

Feedback Done Right

How to Give Feedback That Builds Trust & Drives Performance

Feedback is one of the most powerful leadership tools — yet most people avoid it or do it poorly. Great feedback strengthens relationships, accelerates development, and creates high-performing teams. Poor feedback damages trust, demotivates people, and creates resentment. The difference? Intentional delivery using a proven framework.

Why Feedback Matters: High-performing teams give and receive feedback 5x more frequently than average teams. Regular, specific feedback increases engagement by 40% and reduces turnover by 15%. When done right, feedback becomes your competitive advantage.

The FIRE Framework for Effective Feedback

Keep the FIRE burning to deliver feedback that creates positive change

F — FOCUSED & SPECIFIC

Ask permission • State your intention • Be specific about one behavior

Don't ambush people with feedback. Set context by asking permission: *"I have some feedback that could help. Is now a good time?"* State your positive intention: *"I'm sharing this because I want to help you succeed."* Then focus on ONE specific behavior with a concrete example. Vague feedback like "improve your communication" isn't actionable. Specific feedback like "In yesterday's meeting, you interrupted Sarah three times" gives them something to work with.

I — IMMEDIATE & TIMELY

Give feedback within 24-48 hours • Strike while memory is fresh

Feedback loses impact with time. The sweet spot is 24-48 hours after observing the behavior — recent enough that both of you remember clearly, but with enough distance to be thoughtful. Waiting weeks or months until a performance review makes feedback feel like ancient history. Exception: if emotions are high, take a few hours to cool down before delivering feedback calmly.

R — REAL & FACT-BASED

State observable facts • Avoid opinions and exaggeration • No absolutes

Facts create credibility; opinions create defensiveness. Compare: *"You're disrespectful"* (opinion) vs. *"You checked your phone five times during our one-on-one"* (fact). Avoid absolutes like "always" and "never" — they're rarely true and easy to dispute. Instead of *"You never meet deadlines,"* say *"The last three project deliverables were 2-4 days late."* When you stick to facts, people can't argue with what happened.

E — EMPATHETIC & PREPARED

Plan what and how you'll say it • Show genuine care • Build relationships

Preparation shows respect. Before giving feedback, ask yourself: What specific behavior did I observe? What was the impact? What outcome do I want? How might they react? Choose your words carefully to show you care about their success.

Remember: feedback isn't about proving you're right — it's about helping them improve. People accept feedback when they trust your intentions. Your tone and approach matter as much as your words.

The Situation-Behavior-Impact Formula

Use this three-part structure to deliver clear, actionable feedback:

SITUATION	When and where it happened • Provides context
Example:	<i>"During yesterday's client presentation..."</i>
BEHAVIOR	What you observed them do or say • Stick to facts
Example:	<i>"...you spoke very quickly without pausing for questions..."</i>
IMPACT	The effect their behavior had • Connect actions to results
Example:	<i>"...which made it hard for the client to follow, and we didn't get buy-in."</i>

7 Common Feedback Mistakes to Avoid

■ The Feedback Sandwich	Hiding criticism between compliments feels manipulative. Be direct and honest.
■ Vague Generalizations	"Be more professional" isn't helpful. Specify exactly what to change.
■ Public Criticism	Praise publicly, critique privately. Always protect dignity.
■ Saving for Annual Reviews	Reviews are too late. Address issues promptly when fixable.
■ Attacking Character	Focus on behavior, not personality. "This report had 12 errors" not "You're careless."
■ One-Way Monologue	Feedback is dialogue. Ask for their perspective and listen.
■ No Follow-Up	Check in later to acknowledge progress and reinforce change.

Real Example: Ineffective vs Effective Feedback

■ INEFFECTIVE:

"You're terrible at presentations and your communication skills are really bad. You need to work on that."

Why This Fails:

Attacks character • Vague • No examples • No guidance • Creates defensiveness

✓ EFFECTIVE:

"I want to help you improve your presentation skills. During yesterday's client meeting, I noticed you spoke quickly without pausing, which made it hard for the client to process your key points. They looked confused and didn't ask questions, which usually means they're lost. For next time, try slowing your pace and pausing after each major point. Would you like to practice with me before your next presentation?"

Why This Works:

Positive intent • Specific situation • Observable behavior • Clear impact • Actionable • Offers support

Your 5-Step Feedback Action Plan

- 1. PREPARE:** Write down situation, behavior, and impact • Anticipate their perspective • Choose private setting
- 2. SET THE STAGE:** Ask permission • Express positive intention • Create psychological safety
- 3. DELIVER CLEARLY:** Use Situation-Behavior-Impact formula • Stick to facts • One behavior at a time
- 4. LISTEN & COLLABORATE:** Ask for their perspective • Be curious • Work together on solutions
- 5. CLOSE WITH ACTION:** Agree on next steps • Offer support • Schedule follow-up • Acknowledge willingness

Remember: The goal is to build your relationship, not damage it.

10-Point Feedback Checklist: Making Your Feedback Stick

■ 1. Provide the Big Picture	Explain why the task or behavior matters • Connect it to overall team or project goals
■ 2. Customize Your Feedback	Understand the individual's communication style • Tailor your message to resonate with them
■ 3. Be Specific	Clearly define what needs to be done • Provide concrete examples of expected outcomes
■ 4. Set Clear Timeframes	Include specific deadlines • Ensure the timeframe is realistic and achievable
■ 5. Encourage and Acknowledge	Highlight what the individual is doing right • Offer positive reinforcement
■ 6. Follow Up Regularly	Schedule regular check-ins to discuss progress • Provide ongoing support and adjustments
■ 7. Use the Right Tone and Setting	Ensure your tone is supportive and constructive • Choose comfortable and private setting
■ 8. Ask for Their Input	Encourage them to share thoughts and suggestions • Show that you value their perspective
■ 9. Focus on Solutions	Emphasize what can be done to improve or change • Avoid dwelling on past mistakes
■ 10. Document the Feedback	Keep a record of feedback given • Use documentation to track progress and follow up