Giving feedback

It is not what you say; it’s how you say it

Feedback has two purposes:

1 .**Motivational feedback** – encourages people to do what they are doing well - building confidence

Encourages people to repeat what was successful and effective. The best time is immediately after the task, whilst they clearly remember what they did and how they did it.

You must be specific about what was good, right or successful.

2. **Developmental feedback** – to help people improve upon things they could do better - Develop confidence. Give praise where praise is due and ensure the criticism is a statement of enabling so that the recipient feels empowered to implement improvements.

This identifies what people could do differently next time. The best time is immediately before the next time, this makes it seem like help. When given immediately after a task feels like punishment.

Feedback can be given as a positive force to reflect on performance and influence and modify behaviour. But it can also be a destructive force that creates barriers to improvement.

To be a positive experience, it must make the recipient feel that what is said is valued and inspired to want to implement improvements. If the recipient goes away feeling deflated, demoralised and worthless, the desired changes will not be well implemented.

Give praise where praise is due and ensure the criticism is a statement of enabling so that the recipient feels empowered to implement improvements.

Criticism often has a sense of being judgemental – feedback can be given without emotion but concentrating on the factual implications of the behaviour not judging the person.

Feedback should be:

**POSITIVE**

Use a **feedback sandwich** –

* *Start with a positive*
* *Build with a development area*
* *Ask questions to probe understanding, ownership and taking it forward as a development opportunity*
* *Follow up with another positive.*

**FACILITATIVE**

Encourage self-awareness; people are more willing to accept feedback when they recognise their own strengths and weaknesses.

**SPECIFIC**

Be specific – quote examples and words used, describe behaviour

**DESCRIPTIVE**

“When you repeated the same question several times, I felt that the customer became confused” not “Your questioning technique is confusing”

**ACTIONABLE**

Only feedback on things the individual can do something about.

**PRIORITISED**

Break it into bite sized chunks. People cannot process or action on a number of improvements at once.

Delivering the message

You should focus on the behaviour and not the person. This is the most important point to bear in mind. This avoids personal attack and the feedback is reinforcing good behaviours or attempting to change undesired behaviours.

* Be assertive and aware of your rights as well as those of the other person.
* Don’t be aggressive or overbearing and don’t be non-assertive, apologetic or meek and mild.
* Be direct (not blunt) and to the point and don’t ‘beat about the bush.’
* Avoid sarcasm and demeaning comments.
* Avoid blaming the individual with aggressive ’you’ statements.
* Display appropriate body language, especially in terms of eye contact, body positioning and physical mannerisms.
* Be specific about the good or bad behaviours and be non-judgemental.
* Mutually explore and possibly offer suggestions or options for improvement or change.

Guidance on giving feedback

*Criticism is something we can avoid easily by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing” - Aristotle*

* Listen to what learners have to say. Good feedback is a two-way process that helps you understand more about the learner's perspective than may be apparent from their work.
* Avoid deluging the learner with shortcomings — start with the most significant, or the one which will have the most beneficial knock-on effect on other aspects of their performance.
* Explain why the shortcoming or problem needs addressing.
* Include guidance on how to improve or develop further — if you're teaching an activity-based subject or discipline show how to improve. Encourage the learner to do the movement or technique correctly with you.
* Adapt the way you give feedback to individual learners according to their experience.
* Help the learner see/measure/experience the distance they have travelled to this point.
* Visualise what impact your feedback is having. Look at things from the learner's point of view. Are you explaining things clearly, in a way that the learner can handle?
* Give praise where it's due.
* Give encouragement - everyone needs it!