

You want me to give what? *FEEDBACK?*

Does the word “feedback” frighten you? In today’s society of always being “politically correct,” people are often afraid to give feedback when someone’s performance is not up to par. You worry about offending the other person or, worse yet, damaging a positive relationship. Whether you are a manager, director or an employee, feedback is a necessary part of life that allows each of us to grow both professionally and personally.

So how does it work? How can you possibly give feedback without offending the other person while still providing him or her with the necessary insight for future growth? BCG has compiled the following feedback guidelines to assist you in providing effective feedback.

- First, *acknowledge the need for feedback*. Embrace the fact that what you are about to say *IS* indeed feedback. Preface your discussion with the statement that the information is intended to assist the recipient in improving their performance and realizing their professional goals. An example of how effective feedback can be initiated is to start out by saying, “Can I provide some suggestions on how you might do this differently next time?” This statement prepares the person to agree to receiving feedback.
- Second, *feedback does not have to be exclusively negative*. Effective feedback should include both positive affirmations of what was done well, as well as constructive criticism of what can be improved next time. If this person works for your organization, there are certainly areas in which they excel and areas in which they need to improve. When addressing areas for improvement, acknowledge the employee’s value by saying “You are an asset to the organization...” This type of introduction puts the receiver at ease with what they are about to hear.
- Third, *understand the context*. After you start off with a positive statement, provide some context for why the feedback is important: “...but I need to talk to you about the organization of your desk. Since your desk is sometimes in the customer’s view, we need for it to be kept more neatly.” Tell them what they need to improve on and why. Then, ask them if they understand what needs to be corrected.
- Fourth, use *appropriate language*. The person you are giving feedback to needs to understand your message. Accordingly, individuals should be addressed at their current conversational level. If you speak too simply, they may feel that you are being patronizing. If you use terms that are too complicated, they may not understand what needs to be corrected.
- Fifth, *focus on the behavior* and not the person. It is definitely hard at times to keep our personal feelings aside, but it is critical that you do so. Be sure that it is the behavior that you are addressing.



You want me to give what?
FEEDBACK?

- Sixth, use *good timing*. Know that there is an appropriate time and place for effective feedback. For example, if the intended recipient is exceptionally busy, he or she may not be receptive to the feedback or will be able to properly process and receive it. Schedule a time when there is no one around and where the individual will not be distracted by the surroundings. No one wants to be embarrassed in front of other employees or customers. This will allow the individual to hear your feedback, to digest it, and to ask questions as necessary.

We are confident this six step process will assist you in providing effective feedback for positive organizational growth.