

## Five steps to giving feedback

Successful feedback must be focused on three key dimensions: results, process and relationship.

The solution lies in leadership modeling of feedback, and the use of some simple but powerful guidelines for giving, or better yet, exchanging, feedback. It is an organizational truism that the higher one goes in an organization, the less feedback one gets. So start by asking for feedback from others, and then be very careful not to get defensive. Then try to act in a visible way on the feedback. This will show the organization you are willing to "go first" and lead the way before you ask others to make a change. If feedback is the "breakfast of champions," you will need to eat the first meal yourself.

Successful feedback must be focused on three key dimensions: results, process and relationship. The feedback must increase results, use a clear process and lead to enhanced, rather than diminished, relationships. This can be done by following these guidelines:

1. Choose when to give the feedback: If you are too angry or upset yourself, you will not be able to give the feedback in a respectful way. Wait until you cool down. Also, find a time and place which allows the employee to hear the feedback (especially negative) in private and a time when they can handle it emotionally, but do not wait so long that they can no longer act on the input. Positive feedback should be given quickly, when the employee is still "sweating from the effort."
2. Describe the behavior in as objective language as possible and be specific. Words like "bad attitude" will not be understood and will seem judgmental.
3. State the impact of the behavior on you, the team, the goal, the client, etc. Saying what the impact is allows the receiver of the feedback to better understand why they should change or at least consider the input.
4. Make a suggestion or request. You may ask them to change a behavior that is not working, to continue or do more of an effective behavior, or to simply understand your point of view. "You are not well organized" is a criticism, not feedback. Have a concrete action in mind so the employee has a clear path to improvement.
5. Lastly, check for understanding and be open to alternative views. There may be relevant facts you are unaware of and asking for a response avoids just dumping on the employee and damaging the relationship.