

How Am I Doing?

Why Employee Feedback Matters

September 28th, 2004

excelHR

Unlock your team's potential with
FEEDBACK.

A Manager's Quick Guide to a Review Process

1. Prepare

- Research: collect any data or metrics available; ask for input from colleagues, other leaders, customers, suppliers; write your observations; look at items added to personnel record since last review (not before)
- List responsibilities and expectations
- List behaviours and attitude needed to execute the position well
- Compare your observations and research with the total needs of the position (duties, fit)
- Compile information: top 3-5 strengths and how to further apply them, 2-3 areas to improve and why, the actions that could be taken to do both of those.

2. Format and Method

- Determine if feedback is verbal or written
- Decide where and when it will take place
- Establish who will attend the review, and invite those parties
- Inform the employee of all these details and what preparation (s)he should do.

3. Conduct the Review

Be sure you give the employee your undivided attention. Create an atmosphere where you and the employee can freely discuss the past year. Make notes during the review. Ask lots of questions: How could we improve the organization? What training do you need? What are your one and five year goals? Set a course of action together.

4. Follow-Up Plan

If it was a verbal review, provide a written document within one week—including the action plan agreed upon. Ask the employee to sign the document to ensure their agreement.

5. Measure and Document Changes

Observe the employees performance over the course of the year and document areas of strength and improvement. This will assist you in conducting next year's review.

6. Schedule the Next Review

Employee Feedback is Mission Critical

On September 21st, 2004, our team spoke with 82 people in the Ottawa and Toronto Regions who are currently employed in small (min. 50 employees) to very large businesses, or within the provincial-federal governments, to answer this question: *"Do you know how you are doing in your role—in terms of your performance, skill level and fit with the organization?"*

We were impressed that well over half of respondents know how they are doing—with 54% saying they know, 23% stating they know "somewhat", and 19% not knowing at all.

Frequency

For the 78% that know or somewhat know how they are doing, 35% receive feedback often, 33% occasionally and 31% never get input.

Format

The most common format for offering feedback was verbal at 47%, well ahead of 22% receiving a written document, 19% getting an e-mail, 6% a handwritten note, 2% from a company newsletter, and other formats which amounted to 4% (note on cheque, group statistics). A formal annual review was completed with 61% of respondents.

Beyond the Call of Duty

Of respondents, 36% were recognized for superior performance — yet a startling 56% were not given recognition for going beyond the call of duty. (For 7%, the question was not applicable).

The Best Combination for Results

The best feedback came from a Manager (38%) who offered it verbally at an unexpected time, and served to affirm skills and inspire.

—————Commentary

"Feedback is not something we do here. They express their thanks through your bonus."

"I like the truth and I could handle more of it more often."

"The quality of the review depends on the quality of the manager."

"Quarterly performance reviews are overkill for the employee. It's great if you're new, but when you've been working with the same manager for a while, it gets repetitive."

"I appreciate the one-on-one time I get with my Manager at my annual review."

"The good stuff is verbal, the bad stuff is written. Could we reverse that?"

Reasons to Recognize

- to retain the right people
- to motivate
- to celebrate successes, and encourage excellence
- to substantiate wage adjustments, promotion, disciplinary action, termination
- to identify training needs
- to create documentation for HR and legal purposes
- to reduce the high cost of replacing a good employee demotivated by lack of recognition or feedback
- to understand where your team or organization could improve
- to demonstrate your commitment to the individual—their progress and skill level

“You can’t buy people’s time; you can buy their physical presence at a given place; you can even buy a measured number of their muscular motions per hour. But you cannot buy enthusiasm... you cannot buy loyalty... you cannot buy the devotion of their hearts. You must earn these.”

Rev Dr. Martin Luther King

10 Tips on Giving Positive Feedback

❶ Use “Thank you” to simply demonstrate appreciation for a job well-done—note that positive feedback need not be large and boisterous.

❷ Identify opportunities to celebrate team successes and the achievement of goals, including small ones. This fosters good morale which increases productivity. Consider sharing good news at a Pizza or Pot-Luck Lunch, a “sponsored” coffee break (by Tim Horton’s for example), a morning kick-off with Champagne & Orange Juice (O.J. for those who don’t like the bubbly). A group e-mail or mention in the company newsletter could also be exciting.

❸ Use the employee’s first name to increase the personal effect.

❹ Give credit where it is due—publicly acknowledge whose idea it was as this is a sign of a good leader.

❺ Link the praise to a specific action or behaviour, so it can be replicated.

❻ Offer praise in front of others, citing the effort expended to achieve the result—this could be done verbally in a group, printed out and stuck on the door to their office or any group space, added to a wall of fame, offered with a traveling trophy, etc. — the element of surprise and change is good for everyone.



❼ Give praise as it happens — that way, good habits are reinforced on the spot and you don’t risk forgetting to acknowledge the occurrence. When praising, stick with the praise and avoid adding a negative “but...”

❽ Try different methods to show appreciation like writing a sincere thank you card, or leaving an upbeat voice message.

❾ Praise soft skills too. A good role model, an employee who exemplifies the organization’s core values, excellent business ethics and practices, the demonstrated care to solve a customer or colleagues’ problem all deserve acknowledgement—not just meeting a deadline or reducing expenses.

❿ Encourage employees to learn to accept praise—the other person took forethought to give recognition, therefore they should train themselves to be receptive and avoid the modest “Thanks, but it was nothing really...”

Gifts to Praise By (Other than Cash)

Time Off
(day, half day, leave early)

Flowers or a Plant

Wine or Champagne

Manicure or Spa Treatment

Tokens like “funny money”

1 month Gym Membership

Work Event
(donuts, breakfast, picnic)

Balloons

Gift Certificate

Company Treasure Chest
(dollar store stuff, company promotional items, free lunch or coffee certificates)

Magazine Subscription
(what are their hobbies?)

A handwritten note

Fruit or Fun Basket

Framed Certificates of
Achievement

“There are two things people want more than sex and money... recognition and praise.”

Mary Kay Ash

Founder, Mary Kay Cosmetics

10 Tips on Giving Constructive Feedback



❶ As a leader or manager, start by recognizing that constructive input to an employee is often desired — as it gives them a sense of clarity in their professional life. If you have the belief that “negative” feedback will have a harmful effect, then you may be stunting the employee’s ability to develop.

❷ Avoid the “louder, longer, meaner” method where we barrage the employee with memos, e-mails, speeches, meetings, and policies.

❸ If it is a full review, start with positives first, placing more constructive items second. In this context, try to offer 45 positive items and 2 areas to improve. By limiting the number to only major areas of improvement, the employee can stay focussed on them... too many items will get lost.

❹ If the constructive feedback is being offered on its own, then discuss it in a singular fashion — one constructive feedback item at a time, not multiple areas of concern.

❺ Avoid adding positive items (“... oh but you’re great at this so don’t worry about it.”) - which results not only in a confusing message but also may deflect from the purpose of the conversation.

❻ Changes often do not occur unless there is an immediate consequence associated with the change. What is the consequence to the employee for improving—or not improving—on the area of concern? Associated actions could be: a review with a more senior manager, a reduced possibility for promotion, a limit to responsibilities, minimal or no pay increase, etc.

❼ Some team members will be defensive regardless of the feedback; many can feel criticized and respond with closed body language and self-protective remarks. Start by assuring them that direct and honest input regarding their performance is one of your management standards — that it is not personal. Secondly, ask them if they prefer to only hear the positive feedback—if so, you will need to rethink your management approach with this employee and their willingness to improve. Ask the employee how you could best communicate a concern for them to be able to absorb it and improve it.

❽ Ask them to create an action plan to improve on the area of concern, and submit this to you. Invite the employee to report back to you on their progress, perhaps every 6 to 8 weeks or sooner if the concern requires immediate correction. In effect, make them responsible for their own improvement.

❾ If your budget allows, consider using supporting tools to encourage or aid the improvement — like hire a Coach to mentor the individual, prepare and give them cue cards for their desk as a reminder, send them on a course that deals specifically with the subject of improvement.

❿ If the employee receives constructive feedback and does not change, you need to determine how essential the change is. You may need to “live with it” and work only to minimize the concern, not eradicate it. Some managers state that what they said in their first annual review with an employee remains almost unchanged a decade later. Some habits or skills will change, while others may not. The question is what the manager or the team can accept.

What is 360 Degree Feedback?

360 feedback is multi-source feedback, upward feedback or peer evaluation. Basically, each of these terms describes the process in which you evaluate yourself on a set of criteria, your manager evaluates you as do your peers and direct reports. You receive a gap analysis detailing how you perceive yourself versus how others perceive you.

Some field experts believe that 360 degree feedback is more objective than feedback only from a manager as there are a variety of perspectives on one’s performance. Other organizations do not embrace the program as it can be time consuming for, and onerous on the organization.



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excelHR has become a staffing leader in Canada as a result of employee retention—in large part due to employee feedback and recognition programs. We are not experts in the matter, nonetheless, we hope that you or someone you know could benefit from this collection of thoughts and tips gained from our experience, [1001 Ways to Reward Employees](#) by Bob Nelson, Workman Publishing, 1994 and [Workplace Recognition](#) by Sue Glasscock & Kimberly Gram, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1999.