

Seven Strategies for Giving Better Feedback

Chapter 6: Reputation

Learning to hunt feedback brings a host of career-changing benefits. However, if you're not careful, it could come at a cost. Because, when some individuals get really good at taking feedback, they get really bad at giving it. All about substance over style, they forget that most others aren't yet hunting feedback, they're hiding from it. They haven't come to see feedback as a gift.

If you're looking for ways to give better feedback, here are seven strategies I've found helpful.

FEEDBACK STRATEGY	WHY IT'S SO USEFUL
Give feedback when things have calmed down.	Some people hold a false belief that things have to be “worked out” in the heat of the moment, not realizing that this is most often going to worsen the conflict, not solve it. But all feedback—positive, neutral, or negative—should be delivered at a time when emotions are low. This helps both parties feel calm and safe. Even positive feedback can feel disingenuous if it's delivered in the middle of conflict.
Speak slowly and quietly.	Whenever emotions run high, heart rates accelerate, and people speak more quickly and intensely. This leads to emotionally charged, unnaturally fast (and loud) monologues that are never well received. That's why, when giving feedback, wait until things are calm. Then calm them down even more. Slow your tempo. Speak softly. Even if you feel like you're going too slow, that's better than rushing and being too loud.

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Be neutral, curious, and focus on the relationship.	<p>When giving feedback of any kind, deliver it with neutral language and natural curiosity. “I noticed that . . .” or “Can you tell me more about . . .” are better than “You always . . .” Also, make it clear that you care about them and their growth, that your goal is to build the relationship, that they don’t have to respond to your feedback right away, and, in most cases, they don’t have to do anything with the feedback at all. They’re in control.</p>
Be specific and as objective as possible.	<p>Rather than global, general feedback like “You’re awesome!” or “That sucked!” give precise, specific, concrete feedback that’s situated in a particular time and place, and that describes something that really happened (or didn’t).</p> <p>For instance: “When you presented to our team on Tuesday afternoon, I noticed that you discussed Topic X but not Topic Y. From my perspective, including Y would have been useful because Z.” “When interacting with Client X just now by the front desk, I noticed that you couldn’t find the sign-up sheet. Would it be worth looking at the front desk organization system to see if we can make the process easier?”</p>

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<p>Always put your feedback in context.</p>	<p>When sharing constructive feedback, always make it clear that your comments don't represent the sum total of how you feel about the recipient as a team member or as a person. After all, they're in your life because of good things. So make sure you communicate that you like them, respect them, think they're awesome, and are sharing your feedback in that context.</p>
<p>Share lots of positive feedback too.</p>	<p>In most successful romantic partnerships, there's a 20:1 ratio of positive comments to negative when not arguing. But, even when arguing, those couples have a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative. So make sure you're sharing the right balance of positive to negative feedback. Instead of always "catching people doing something wrong," be sure to "catch them doing something right." This makes it easier for them to understand the context above and to take constructive criticism in stride.</p>

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<p>Share lots of positive feedback too. (cont)</p>	<p>Positive feedback also gives people a useful “action plan” for what to correct, improve, and/or develop. For instance, “I overheard you chatting with Client X, and I noticed your sales communication is really coming along well! In particular it sounds like you’ve been working on active listening and trying to understand their story in order to tailor our membership offer to what they’re seeking. That’s really effective! Keep working on that!” Now the recipient knows exactly what they did well, and what they can continue to strengthen too.</p>
<p>Ask for permission.</p>	<p>This might sound obvious but it’s often lost: People usually take feedback better when they’ve asked for it. So start by asking for permission: “Would it be okay if I shared some feedback about X with you?”</p> <p>With that said, sometimes you’ll have to share unsolicited feedback. In those cases, consider calling it out: “I wanted to share some unsolicited feedback with you. I totally get that you haven’t asked for it and that I’m just showing up with it unannounced. Is now a good time to talk about this? If not, when’s better?”</p>

These activities and worksheets are taken from the book **Change Maker**: Turn your passion for health and fitness into a powerful purpose and a wildly successful career by John Berardi, PhD.

Check it out at: www.changemakeracademy.com/book