



BRIDGESPAN

Where Trust and Technology Connect

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Participant Guide

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Welcome

Valid feedback from others, when properly given, can make all the difference between success and failure on the job. Feedback provides us with information as to what is working and what is not working. We may look at feedback as a bad thing, or something totally negative. However, when viewed in a different manner, you can see how feedback is an opportunity to expand your understanding of the perception of others and use the feedback as a tool for achieving positive results.



Learning Objectives

After completing this program, participants will be able to:

- Define feedback
- Recognize communication styles
- Plan and deliver effective feedback
- Receive and consider feedback
- Recognize difficult situations
- Plan to improve feedback skills



Self Assessment

Giving Feedback

For each statement, check “rarely,” “sometimes,” or “often” to indicate how consistently you use the described behavior in the workplace.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. I pick an appropriate time and place to give feedback.			
2. I keep my emotions in check, remaining clam and keeping my voice even.			
3. I provide specific, detailed information about a person’s behavior or performance.			
4. I explain the impact the actions are having on the team or organization.			
5. I really listen to the response of those receiving my feedback			
6. I clarify my expectations if there is any confusion about the behavior in question.			
7. I remember to thank and encourage the receivers of my feedback.			
8. I provide input as needed in developing an action plan for meeting behavioral or performance goals.			
9. I focus on the steps of the feedback process to keep the dialog on track.			
10. I try to understand feedback from the other person’s point of view and preferred communication style.			

Receiving Feedback

For each statement, check “rarely,” “sometimes,” or “often” to indicate how consistently you use the described behavior in the workplace.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1. I truly listen to what feedback givers are saying.			
2. I keep feedback in perspective and don't overreact.			
3. I try to learn from all feedback, even if it is poorly given.			
4. I am willing to admit to and learn from questions about my performance or behavior at work.			
5. Rather than avoiding feedback, I attempt to turn every feedback session into a useful encounter.			
6. I accept redirection and reinforcement rather than denying them.			
7. I accept responsibility for my role in achieving individual, team, and organizational goals.			
8. I accept responsibility for searching for solutions to performance and behavioral problems that threaten goals.			
9. I accept responsibility for keeping my emotions in check during feedback discussions.			
10. I am committed to listening and learning in all feedback situations.			

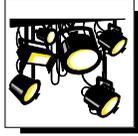
Reviewing Your Assessments

You were asked to take an assessment prior to arriving in class. Please take out your assessments.

How did you score on the two self-assessments?

If you answered most of the questions with “often,” your skills for giving useful feedback and receiving feedback effectively are well developed.

If you answered a number of questions with “rarely” or “sometimes,” you are one of several and your feedback skills could probably use further development.



Feedback

Let's look at a couple of different types of feedback.

Case A

A manager hands in a report to her director and waits for a month without receiving a reaction. The manager wonders, "What did I do wrong?"

Case B

A supervisor becomes upset at an employee who consistently makes typing errors. "Don't you know anything about the English language?" he yells. "It's amazing you ever finished high school!" The manager slams a recently typed document on the employee's desk and stalks off; the specific typing errors are never discussed.

Case C

An employee received praise from a supervisor during an annual evaluation. "You're doing a great job," she's told. "Keep up the good work." As the employee leaves the supervisor's office, she wonders, "What exactly am I doing well? I want to keep doing it, but I'm not sure what 'it' is."

Whenever we respond to another person, we are giving that person feedback.

We may be reacting to any number of things:

- The way a person looks
- His or her actions
- Something he or she said
- Or a combination of factors

There are different types of feedback we experience: valid feedback, unjustified feedback, and vague feedback. We may state our reactions to behavior or performance verbally, through speaking or writing, such as email, or we may react nonverbally, letting our body language and facial expressions speak for us.

Case A

In the first example, the director has responded to the manager with silence. Silence is actually one of the most common forms of feedback in business. How many times have you heard a manager say, "You won't hear from me unless there is a problem?" But, silence can be misinterpreted. In this case, the manager has interpreted silence as criticism, but is that what the director really means? The area director may have just thought she was too busy to respond, yet her silence has sent a message that is unintentionally negative.

Case B

In the second example, the manager chose to give feedback in the form of criticism, attacking the employee's personal qualities rather than focusing on the typing errors. The manager may have vented some emotion by yelling, but the employee still has no idea what the errors are and what should be done about them. The manager's criticism has only created distrust and hostility, which will make it even more difficult to discuss the actual problem.

Case C

In the third example, the supervisor offered praise, much more pleasant than the first two cases. The employee is happy to hear that her boss likes her work, but unless she asks for more specific details regarding what actions she should continue, the praise is of little long-term value.



Question & Answer

- Did these examples remind you of a similar situation you may have encountered? Describe the situation.

- Do you think the situation you experienced was handled well? How might it have been handled better?

What is Feedback

Feedback is information we receive from others defining their perception of us in terms of looks, actions, or things we have said.

We often look at feedback as something negative, but feedback, properly given and received, may also be defined as an opportunity to expand one's understanding and can be used as a tool for achieving positive results. Properly given, this feedback becomes constructive feedback.

We receive feedback daily and from different sources. If we can understand it and use it, this feedback can empower us to communicate more openly and improve our performance in many areas.

Feedback is seldom verbal only – emotions, timing, location, body language, etc., occur. All contribute to how feedback is received.

Consider the intent of the feedback. If you do not have a positive intent, a positive outcome is not possible.

One of the reasons why we tend to resist critical feedback is that a good part of our self-image is based on how others view us. When we find out that someone sees us in a less-than-positive light, we may feel devastated.

We like to hear what is consistent with our own views and resist ideas contrary to our beliefs. But, if we knew that we were doing something ineffectively, wouldn't we try to improve the performance? Constructive feedback implies that we could be wrong. What could be more personal and threatening? It takes an open mind to be able to listen to an opposing view.

What we should realize is that constructive feedback has two interactors – one giver and one receiver. It is not just something we must “take,” but something we can respond to and interact with.

How Do We Give Feedback?

Within the workplace, we provide fellow employees and team members information about their acts in order to help them meet individual, group, and organizational goals.

There are two types of actions about which we provide feedback: job performance and work-related behavior.

Job performance involves competency – whether or not an employee is capably performing specific tasks that have been assigned.

Work-related behavior involves the way in which an employee performs his or her tasks – whether he or she speaks politely to customers, for example, and works cooperatively with other team members.

Consider that workplace feedback is fairly specific. When we give workplace feedback, we are not commenting on our coworkers' personalities or private lives, nor are we dwelling on their past errors to punish them.

Instead, we respond to those factors that affect our feedback recipient's work or the work of others so that the recipient can plan for the future.

As we have seen in our case studies, the feedback we read about produced a variety of results. Silence allowed a manager to create her own interpretation of the director's reaction, which may or may not have been correct.

Criticism created harsh feelings between an employee and a manager.

Praise created positive feelings during an employee evaluation, but accomplished nothing more – no reinforcement of the good work performed. What could more effective, constructive feedback have done?

Question & Answer

- What are some reasons leaders might be uncomfortable or hesitant about giving feedback?

Redirection and Reinforcement

Think for a moment about the last two cases.

Did the manager really want to insult the employee? Probably not – the criticism was meant to redirect the employee’s job performance to eliminate the typing errors. The redirection simply came out badly.

What was the intention of the supervisor in the last case? The supervisor wanted to reinforce the employee’s positive actions so that she will repeat and develop those same actions.

These are two types of feedback.

Redirection

Redirection identifies job-related behaviors and performance that do not contribute to individual, group, and organizational goals and help the employee develop alternative strategies.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement identifies job-related behaviors and performance that contributes to individual, group, and organization goals and encourages the employee to repeat and develop those actions.

Redirection and reinforcement are really two halves of the same whole – they work together to provide all members of the organization with the information they need to improve their job performance and work up to their full potential.

When feedback takes the form of redirection and reinforcement, it has a number of useful characteristics:

- Focuses on acts, not attitude
- Directed to the future
- Is goal oriented
- Is multidirectional
- Supports proper action
- Is continual

Rather than commenting on an employee's lack of professionalism, for example, we redirect job performance issues like typing errors and behavioral problems that affect job performance, like lateness.

Question & Answer

- Think of a situation in which you received redirection that was not focused on acts (as in the employee with the typing errors in the second case study.) Describe the criticism you received. How did the other person approach you? What did he or she say?

- How did you respond to this criticism? Were there aspects of your work that could have been improved? How could your critic have changed his or her message so that you could have benefited from the advice by redirecting your efforts?

Reluctance to give or receive feedback is usually based on misperceptions about feedback.

As givers, we are reluctant to hurt the feelings of others and as receivers; we don't want our work to be criticized. When we think about those times in which we have been subjected to hurtful criticism, we often find that what hurt us wasn't the fact that someone was commenting on our work, but the way those comments were offered. Somehow, feedback about our typing errors turned into an evaluation of our entire educational history and personality.



Communication Styles

Communication styles play an important part in the giving and receiving of feedback.

All of us have developed communication patterns that reflect our individual identities. These patterns develop over time and become our preferred manner of communicating.

Your effectiveness in giving and receiving feedback will be enhanced if you are aware of your preferred communication style and that of your feedback recipient. By recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of both styles, you can adjust your style to avoid conflicts and ensure understanding.

There are four major communication styles:

- Driver – direct and task oriented
- Animated – enthusiastic and relationship oriented
- Amiable – supportive and avoids change and confrontation
- Analytical – accurate and detail oriented

Though our individual communication styles are usually a composite of all four styles, we tend to have one stronger, preferred style. The chart below describes some of the strengths and potential stumbling blocks associated with the four styles.

Which style comes closest to describing the way you tend to communicate?

Communication Style	Strengths	Potential Stumbling Blocks
Driver	Direct Practical Decisive Confident Clear, to the point Task-oriented	Challenges others Impatient Insensitive Overly independent Need for control Domineering
Animator	Talkative Friendly Enthusiastic Approachable, open Initiates through involvement of others	Overly sensitive Lack of follow-through/details Unprepared, disorganized Subjective in decision-making
Amiable	Supportive, patient Predictable Easygoing, calm Listens actively Responsive to others	Avoids confrontation, passive Slow to change Slow to initiate Indecisive Withholds feelings
Analytical	Accurate, well-prepared Diplomatic Analytical Cautious, restrained Systematic, detail-oriented	Too critical, insensitive Inflexible Withdrawn Overly cautious Imposes high standards

How Styles Affect Feedback

Most of us give and receive feedback in a manner consistent with our dominant communication style. Review the preferred manner for giving and receiving feedback for each of the four styles, paying particular attention to your own style.

Communication Style	Prefers to Give/Receive Feedback
Driver	Quickly Directly To the point Focusing on the "WHATs"
Animator	Con conversationally Allowing time for anecdotal support Sensitively Allowing time for much verbalizing Focusing on the "WHATs"
Amiable	Patient, allowing time to respond Non-threateningly Clearly Supportively Privately Focusing on "WHATs" and "HOWs"
Analytical	Objectively Thoroughly Accurately Patiently, allowing time to change With no surprises Focusing on "WHATs" and "WHYs"

Understanding Styles

Knowing and understanding your preferred communication style is important to fully appreciate others' styles, you must first appreciate your own.

You will want to be conscious of your own communication preferences when giving and receiving feedback from others. But your primary focus needs to be on what you believe the other person's preferences are.

If you are giving feedback to a coworker or an associate, you need to be sensitive to that person's communication style. By matching that individual's style, or delivering your feedback in a way that is comfortable to the person, he or she will be more likely to hear what you have to say and to be open to changing his or her behavior or improving performance.

When receiving feedback from others, be aware of their preferred communication styles. Understanding their styles explains their approach in giving you their feedback. Understanding their approach enables you to get beyond the "how" they are giving you the feedback and allows you to concentrate instead on probing for specifics (the "WHATs" and "WHYs").

In the following example, a supervisor with a Driver communication style is trying to redirect the performance of an employee with an Analytical style.

Step 1 – Describe the behavior or performance you want to redirect.

Supervisor says: We need to talk about your follow-through on the customer inquiries assigned to you in the database. Of the 49 inquiries – all 5 weeks old or older – 21 are past a contact stage or more in reaching a resolution. That means that 28 – or over 50% – have had initial contact, but little follow-up.

Step 2 – Listen to the reaction of your feedback.

If the employee acknowledges that he has not consistently followed through on customer inquiries and this is a problem, the supervisor can move immediately to Step 5 and help the employee to develop an action plan. Otherwise, the supervisor must take the time to help the employee understand and acknowledge the impact his performance is having on others. Until the employee recognizes the consequences of his performance and takes responsibility for them, there is little incentive for him to change.

Step 3 – Explain the effect the behavior or performance is having on the organization.

The manager states: When you are slow in reaching resolution on inquiries, it has far-reaching effects. For example, until an inquiry reaches a point where a potential resolution has been reached, the fulfillment department can't access it and begin preparations for processing. This causes a backlog on-line and makes it difficult for fulfillment to schedule employees.

We know that delays in follow-through result in fewer sales. We need to be responsive to customer inquiries while their interest is strong. Delays result in lower commissions for you, missed sales targets for our team, and less revenue for the company.

Step 4 – Help your feedback recipient acknowledge that a problem exists and take responsibility for it.

The manager should continue to discuss the situation with the employee until he acknowledges his responsibility for the situation.

Step 5 – Develop a plan that will help the receiver of your feedback adjust his or her actions.

The manager might say, “In order to meet our goals, we need to reach resolution on all inquiries within eight weeks of the inquiry date. What can you do, and how can I help, to increase your rate of follow-through?”

The manager and the employee may now work together to set short- and long-term goals for the employee’s performance and create an action plan that will help Bill meet those goals.

Step 6 – Thank your feedback recipient for his or her efforts.

After they’ve made specific plans, the manager can thank the employee, review the conversation, and arrange a future meeting to follow-up on the progress. So, the manager might say, “Thank you for taking the time for this conversation. You’ve acknowledged that your delays in reaching resolution are having negative effects, and you’ve identified several steps that will help you reach resolution more quickly. I’m here to help you if you need it. Let’s get together again next Tuesday and assess the progress you’ve made.”

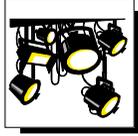
Being aware of the four communication styles and adjusting your feedback to the style of the person to whom you are speaking can help you give and receive feedback more effectively.

Question & Answer

- Do you think the supervisor is adaptive and prepared for the difference in communication style?

- How well did the manager (a Driver) do in matching the way she provided feedback to the employee (an Analytical)?

	Yes	No
Was the manager well prepared?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the manager thorough?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the manager explain the “whys” for improving?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the manager objective and nonaccusatory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the manager detail and specific in her examples?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could the employee relate to the affects and understand the need for improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Planning Feedback

Effective feedback doesn't just happen.

Whether you are giving redirection or reinforcement, you should plan what you are going to say in advance. You will need to identify examples to support the redirection or reinforcement you want to give; and you will need to organize your thoughts so that you are able to present your feedback coherently.

Clarify why you are providing feedback. Do any of these possible reasons exist:

- To continually improve a team's performance
- To correct an individual's poor performance
- To motivate
- To learn from past failures and mistakes

Ensure you have accurate information about what the person did so you can discover why. As you take part in more and more feedback sessions, you may find that you actually spend more time planning your feedback than you do giving it. This is not uncommon – the more time you put into your planning, the more smoothly your feedback sessions will run.

Knowing that you want to give someone reinforcement or redirection is just the beginning of the feedback planning process.

Try asking yourself this series of questions to get your feedback planning on track.

- √ Can I identify and accurately describe the behavior or performance I want to redirect or reinforce and its effects on others in the organization?
- √ Do I have detailed examples of the act and its effects that I can use to support my descriptions?
- √ Do I have positive intent?
- √ Can I identify and describe the results that I hope my reinforcement or redirection will produce?
- √ Does the person receiving the feedback understand my expectations for his or her performance?
- √ Is the person receiving the feedback really responsible for the act in question?
- √ Is the other person open to receiving feedback from me?
- √ Have I put off giving this feedback for a long time?
- √ Have I given myself enough time to prepare the feedback?

Setting the Environment

A large part of providing feedback is the way in which the feedback is given.

You should take care to prepare yourself for the feedback session. Keep some of these points in mind.

- Notify the employee or peer and schedule a meeting date and time.
- Choose a private but visible setting, including a glass cubicle or glass window conference room, where you and the other person are physically comfortable.
- Prepare the facts and documents from which you will work.
- Collect the back-up material supporting the feedback and what you wish to accomplish.
- Plan how to say what needs to be said.
- Ensure there is positive intent.

During the session try to:

- Explain the purpose and positive intent.
- Place the feedback recipient at ease, as much as possible.
- Encourage the feedback recipient to be open and expressive.
- Do not become emotionally involved.
- Listen!
- Encourage clarification of discussion with open-ended questions.
- Use specifics, not generalities.

- Get feedback recipient to talk about him or her, not others.
- Use receptive body language; don't close off your body or your mind.
- Do not cross-examine; discuss the topics at hand.
- Don't argue.
- Put yourself in the feedback recipient's shoes and treat them as you would like to be treated.

When wrapping up the session, be sure to:

- Explore future actions and your confidence in him or her.
- Get the feedback recipient's commitment to make the action plan happen.
- Remind the recipient of the positive intent.
- Agree on a tentative scheduling for a follow-up session.
- Thank your feedback recipient.

Identify Behavior and Performance Issues

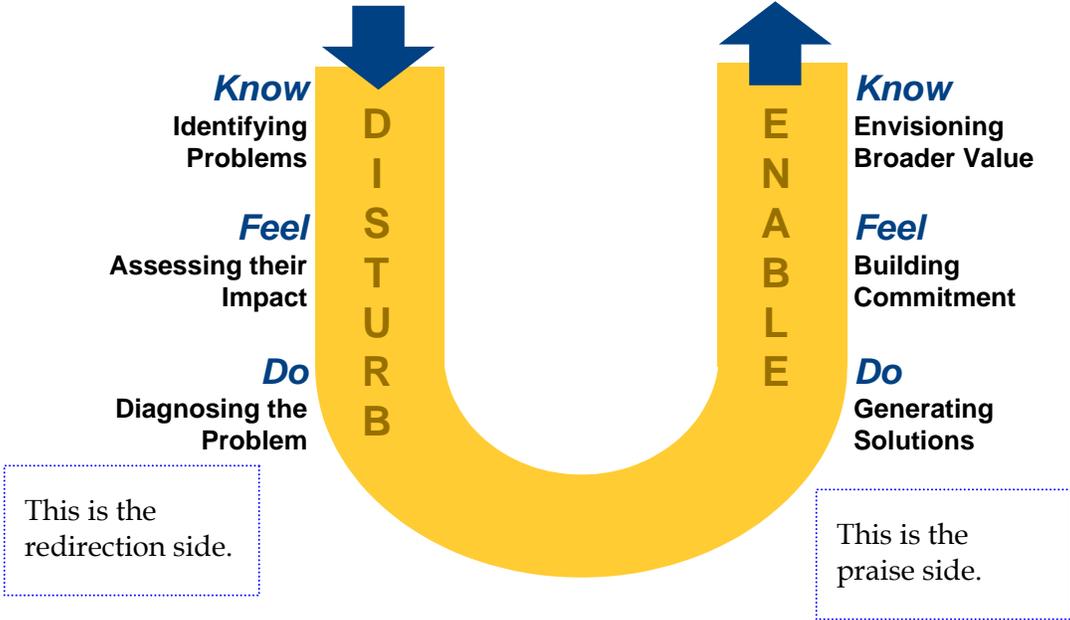
Can you identify and accurately describe the specific behavior or performance you want to redirect or reinforce and its effects on others in the organization?

Effective feedback requires more than just a vague statement that you like or dislike someone's work. Statements like "Something's wrong here - I don't know exactly what it is, but change it." Do not provide enough details for employees or coworkers to begin to redirect their actions. Likewise, telling someone, "Keep up the good work." Tells little to that person what good work is.

Begin your feedback preparation by identifying the specific job performance or behavior issue you want to redirect or reinforce and the effects that action has on others in you organization. Prepare for your feedback session by making a list in which you describe the act and its effects, as in these two examples.

Individual	
Behavior to redirect	Was late to work 3 times in the past week.
Effects on others	Person on previous shift had to work late; people on same shift are irritated and demoralized
Team	
Performance to reinforce	Reorganized work process so that correspondence is completed more quickly and with fewer errors.
Effects on others	Lower turnaround time means we can respond to clients more quickly;

reduction in errors means fewer documents have to be retyped, which also saves time and money.



Providing Examples

Do you have detailed examples of the action and its effects that you can use to support your arguments?

The more examples you can describe, the stronger your case will be, especially if you are asking someone to redirect an action and are concerned that the person might resist your redirection. Here is one way you could list examples of actions and effects to support redirection of the employee who is late to work.

Example of behavior	Effects on others
Monday: Employee A ½ hour late for first shift	Another employee had to handle all customer calls by herself
Wednesday: Employee A 20 minutes late getting back from lunch	Another employee had to delay her lunch break; team was short-staffed at busiest time of day
Thursday: Employee A 1 hour late for second shift	Another employee had to continue working after his first shift ended

Identify Desired Results

Can you identify and describe the results that you hope to reinforce or redirection will produce?

The purpose of giving feedback is not to dwell on the past – it is to plan for the future. After you give your feedback, what types of actions do you hope to see?

In the case of reinforcement, the answer is easy – you hope to see the action in question repeated and developed. In the case of redirection, you may need to give a little more thought to this question. Although you will want to take input from the person receiving your redirection about specific short- and long-term goals, you should have some objectives in mind. Keep these goals in site as you talk to the person to ensure that the action plan you negotiate leads to the results you want.

Understanding Expectations

Does the person receiving the feedback understand your expectations for his or her behavior and job performance?

This is an especially important question for cases of redirection. Often we assume that people understand exactly what they are supposed to be doing in a given situation, but that may not be the case. Ask yourself what you and others have done in the past to clarify your expectations. Refer to the person's job description and to previous performance evaluations – have your expectations ever been addressed before?

If you discover that no one has ever addressed the act in question with your feedback recipient, your redirection may take the form of clarifying your expectations. If the expectations are new to the employee, you may also need to discuss such questions as:

- Are the expectations fair and reasonable?
- Is the feedback recipient capable of meeting them?
- Are there ways in which the team can help the feedback recipient meet the expectations?

Controlling the Situation

Is the person receiving the feedback really responsible for the act in question?

The person to whom you are planning to give your feedback may have no trouble understanding your expectations yet to be unable to meet them. This could occur for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the feedback recipient is not actually responsible for the situation you are addressing, or perhaps the recipient does not have the resources to redirect or repeat his or her actions.

Before you give feedback to anyone, try to discover if other people might be responsible for the situation. You may want to reinforce Ben's addition of bar graphs to the weekly sales memo, but he can only do this when accounting gives him the figures. Perhaps the person in accounting needs your reinforcement, too?

If you think outside factors may be affecting your feedback recipient's actions, but you aren't sure, ask the recipient in the course of giving your feedback and take his or her response into account the two of you develop plans for the future.

Accepting Feedback

Is the other person open to accepting feedback from you?

This will depend on your relationship with the person receiving your feedback and his or her attitude toward the feedback process. Questions to ask yourself include:

Are you a credible feedback source for this person? Does your feedback recipient believe that you have the expertise to provide competent redirection or reinforcement? If you believe your credibility may be an issue, make doubly sure you have plenty of examples to support your comments.

Is your relationship with your feedback recipient cordial? People are always willing to accept suggestions more readily from someone with whom they have a good working relationship. If you do not have a good relationship with your receiver, or perhaps have criticized (rather than redirected) the receiver's work in the past, you may need to reestablish your relationship before feedback can be effective.

What is your status relative to the feedback recipient's? In hierarchical organization, it is often difficult to give feedback, especially redirection, to a manager or supervisor. If you are presenting feedback to a higher-up, present plenty of examples to establish your credibility and remember to present your comments as supportive rather than critical.

Delaying Feedback

Have you put off giving this feedback for a long time?

If you previously looked on feedback as unpleasant or unimportant, you may have put off approaching the receiver with your feedback. Unfortunately, delaying feedback makes it harder to give that feedback when you finally do sit down with your receiver.

If you have delayed giving redirection, the situation may have had time to escalate from a minor glitch to a serious problem.

If you have delayed giving reinforcement, your recipient may not remember the action in question and may wonder why it has taken you so long to respond.

The receiver of your feedback may not be open to your input after such a long delay. Delayed reaction can often result in responses like “But that’s the way we’ve always done it” from the recipient.

You may need to explain to your feedback recipient that you realize that you have not always been prompt in giving feedback, and that this is your first effort to correct that problem. Apologize for doing it late and explain why that was not good – be human and be real about the situation.

Don’t delay – if you have been avoiding a feedback session, do not put it off any longer! Immediately schedule a session and start to prepare for it.

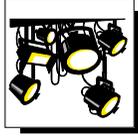
Taking Time for Feedback

Have you given yourself enough time to prepare your feedback?

Don't kid yourself – it takes time to think about all of the issues discussed as well as to document and describe the actions you hope to redirect or reinforce. Always give yourself enough time so that you begin every feedback session fully prepared.

Think of someone in your workplace to whom you need to give feedback about the quality of his or her efforts. Perhaps you need to redirect that person's performance. Perhaps there is a behavior that has been wonderful.

Use the Feedback Plan form on the following page to help you prepare the necessary feedback. If you take the time to consider each of the questions, you should be fully prepared for your next feedback session.



Useful Feedback

Decide why you are providing feedback.

There are several potential reasons for providing feedback:

- To continually improve a team's performance
- To correct an individual's poor performance
- To motivate
- To learn from past failures and mistakes

Useful workplace feedback focuses on actions and impact of the behavior rather than an employee's attitude or personal characteristics – it responds to specific actions that are done in the process of performing one's job.

Attacking someone's talent and abilities, educational background, physical attributes, or ethnic background is not useful feedback and could leave your organization subject to legal action.

Sometimes we think we are giving a person feedback about his or her actions when, in fact, we are commenting on attitude, which is not a useful type of feedback. It does little to accuse an employee of being "unenthusiastic" or "unprofessional" – we have no way of knowing how that person truly feels, nor is it really our business. Instead, we should focus on what we can see – the acts that we hope to redirect or reinforce. Rather than commenting on an employee's lack of professionalism, for example, we redirect job performance issues like typing errors and behavioral problems that affect job performance, like lateness. In this way, we are focusing on correcting the behaviors that show the lack of professionalism.

Useful feedback is directed toward the future.

The purpose of feedback is not to dwell on the past – it is to plan for the future. Though feedback begins with a consideration of past and current behaviors and job performance, it certainly doesn't end there. Useful feedback uses past actions as a springboard to help the feedback recipient develop effective plans for future actions.

Useful feedback is goal oriented.

Everyone within your organization shares common goals that relate to your organization's mission, vision, and strategies for success.

Useful feedback is specific.

If I asked you to change your telephone skills, as we want to ensure that our customers have a good impression of BridgeSpan, is that enough information to assist you in changing your performance while using the phone? Have I really indicated what needs to change? Not really.

To give detailed feedback, think about what happened to make you believe the performance needed to be improved. What happened? Where did it occur? When did it occur? Who was involved? How did it affect others?

So, thinking back on a potentially confusing telephone conversation you overheard, you could say,

“I heard you answer the phone yesterday and was pleased to see that you picked it up in under two rings! We've been trying to prove to customers that we value them and their business.

You jumped right into eMA and looked up the referenced file. It sounded like you handled easily their question. However, I did not see you document your discussion in the Comments.

If I had to answer a follow-up question that the lender might have, I would not have had the information you already offered or the work you already performed documented. The lack of information in Comments would lead me to believe you had no discussion, or that the initial research work had not been performed. I would have done all of the research over just to answer their follow-up question.

Is there something you can do to remind yourself that each time you speak with a customer, you document the conversation in Comments?"



Question & Answer

- Were all of the appropriate things considered?
- What happened? Do you know for sure, or third or fourth hand?
- Where did it occur?
- When did it occur?
- Who was involved?
- How did it affect others?

What would your response be?

Useful feedback should be clarified.

During the process of giving feedback, ask questions about how things happened. Ask how things could be changed to allow improvement. As you listen, you may discover that you wish to direct your feedback to a different person, or actions that you thought needed to be changed were actually making a positive contribution. Encourage your feedback recipient to describe the events that may be affecting the situation or performance in question. Ensure that the feedback recipient is involved in determining the plans for improvement.

Useful feedback is timely.

When planning your feedback, you review the circumstances and define what happened and when. Try to give the feedback as close in time to the time when the action occurred. It is easier to discuss something when the events are fresh within everyone's minds.

There are a couple of exceptions. Do not offer feedback in public, unless it is reinforcement that others could also use. Do not offer reinforcement and redirection at the same time. People tend to ignore the reinforcement and focus on the redirection.

Try to offer the reinforcement as soon after the action is noticed and delay the redirection until just before an instance where the action to be redirected may be taken again.

Balance the need for a timely response to your need to prepare for the feedback session. Your feedback needs to be organized and documented, and perhaps researched. Plan your feedback as soon as you can with the preliminary work considered.

Attitude is a choice.

We cannot always control our circumstances, only how we react to them. Our character is more assessed by our reactions than by our actions. While a leader does impact how a person receives and responds to feedback, the choice is individual. A leader's intent comes through within the first minute.

Reinforcement

Providing reinforcement to others can be easy with a few simple steps.

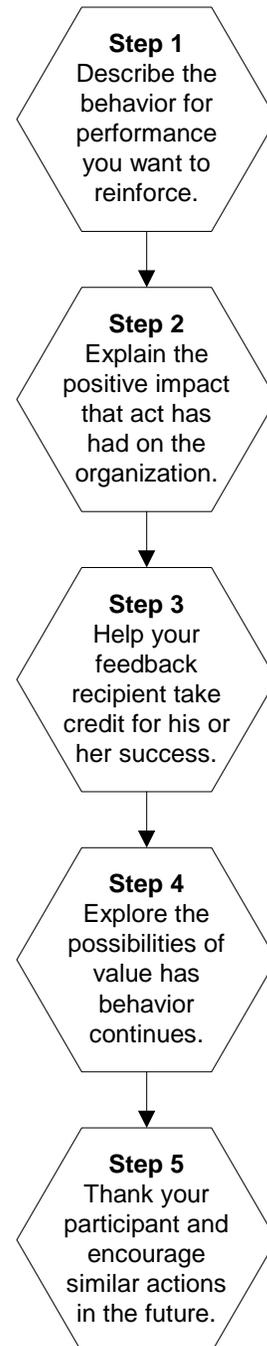
When giving reinforcement feedback, remember that your goal is to specify as much detailed, useful information as possible to help your associate or coworker be as productive as possible.

Most of us would like to know how our efforts fit into the big picture. Learning how our work supports the work of others helps us see our importance to the group.

It is amazing how many people have trouble accepting positive reinforcement. We sometimes have to alter the attitude that accepting a compliment is not bragging, it is accepting the good stuff!

In addition to understanding how our efforts fit into the big picture, we can correlate future success of the organization or the team with the continuation of the behavior specified.

Don't forget the simplest compliment of all - thank you. This magical expression will be one of the last things the person takes away from the discussion.



Remember the U shape found on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**?**Error! Reference source not found.**

Notice that these steps are present even within this graphic. Step 1 aligns with the DO. Step 2 and 3 align with the FEEL. Step 3 and 4 align with the KNOW.

Question & Answer

Think of someone you work with whose positive behavior or performance you would like to reinforce. With that in mind, decide what you intend to say at each step of the process.

Describe the behavior or performance you want to reinforce.

Explain the positive impact the behavior or performance has had on the organization.

Help your feedback recipient take responsibility for his or her success.

Thank your feedback recipient for his/her contribution toward meeting individual, group, or organizational goals and encourage similar future behavior or performance.

Redirection

Redirection consists of basic steps that help your feedback recipient see the impact of his or her acts and plan for the future.

Again, when giving redirection feedback, remember that your goal is to specify as much detailed, useful information as possible to help your coworker be as productive as possible.

Give your feedback recipient a chance to respond including acknowledgement, confusion, or refusal to accept responsibility. Clarify expectations or listen to the challenges being faced affecting the person's ability to do the job. Are they just making excuses, or finding areas of improvement? Getting past any defensiveness can be difficult, but ensuring that you are taking the viewpoint seriously, the responses will become less defensive and more cooperative. If you are unable to get past the line of defense, continue to focus the conversation on the effects of his or her actions. By the end of the discussion, you and your feedback recipient should agree on a set of reasonable expectations.

Descriptions illustrating the issue and the effects without expressing anger or making a value judgment allow the feedback recipient to see the impact of his or her behavior and take responsibility for it. If the person continues to be defensive, continue returning to your valid examples until he or she is ready to accept responsibility and work out a plan to promote change.

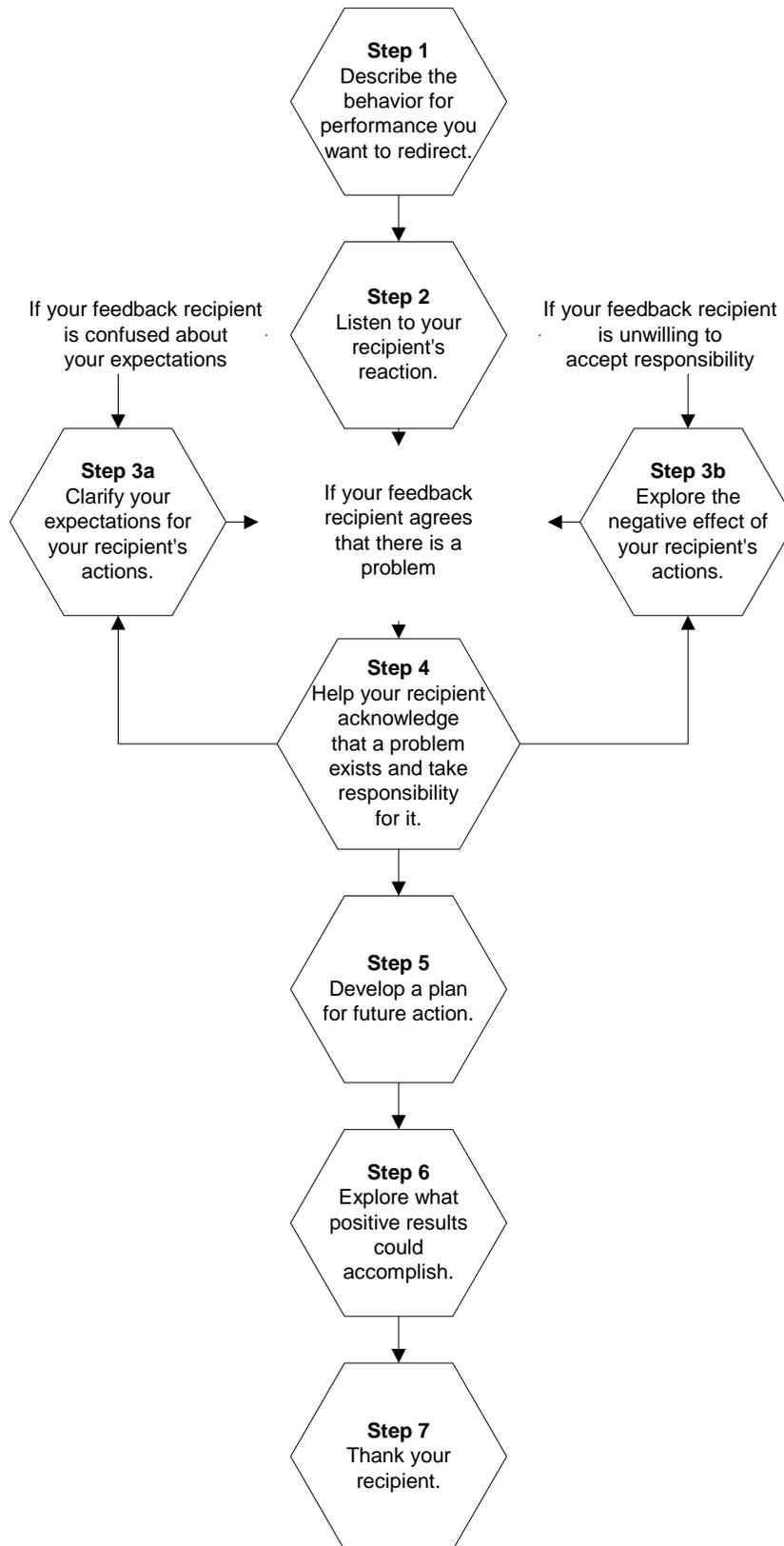


Question & Answer

- Let's review that last sentence

“If the person continues to be defensive, continue returning to your valid examples until he or she is ready to accept responsibility and work out a plan to promote change.”

Does this really work? Can you think back to a situation where this would have been helpful? How long would this take?



Without this acknowledgement, you cannot collaborate toward a redirection of behavior or performance. Your feedback recipient must take responsibility for correcting the action. If you hear “Yes, I agree; there is a problem here. What can I do?” or even “What if I ...?” then you have received your acknowledgement. If you don’t hear the acknowledgement, continue to present evidence you can use to convince the recipient that a problem exists and that his or her performance or behavior needs to change. Sometimes, just getting the person to acknowledge the negative impact or consequences on others is enough to get the person to agree something needs to change.

While this type of conversation can be stressful, focusing on the evidence and the effects prevents you from being distracted. If the feedback recipient tries to steer the conversation on other topics or other people’s actions, take the time to listen and consider alternative opportunities for improvement. Table other topics that are brought up to be covered in a separate meeting. For example:

“I want to talk about that more. Can we schedule a meeting for this afternoon to do that?”

“Discussing that topic will take longer than what we have scheduled for this meeting. Can we schedule a meeting for this afternoon to do that?”

Once you have convinced the person that you have listened, you can return to the evidence and effects and continue with these steps.

Developing an action plan is the key to a successful redirection conversation. Although you may already have goals in mind when you started the conversation, ensure you listen to the feedback recipient. You can initiate the action planning by stating a goal you see and ask for the other person’s ideas on how he or she can implement the goal.

Then, don't forget to thank the feedback recipient for the efforts he or she has made. You might even use this opportunity to mention the next time you would like to get together to follow-up on the progress of the plan.

Consider this example.

Operations Person: I really want to get files processed on time, but I have difficulty when you fail to provide me with the payoff information. Is there some way you can ensure that I get this information prior to the day of closing?

Manager: It is difficult. Most lenders will not release the payoff information without a borrower's authorization. I find that when I look through the Published documents, there may be a borrower's authorization, but it is not signed.

Operations Person: We do rely on the lenders or real estate agents to ensure that we get certain documents signed up front. I can send out a communication to all of our lenders requesting that they attempt to provide us with this information on time. Would that help?

Manager: That sounds good. In fact, since some lenders do not request the signature, my staff can also attempt to acquire the payoff without the signed authorization. And, if it looks like we do need it, perhaps we can contact the lender ourselves to get a signed authorization?

Operations Person: We have really great relationships built with our lenders and I would like to keep the communication lines open between us. Perhaps you could send us an email message asking for the signed borrower's authorization that we could then forward to the lender for action. Then, the lender will begin to understand our needs for the signed document up front in order to meet their closing deadlines.

Manager: Great. That sounds like a plan.

Operations Person: Thank you for your time and effort. I was so frustrated and this plan where we are both making an attempt to improve the situation is a relief. I believe that my initial communication with the lenders will be helpful and your assistance to letting us know when we need one will make the process more efficient.

Manager: Perhaps we can meet next week and check on the progress of our action plan?

Question & Answer

Can you describe the behavior or performance that needed to be changed?

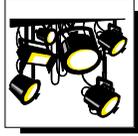
During the discussion, did you see any challenges faced by either person or group?

Did either party get defensive? Can we really tell by the words?

How do we know when someone gets defensive?

Were all of the steps for redirection taken?

How would you have changed the discussion?



Receiving Feedback

Feedback is a two-way process where you specify detail information and probe for additional information when needed.

As you provide information, you need to provide specific details. The more specific your information, the closer your recipient can come to meeting individual, team, and organizational goals.

As there is a giving and receiving of information, both individuals need to be providing information. If one person is not providing information, you can also probe for information. Someone may not always give useful feedback. As a recipient of feedback, you can ask questions to clarify what you think you are hearing and ask for more details to define what you can do better.

Knowing this, how do you typically react to feedback from someone?

Think back to the last time you received feedback from someone. Did you listen and try to learn as much as you could? Did you ask questions to define the information? Did you provide excuses as to why you acted a certain way? Did you identify other departments or individuals that contributed to the actions? Did you simply become defensive?

It is tempting to make excuses whenever we receive redirection. As we work, we usually have very good reasons for doing things the way we did. It is natural to try to explain those reasons. But, if you focus on the explanation, you won't really hear what the person is trying to say. You should be hearing that your actions are creating some negative effects and need to be

changed. You must put aside your defensive attitude and focus on the details that will help you identify what you need to change.

Apply this ability to listen to both redirection and to reinforcement.

When you receive reinforcement, make sure and ask questions about the details of what you did so you can ensure that you do it again! Get the details about which aspects of your behavior or performance that have the positive effects on others.

 **Question & Answer**

Think about the last time you received feedback from someone. Was your reaction in that instance typical of how you react when you receive feedback? Did you:

- √ Get defensive and try to explain your actions?
- √ Find someone with whom to share all or part of the blame for the problem?
- √ Shut down and not listen, focusing instead on what you can do to regain favor in the other person's eyes?
- √ Listen carefully to what the person is saying so you can understand and probe for more information, if necessary?

Attitude is a choice.

We cannot always control our circumstances, only how we react to them. Our character is more assessed by our reactions than by our actions.

Listening

You'll get the most from feedback, reinforcement and redirection, if you make the commitment to listen and learn in all feedback situations.

You can evaluate feedback more effectively if you develop these habits for receiving feedback:

- Become a careful listener
- Keep all feedback in perspective
- Try to learn from all feedback, even if it is presented poorly

Listening is one of the most important communication skills we can develop.

At times when we listen, we can become easily distracted. We may think about deadlines, rumors around the office, our child's next soccer game, whether we are the refreshment parent, and if we have prepared for our next meeting. It is easy to be distracted when we are receiving feedback. We listen to the thoughts that generally crowd our minds, and also try to generate reasons for our actions as they are being described to us.

We can develop this listening skill by trying to clear our minds and starting every feedback session with the attitude that we will listen. Instead of trying to generate a response to the person speaking, just concentrate on the person giving the feedback and listen.

If the person's perspective seems strange to you, ask yourself why he or she might see things that way.

If is easy to overact to feedback you hear. If someone reinforces a positive behavior, it is natural to enjoy the feeling of a job well done. But, it is easy to discount the reinforcement and say “it was nothing,” when in reality, it was something or the person wouldn’t be commending you. In addition, it is easy to extend that positive feeling to a point where we think we can do no wrong.

Question & Answer

According to the Harvard Business Review, 65% of executives have been trained or coached on speaking, but less than 5% on effective listening.

What can you do to listen effectively?

The same thing can happen when we receive redirection, especially if the feedback is being given inappropriately or in an overly critical manner. Remember, not everyone has the experience to demonstrate the correct manner, like you will be able to do after this class. By dwelling on the negative aspects of the presentation, you can turn a simple comment into an act of criticism of your entire job or even your whole life. Keep all feedback you receive in perspective.

You might be tempted to disregard any feedback as inappropriate or rude, but by doing so, you miss the opportunity to do your job better. As you become more experienced, you will be able to exert some control over when and where the feedback is delivered. You can learn to recapture the correct attitude while listening so you can gain valuable information. Your abilities to listen will also show other team members how to develop their own skills by mimicking your listening skills.

Don't be afraid to ask questions.

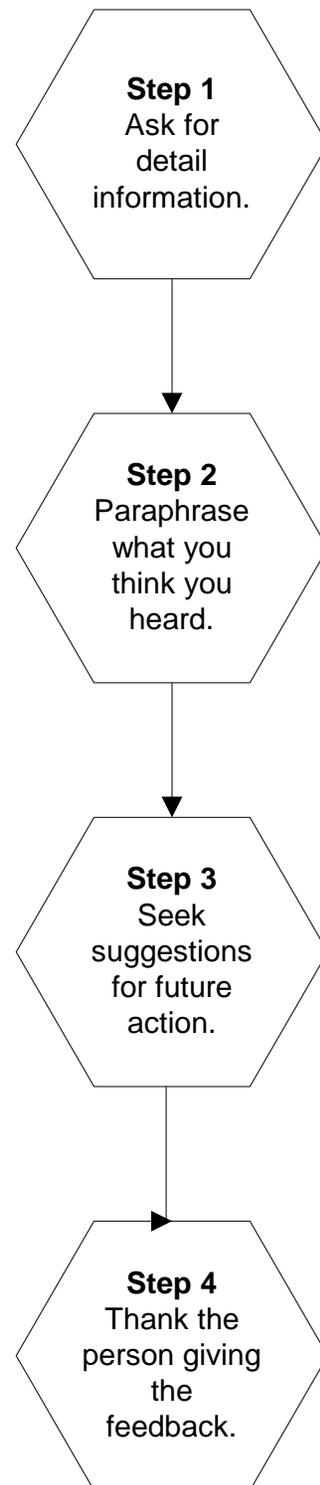
The more detailed information you can receive, the more benefit you will receive. The way you can guarantee that you receive feedback you can use is to ask questions. Probe for more and more details, and make sure you understand those details. Ask questions to clarify your understanding of the details.

While it may be difficult for you to ask questions or ask for examples of how your behavior had negative effects on others, it is worth the time and courage to ask. The details are the tools you need to improve your performance and meet your goals. Asking for these details may be one of the best ways to handle inappropriate feedback sessions – you can focus the session on details and not accusations.

Paraphrasing, or repeating in different words, what you heard is a good way to make sure that your interpretation of what was said matches the intention of the person giving the feedback.

Whether you are receiving reinforcement or redirection always be sure that future plans are included in the discussion. Never leave a discussion without having agreed on a future course of action.

It takes courage to give another person direct, honest feedback. Show the other person that you value his or her effort, as well as the time they took to prepare and present the feedback.



Even when listening carefully, we can misinterpret what the other person is saying.

Repeating what you heard the person say in different words allows you to restructure what is being said to ensure you both understand it. It is easy to focus on just one aspect of what is being said and ignore the rest, especially if you are having a strong emotional response to what is being said. Wait until the other person has finished describing his or her perspective before you begin to paraphrase. Then, restate your understanding in your own words, asking the other person if it is correct. Give the other person a chance to respond and add any additional information. Don't get caught up in a potential trap where you are each saying the same thing, but you aren't listening to the other or misunderstanding the meaning of the words. Break down any phrase that is causing problems to ensure the intention and value is accurate.

Consider your nonverbal language.

When listening, we tend to show how we are receiving the message. Make eye contact with the person providing feedback. Maintain an even tone and volume of voice when responding. Note your body posture. How are you sitting? How would you interpret this position?

Consider the following:

- Facial Expressions reinforces your words.
- Make eye contact.
- Restrict your use of gestures in case someone considers them threatening.
- Mirror speaker's body language.

Do not automatically assume your critic is right or wrong.

Take the time to assess whether or not the feedback is valid before taking action. Ask questions to clarify the feedback or get specific examples. Ensure that you understand the context and the perspective of the person giving the feedback.

Consider your active filters.

Many things impact how we listen. Identify and control the filters that may get in the way of listening. Everyone filters information through their own worldview including values, emotions, circumstances, religious upbringing, culture, attitudes, self-worth, physical condition, and even political biases. Acquired over the course of a lifetime, these filters are based on your biases, experiences and expectations. Also pay attention to your emotional filters – your ways of responding to information, ideas, words and others' nonverbal communication. Although it's virtually impossible to eliminate your emotional filters, you can learn to control them.

- Distance yourself mentally and physically from your personal life so you can listen in the office.
- Leave your work at the office so you can listen at home.
- Use a buffer such as commute time to help you separate from your personal, organizational, or team troubles.

Question & Answer

Consider a manager coming to you and stating, “You have horrible customer service skills. You should take the time to improve them.”

How would you handle it?

What probing questions could you ask?



Role Play Instructions

Use the table on the next page, practice listening.

1. Using this statement, practice with the person next to you as to how you would restate what you hear.

“I really like the way you answer the telephone consistently within three rings, but do you have to always put them on hold?”

2. Using this statement, practice with the person next to you as to how you would restate what you hear.

“I had a customer call and complain that you lost your temper over the phone regarding the payoff amount for the Brewster file. What happened?”

Practice Listening

When practicing with the person next to you. Review these items and make note of those things that could use improvement.

Verbal	Excellent	Average	Needs Improvement
1. Did you face the real issue?			
2. Did you really understand the feedback?			
3. Did you become overly apologetic or rationalize your behavior?			
4. Did you counterattack the person providing feedback?			
5. Did you communicate what you wanted to communicate?			
6. With the critical feedback that was valid, did you resolve the problem to the critic's satisfaction?			
Nonverbal	Excellent	Average	Needs Improvement
1. Eye contact			
2. Tone and volume of voice			
3. Facial expressions			
4. Body posture and gestures			
5. Nervous expressions (blushing, perspiration, etc.)			
6. Other:			

Developing Your Feedback Skills

By attending this class, you have taken the first steps to improving your feedback skills.

At the beginning of the class, you assessed your feedback skills. Now you can develop an action plan for improving those areas in which you were weak. Identify each of the statements you would like to incorporate into your personal development plan.

Action Plan for Giving Effective Feedback

- I will pick an appropriate time and place to give feedback.
- I will keep my emotions in check, remain calm, and keep my voice even.
- I will provide specific, detailed information about the employee's behavior or performance.
- I will check my intent.
- I will explain the impact the employee's actions are having on the team or organization.
- I will really listen to the responses of those receiving my feedback.
- I will clarify my expectations if there is any confusion about the action in question.
- I will remember to thank and encourage the receivers of my feedback.
- I will provide input as needed in developing an action plan for meeting behavioral or performance goals.
- I will focus on the steps of the feedback process to keep the dialogue on track.
- I will try to understand feedback from the other person's point of view and preferred communication style.
- I will deliver the message in the same manner as I would to my boss or my peer.

Action Plan for Receiving Feedback Effectively

- I will truly listen to what feedback givers are saying.
- I will keep feedback in perspective and won't overreact.
- I will try to learn from all feedback, even if it is given poorly.
- I will admit to and learn from questions about my performance or behavior at work.
- I will attempt to turn every feedback session into a useful encounter.
- I will accept redirection and reinforcement rather than denying them.
- I will accept responsibility for developing solutions to performance and behavioral problems that threaten goals.
- I will accept responsibility for keeping my emotions in check during feedback discussions.
- I will listen and learn in all feedback situations.

To develop these skills, you can do a number of things.

Identify another person in the office that you believe gives good, effective feedback. Take note of the things that person does to make his or her feedback effective. Then, try to emulate those actions or ask that person if he or she will mentor you as you prepare for your next feedback session.

Identify another person to whom you have given feedback. Ask that person to rate your feedback skills. Do you give him or her enough information to make changes to their performance, or is that person confused by your feedback? Based on the evaluation data, decide which skills you should improve.

Identify a person who frequently gives you feedback. Do you accept that person's feedback with an open mind, or do you become defensive and make excuses? Ask that person to rate your skills as a recipient and decide which skills you should improve.

Practice your feedback skills whenever possible. Even if you are not a manager, you provide feedback everyday, perhaps without realizing it.