Two Page Course Summary for

Introduction to Informal Feedback for Managers

Participants who complete the pre-work and classroom components of this course will know or be able to:

• Describe what feedback is and the difference between informal and formal feedback
• Describe why routinely giving timely and accurate informal feedback has a strong positive impact on performance
• Identify specific situations for giving both positive and constructive (development) informal feedback
• Deliver clear, specific informal feedback using the Situation-Behavior-Impact (SBI) Feedback Tool
• Manage common reactions to constructive (development) feedback

What is Feedback

Two Types: Informal and Formal

Informal feedback is ongoing, in-the-moment advice outside of the formal performance review. Formal feedback is information relayed to person in their performance review

• Common themes from informal feedback conversations should be used as data sources when writing performance reviews
• Performance reviews are tools for assessing accomplishments and performance of faculty and staff and identifying development needs

Feedback Comes in Two Different Forms:

• Positive feedback is used to sustain or reinforce good performance
• Constructive feedback (AKA as “development” feedback) is used to correct unsatisfactory performance or improve average performance

Why is Feedback Important

Simply put – employees perform better when they get feedback. A 2003 Corporate Leadership Council study found that employees who receive feedback from their manager on a consistent basis, that is both fair and accurate, perform up to 40% better than employees who receive no feedback

Why Does Feedback Have a Strong Impact on Performance

1. People typically aren’t aware or don’t see their performance or behavior accurately
2. Feedback lets them know what performance or behavior needs to be corrected so they can correct it or what performance or behavior needs to be reinforced so it can be repeated
3. It’s a gift that keeps on giving. The person getting the feedback can use this information to improve or strengthen performance in the future

When to Give Feedback

Positive Feedback Opportunities

• When an employee demonstrate improvement in a development area
• When an employee goes out of their way to support their teammates or other colleagues
• When an employee demonstrate the organization’s values
• When an employee goes above and beyond what I asked of them
• When you hear positive feedback from others about an employee

Development Feedback Opportunities

• When an employee has opportunity to improvement their work
• When an employee engages in behavior that reflects poorly on the team
• When an employees fails to meet performance expectations or standards
• When an employee struggles with a particular task or skill
• When you get feedback from others about your employee

Basic Feedback Lessons

As pre-work, participants were asked to complete a short e-learning module which reviewed these basic feedback concepts:

A. Five Key Characteristics of Informal Feedback

• Specific. Feedback should reference specific actions the employee took or specific pieces of their work

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• **Proactive.** Provide feedback proactively, not just when employees request it
• **Timely.** Give feedback as soon as possible after the action or event
• **Relevant.** Feedback should help employee do their job better and be within employee’s power to improve.
• **Constructive.** Development feedback should be framed as opportunity to improve performance rather than as a “weakness.”

**A. Utilize All Available Channels to Deliver Feedback.** Don’t let the challenge of finding time for face-to-face interactions limit the amount of feedback you provide. Other feedback channels such as e-mail, phone calls and written notes have been shown to be just as effective as face-to-face

**B. Avoid These Common Mistakes:**
• Making Assumptions. Feedback should be limited to the employee’s behavior without making assumptions or interpreting the behavior as a sign of something else
• Providing Vague Feedback. When feedback is specific and detailed, employees are more likely to repeat desired behaviors or stop incorrect behaviors
• Over-Emphasizing Development Feedback. Feedback should be provided on strengths as well as development areas

**The Situation-Behavior-Impact (SBI) Feedback Tool**
The SBI feedback tool was developed by The Center for Creative Leadership as a simple structure that you can use to give feedback.

1. **Situation.** First, define the where and when of the situation you’re referring to. This puts the feedback into context, and gives the other person a specific setting as a reference. For example:
   • “During yesterday morning’s team meeting, when you gave your presentation...”

2. **Behavior.** The next step is to describe specific behaviors you want to address. Don’t make assumptions or subjective judgments about those behaviors. These could be wrong, and this will undermine your feedback. The examples below include a description of behavior:
   • “During yesterday morning’s team meeting, when you gave your presentation, you were uncertain about two of the slides, and your sales calculations were incorrect.”

3. **Impact.** The last step is to use “I” statements to describe how the other person’s action has affected you or others. For example:
   • “During yesterday morning’s team meeting, when you gave your presentation, you were uncertain about two of the slides and your sales calculations were incorrect. I felt embarrassed because the entire board was there. I’m worried that this has affected the reputation of our team.”

**Understanding and Addressing Reactions to Feedback**
Neuroscience research explains reactions to feedback. The S.C.A.R.F. model suggests that the overarching, organizing principle of the brain is minimize danger and maximize reward. Positive feedback is associated with positive emotions or rewards so people welcome it. Constructive (development) feedback is associated with negative emotions or punishments. It is seen as a threat and triggers an “avoid” response which explains why people get defensive or react in highly emotional ways.

Prevent or reduce strong emotional responses to feedback by asking person to “think about it first.” Some people have an immediate and overwhelming emotional response to constructive feedback. For these individuals the part of the brain that regulates emotions, the amygdala, gets hijacked and acts before the neocortex, which regulates logic and reason, can take over. To prevent an “amygdala hijack” ask the person to think about the feedback for at least six seconds, or take break, before reacting to it.

**Other Tips to Minimize Negative Reactions to Feedback**
• **Phrase the Feedback Accurately.** Use simple words and supporting examples to deliver formal and informal feedback. Poorly crafted and delivered messages can trigger feelings of self-doubt, anger, shock, or resistance
• **Allow the Employee to Speak Openly and Do Not Interrupt.** Let them vent his/her feelings about the feedback. Make the employee feel respected by allowing him/her to share his/her true reactions and emotions with you.
• **Observe Signs of Emotional Reactions.** Observe the employee’s choice of words, tone, and facial expressions to assess the emotions and respond accordingly.
• **Remain Calm and Composed, and Handle the Situation with Care.** If the employee acts shocked, aggressive, or defensive, maintain your composure. Be considerate yet firm with the employee, and reiterate your point with substantial examples and next steps.