

THE NEW MANAGER'S GUIDE TO GIVING FEEDBACK



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Providing effective employee feedback is one of the most important roles of any manager, and it serves several purposes, including:

- Allowing managers to build relationships and establish rapport with their direct reports
- Providing employees with valuable information about their work performance
- Demonstrating to the person that their work is seen and valued
- Improving an employee's work performance over the long term through observation and evaluation should lead to continued team and company success



However, for new managers, giving feedback can be one of the most daunting tasks. Suddenly, you're preparing for potentially difficult discussions and possible conflict, and you're responsible for your team's successes and failures and the professional development of your employees. That's a lot!

It's easy to feel overwhelmed, but our guide will help you shift your perspective, so you can start to see that feedback is beneficial to everyone and not something to be dreaded. We'll discuss several ways that a new manager can prepare for and provide effective employee feedback.

MAKE FEEDBACK PART OF YOUR CULTURE

When employee reviews only happen once or twice a year, it's viewed as a big deal. If it's tied to compensation, it becomes an even bigger deal. These types of situations can make direct reports (and managers!) nervous. Of course, formal reviews and salary discussions are important, but staff members need more frequent feedback for it to be effective. This is especially important if you're managing multiple generations. For example, younger employees crave more regular feedback from their managers. When they don't receive it, they look for opportunities with other organizations.

Before you become overwhelmed with the prospect of giving feedback, try adjusting your perspective. Instead of viewing it as an infrequent and negative event, make providing feedback a normal, common occurrence, and acknowledge that it gives people an opportunity to grow.

We'll reference two types of feedback throughout this guide:

- **Positive feedback** is recognition and praise of excellent work
- **Constructive feedback** is prescriptive and is based on a specific area that can be improved



Both constructive and positive feedback are valuable tools. If you can give detailed examples of excellent work plus address areas for improvement, you'll be able to gently adjust behaviors as needed and employees will be able to optimize their job performance.

Incorporating feedback as part of your routine communication with your team can normalize receiving constructive ideas for improvement. If you think about it, it makes much more sense to say something when you notice it—not months later. Regardless of whether it's positive or constructive feedback, employees should hear about it in a timely manner.

Prepare

Whether you're looking to provide routine feedback or a more formal evaluation, you'll want to prepare in advance, so your feedback is concise, understandable and actionable. Here are five steps you can take to effectively prepare for your next feedback conversation:

1. Think about exactly what you want to address with your direct report, then consider how you will frame the conversation.
2. If your feedback is constructive, think about how the behavior or work can be fixed and what action items and next steps can be taken.



**BOTH CONSTRUCTIVE
AND POSITIVE
FEEDBACK ARE
VALUABLE TOOLS**

3. Keep it simple. Whether the feedback is positive or constructive, try to limit it to one or two issues, so you don't overload your employee and so they can absorb the information.
4. Be prepared to provide multiple specific examples of the issue(s) you are discussing.
5. Make notes to help you stay focused and ensure that you provide the employee with all the information they need. Jot down key talking points as a visual reminder to reference during the actual conversation.

The more often you do this, the better you'll get at gathering your thoughts and talking with your employees. As with many things in life, practice makes it easier!

Be Specific

Think about times you've received feedback from a manager. Has it been unclear or overly general? If so, did you have a hard time understanding exactly what you needed to fix or what you were doing well?

Or did your manager provide concrete, specific feedback that helped you understand what they appreciated or wanted to see adjusted?

Now that it's your turn to provide feedback—be specific. Your direct reports will be much more receptive if you can be precise and help them understand how to meet and exceed expectations.

Here are some examples of vague feedback versus specific:

Vague: Great job in that meeting!

Specific: Great job mediating between multiple parties to help us find areas of agreement, which led to a very productive meeting with clear action items.

Vague: Your analysis was lacking detail.

Specific: More detail in your analysis would have been valuable. For example, I would like to see the past five years of pricing, along with charts or tables to help visualize your forecast.





IF YOU'RE HAVING A HARD TIME COMING UP WITH SPECIFIC FEEDBACK, YOU COULD USE THE START, STOP, CONTINUE APPROACH TO MANAGING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR.

Think about these questions:

- What is the employee not doing currently that you want them to start doing?
- What is the employee doing that is hindering their performance, if anything?
- What is the employee doing well that you want them to continue?

This approach will help employees identify which behaviors to repeat, which to change, and how and where they add value to the team and the company. Employees should leave a feedback session with a clear understanding of what they're doing well or where they need to do to improve their work. All goals need to have clear action steps and timelines.

GALLUP RESEARCH SHOWS THAT PEOPLE WHO USE THEIR STRENGTHS EVERY DAY ARE SIX TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE ENGAGED AT WORK, 8% MORE PRODUCTIVE AND 15% LESS LIKELY TO QUIT THEIR JOBS.



BE SOLUTION ORIENTED

PROVIDING FEEDBACK IS NOT THE TIME FOR YOU TO VENT TO YOUR EMPLOYEE ABOUT HOW THEY NEED TO DO BETTER.

Frame the conversation as a two-way discussion where you can collectively come up with a solution for the future. How can you both find a better way to tackle a problem? Or, if something is going well, how you can replicate the process so other team members can take advantage of your knowledge and experience?

Another way to be solution oriented to is provide feedback from a strengths perspective.

If you're providing constructive feedback, take the time to listen to how the person interpreted the situation and their thought process behind their actions. This will help you better understand your employee, hone in on strengths and help them work on using those strengths effectively.

For example, instead of telling someone they ask too many questions, shift the focus and help them see how their natural curiosity or ability to poke holes in ideas is valuable, except when they ask questions that are irrelevant to the topic at hand or should be discussed in a smaller, breakout group. This way, the conversation becomes about how you both can find a solution to an issue, instead of making the employee feel badly about asking questions.

Don't Forget About Positive Feedback

We've mentioned throughout this guide that feedback can be constructive or positive. It's easy to get hung up on the processes behind providing constructive criticism, because it's more difficult to do, it takes more preparation, and it can stand out as something that needs to be addressed and fixed immediately.

**BUT PLEASE, REMEMBER TO
RECOGNIZE AND PRAISE
PEOPLE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS!**

Giving positive feedback empowers employees and motivates them to continue to work hard. Providing constructive feedback is meant to help people improve. Maintaining balance between constructive and positive feedback will demonstrate to your employees that their contributions are seen and valued and their professional development is important to you.

Set a Meeting

Once you've gathered your thoughts and have specific feedback prepared, it's time to talk to your direct report. Don't catch them off guard by providing feedback in an offhand manner or at a time that is rushed or inconvenient for either party.

Instead, schedule dedicated one-on-one time and let the employee know the purpose of the meeting so they can also prepare. This will help facilitate a productive conversation rather than a meeting in which you talk at your employee while they sit and stare at you.



ENSURE FEEDBACK IS A CONVERSATION

ASK YOUR EMPLOYEE QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR WORK AND PRIORITIES, AND ALLOW THEM TO IDENTIFY THEIR OWN AREAS FOR GROWTH, IMPROVEMENT OR INTEREST.

As managers, we tend to do far too much talking and not enough asking and listening. Feedback meetings (whether positive or constructive, routine or more formal) should be a conversation.

All sides should have a voice in the discussion and the outcome. Once you've both had a chance to speak and be heard, you can agree upon a mutual plan of action for the future. The whole point of this conversation is to achieve desired results that are beneficial for all parties.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR QUESTIONS THAT WILL HELP OPEN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR EMPLOYEE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- What went well for you this month/quarter/year in your job?
 - As a manager, you need to understand what defines success for each employee on your team
- What will you do to make your job performance even better going forward? Examples could include: creating specific goals, improving work habits, taking on new projects, or contributions to office culture.
- How can the organization help you succeed? Examples could include helping with goal setting, considering new work assignments, or providing professional development.
 - Managers need to lead the discussion around professional development and career growth opportunities.



FOLLOW-UP AND AGREE ON ACCOUNTABILITY

All feedback sessions should end with clear and agreed upon next steps. Take the time to follow up soon after the meeting with a brief email to your employee, outlining what was discussed and any action items, including timelines or due dates.

Increasing the frequency of feedback and making it part of your culture should help with accountability on its own, as you'll be checking in more often, setting shorter term goals, and sticking to more realistic timelines.

It's important that your direct report understands what they're accountable for. This is not about them taking the blame when something goes wrong—it's about delivering on a commitment, owning an outcome, and taking initiative.

You can do this!

Feedback is essential to individual growth and development. Managers (new ones and veterans!) can let fear get the best of us, which can limit the effectiveness of our conversations, or lead us to avoid them all together. Taking the time to consider and apply the tips in this guide will help you deliver feedback more effectively, leading to the success of your employees, your company, and your career as a manager.



WANT TO AMP UP YOUR NEW MANAGER SKILLS?

Introducing New Manager Bootcamp!

Being a new manager is more than a new title and new office.

Go from uncomfortable and overwhelmed to clear and confident in 6 weeks with New Manager Bootcamp, the only online new manager training program for small businesses and start-ups. Managers in our program discover:

- How their management style impacts their team
- How to hire the right people for a new or existing team
- How to engage and motivate employees
- How to maximize productivity through effective time management, prioritization and delegation practices
- Why providing feedback is crucial for retaining staff
- How to have difficult conversations when employees aren't performing at appropriate levels.



New Manager Bootcamp is built on our Manager Success Formula and enables new managers in small businesses and start-ups to move from feeling uncomfortable and overwhelmed to clear and confident so they can lead their teams to success and show senior management they can help lead the organization into the future. For those of you who don't want to go it alone and want a step-by-step program to go from where you are now to feeling more confident - and competent - in your manager role, this is the program for you.

New Manager Bootcamp is six content-rich learning modules (plus a bonus wrap-up module). Each module includes videos, downloadable tools, self-reflection exercises, templates and other resources to help you unlock your new manager potential and become successful in your role. Our Manager Toolkit contains 30+ pages of robust content to use in the program and well into your management journey.

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