right time.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Ask the group to think about their own experiences of 'upwards' feedback by discussing questions such as:

- How do relatively junior people feel when someone relatively senior asks them for feedback?
- What is the commonest answer from a staff member when their manager asks, 'Have you any feedback for me'?
- In the video, after a 'false start', how did Anne make it easier for Natalie to provide feedback?
- When a manager genuinely listens to feedback from staff, what 'message' does that send to staff about the manager's attitude towards them?

REMEMBER

Staff can provide useful information to help us be better managers but only when we:

- Help them feel comfortable giving us feedback, especially if that feedback is critical.
- Use two questions that make it easier for staff to be specific, descriptive and constructive.
- Time the questions so that they feel natural.

FILM 3 – THIRD PARTY FEEDBACK

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

In addition to interacting with their manager, many staff interact with 'third parties' such as colleagues, suppliers and customers. These third parties can be useful sources of performance-enhancing feedback – but only when feedback from them is requested the right way and then discussed with staff the right way.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Ask the group to think about their own experiences of third party feedback by discussing questions such as:

- As so many managers have staff who work with third parties, how useful is clear, accurate and objective feedback from third parties?
- How can managers, when talking with a third party, make sure that feedback is clear, accurate and objective?
- How do most staff feel when their manager gets feedback from a third party and relays it to the staff member as if it is fact? Has this ever happened to you? How did you feel?
- How can a manager make it easy for staff to listen to, and act on third party feedback?

REMEMBER

Getting third party feedback is easier when you:

- Lead into asking for feedback about a staff member by first discussing the work the third party does with your staff member.

Relaying third party feedback is more effective when you:

- Present it as the third party's opinion, not as fact.
- Focus not on whether the feedback is right or wrong but on how the third party might have come to that opinion.
- Ensure that the staff member is comfortable by agreeing how you can monitor performance objectively.

FILM 4 – HOW TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

If feedback is to be effective, we need to act on it but we can only act on it when we understand it and even check its validity. To do that, we need to ask questions but we do not want those questions to be misunderstood by the 'feedback giver' who, unless we are careful, could assume we are disagreeing or trying to wriggle out of our responsibilities.

This video shows us how to respond positively when receiving feedback while also taking more control of the feedback.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Ask the group to think about their own experiences of feedback by discussing questions such as:

- When receiving feedback, how easy is it to want to defend ourselves?
- What is the effect on the discussion if the feedback giver assumes we are being defensive?
- Think of a time when you were giving feedback to someone and he/she worked with you to understand the feedback and determine what to do about it. How did you feel during the discussion?
- When receiving feedback, how much easier is it to disagree (if appropriate) or to take control of the conversation when you use the respond positively?

REMEMBER

When receiving feedback, you come across positively when you follow this process:

- Listen to it.
- Explain why you are about to ask questions and then...
- ...probe gain a deeper understanding of the feedback.
- Summarise your understanding and then...
- ...build on your summary by suggesting actions you can take

FEEDBACK – EXERCISE

This exercise provides an opportunity for participants to consolidate their thoughts about discussing feedback.

1. Arrange participants into groups of between 4 and 6 and give them 15 minutes to prepare a brief presentation (max. 5 minutes) covering the following points:
 - The importance of skilled feedback to people's performance, job satisfaction and relationships.
 - The challenges of giving and discussing feedback.
 - Tips to make feedback effective.
2. Listen to, and discuss each presentation (5-10 minutes), correcting any misunderstandings at the end of each presentation.
3. Ask each group to select one of the styles of feedback and use it to give feedback to another group on how well their presentation met the brief. (5 minutes preparation time.)
4. After each group's feedback, analyse and discuss (max. 5 minutes per group):
 - The style used.
 - Its appropriateness and whether another style would have been better.
 - How to make the feedback even better.
5. If you want to, ask each group to give you feedback on what they liked about the workshop and how they would make it even better (5-10 minutes).