Providing Good Feedback: Key Elements & Examples

Providing good feedback is a powerful managerial tool to address an employee's problem behaviors or to simply improve performance (i.e., making a good employee better). It seems really simple. Unfortunately, few of us do it very well. Integrating a few basic concepts discussed below can make your feedback effective and powerful, whether it's given orally or in writing.

Good Feedback Is

- *Understandable*—   Keep it clear and simple.

- *Focused*—   Address only 1 or 2 issues, not a "laundry list" of problems.

- *Specific*—   Provide details and examples. Personalize it and be precise.

- *Substantive*—   Comments are meaningful, addressing the "heart" of the issue.

- *Objective*—   Where possible provide quantifiable feedback, in measurable terms.

- *Properly Directed*—   Directed toward the behavior to be corrected, not the person.

- *Informative*—   Explains why the behavior is a problem.

Feedback Examples to Consider

#1   **Poor Feedback:**   Marge is having problems getting her work done.

      Better Feedback: Employees are expected to process 25 claims daily with 99% accuracy. Over the last two months, Marge has processed an average of 19 claims daily at 90% accuracy. Marge's work has to be redone when it reaches Quality Control which is causing them to fall behind on their work and in two instances caused unnecessary overtime.

#2   **Poor Feedback:**   Homer's customer service skills need improvement.

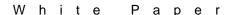   **Better Feedback:**   Department policy requires that all customer calls be returned within 24 hours. Homer has failed to do that on at least 5 occasions in the past two weeks. Four customer complaints have been made about Homer over the past month. On two occasions he was observed telling customers, "that's not my job responsibility" and then hanging up.

#3   **Poor Feedback:**   Fred has been causing a lot of problems and frustration around here.

Better Feedback: In the last month, on two occasions, Fred complained to our clients that he is dissatisfied with our customer support. Those two clients mentioned this to our Regional Manager. Fred has also circulated several e-mails to other sales reps complaining about customer service. Two customer service reps complained that he wouldn't speak to them. He hasn't discussed these issues with his manager.

#4   **Poor Feedback:** Wilma's sales production is awful.

Better Feedback: New sales in Wilma's territory are down 45% compared with last quarter. Sales of the Kwark line have decreased 75%. Additional sales from current customers are off 50%. No sales goals have been met for the past 4 quarters.

Providing Positive Feedback

While we all like being told that we're doing a good job, employees need to know what they did to earn your attention and why they're being reinforced. If they know why they're being praised they're likely to do it again. Personalized, specific praise is also more meaningful and credible.

#1   **Poor Feedback:** Lisa is doing a great job. We're happy to have her with us.

Better Feedback: Lisa's reports are always on time. The reporting format is clear and easy to read. The executive summaries have been very valuable to both the Finance and Marketing Departments. Lisa was a key factor in our acquisition of the Simpson account.

#2   **Poor Feedback:** Great work Bob!

Better Feedback: Bob, you've increase your production 15% while maintaining your error free record for over 3 weeks. Your efficiency and attention to detail have really improved.

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