



Constructive Feedback: A Guide for Managers

Knowing how to provide constructive feedback is a valuable management skill. Feedback is most effective when it:

- Is clear, specific, and timely
- Maintains a positive focus
- Avoids undermining confidence
- Offers broad strokes and helpful tips
- Targets areas for improvement
- Minimizes nitpicking or micromanaging
- Focuses on improving performance rather than punishing mistakes

Effective feedback often includes some combination of:

- Positive affirmation
- Factual or procedural updates
- Remedial or corrective action

Of the three, remedial feedback is often the most challenging to deliver. However, it is a necessary part of addressing performance concerns. When you have to deliver remedial feedback, particularly following a major error, these steps may be helpful:

- 1. Stay calm.** If tensions are high or it's been a difficult day, give everyone a chance to regroup before providing feedback. Sample language: "Let's meet in the morning to talk about what happened."
- 2. Consult with Human Resources.** If the feedback is needed because the person has engaged in inappropriate or negligent behavior, review relevant policies with

Human Resources. In addition, the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can help you prepare to deliver feedback.

- 3. Listen.** Ask clarifying questions that will help you understand the person's choices. Sample language: "Would you please explain your understanding of this task?"
- 4. Create an action plan.** Compile a list of steps that can be taken to avoid mistakes and improve performance. Sample language: "Let's discuss how we can avoid this situation in the future."
- 5. Make a referral to LifeMatters.** If a personal issue is impacting the individual's performance, remind them that LifeMatters is available to help. When there is a violation of organizational policy or a pattern or poor performance, consider making a performance referral. (Consult with HR before taking any disciplinary action.) Sample language: "LifeMatters can help you address issues that may be impacting your ability to focus on your work. Please call."
- 6. Follow up.** Check in periodically to review the person's efforts and offer additional feedback. Point out positive improvements and offer encouragement.

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can assist with any management issue. Call 24/7/365.

1-800-634-6433

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