



Feedback and Coaching Guide

Feedback vs. Coaching

Let's start by defining what we mean by "feedback" and "coaching," as the two terms are often used interchangeably but in reality, are quite different.

Feedback:

- Is information about the past, given in the present, with the goal of influencing behavior or performance for the future.
- Focuses on the relevant work or task being performed in the workplace.
- Can be used to address undesirable behaviors and performance gaps and issues.
- Should always follow up with the right way of doing the task and what the successful behavior looks like.
- Should be descriptive, with current examples demonstrating the behavior or performance gap.
- Can be "advice" oriented.

Coaching:

- Focuses on future behavior.
- Is a conversation in which a manager asks an employee questions to guide them to solve problems themselves instead of just telling them the answer.
- Can be used to improve both performance and development.
- Is a behavior, not a process.

3Cs Feedback Model

CONTEXT

- Plan the message you want to convey.
- Provide feedback “just in time.”
- Ensure recipient is not preoccupied.
- Try to balance the feedback – refer to successful and not successful behavior.

COMMUNICATE

- Feedback must be honest and helpful.
- Be specific and give a recent example.
- Be descriptive, not evaluative.
- Relate feedback to behaviors that can be changed.
- Give an alternative positive behavior.

CONFIRM

- Solicit the recipient’s thoughts on the feedback.
- Clarify if not understood; try another example.
- Confirm recipient understands and accepts the feedback.

Feedback Scenario #1: The 3Cs Feedback Model

Take a look at an actual scenario from beginning to end that uses the feedback model:

CONTEXT

- Plan the message you want to convey.
- Provide feedback “just in time.”
- Ensure recipient is not preoccupied.
- Try to balance the feedback – refer to successful and not successful behavior.

Context – set the stage for where, when, and how the feedback will occur.

A sales manager determines that he needs to give one of his team members, Jim, feedback on how he handled a recent meeting with a client. Before he meets with Jim, he is going to set the **context and plan his message** by doing the following:

- Think about what the message is that he wants to convey. He will write it out, using the recent client meeting as an example.
- Balance the feedback with positive and successful behaviors and ones that need changing or improvement.
- Book a time to meet with Jim when he knows he has time and will not be preoccupied. This meeting will take place on the same day as the client meeting or the first available time to ensure the example he uses is recent and Jim will remember.

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Communicate – deliver the feedback

In his meeting with Jim, the sales manager says the following:

- “Jim, I want to give you some feedback from today’s client meeting. During the meeting, when John was talking, you were checking your email. This sends the wrong message to the client, as it appears you are not interested in what he is saying. When someone is talking in a meeting, I expect you to listen to the person and not check your emails.”

The manager is clearly defining what behavior he wants changed.

The feedback is descriptive and relates to behaviors that can be easily changed.

The conversation informs Jim what the positive behavior looks like.

CONFIRM

- Solicit the recipient’s thoughts on the feedback.
- Clarify if not understood; try another example.
- Confirm recipient understands and accepts the feedback.

Confirm – ensure that the recipient of the feedback comprehends it

The sales manager will confirm that Jim understood the feedback:

- “Jim, do you recall reading your email during the meeting today? Do you understand how the client would perceive your actions that you are not interested in what he was saying?”

The manager solicits Jim’s feedback asking if he recalled the situation.

The manager confirms that Jim understands the feedback.



Feedback Scenario #2: Communicate Feedback on Behaviors That Can Be Changed

It's important to remember that when giving feedback, you need to ensure that the employee can change the behavior that you are discussing with them. Provide the employee with alternative positive behaviors to help them do so.

The following is not a good example:

- x Telling an employee that they are terrible at public speaking is not a good example. This MAY be a behavior or skill that they can change over time, however, it's not a skill that is easily learned, and some employees may never become good public speakers.

Instead, focus the feedback this way:

- ✓ Ask them how they feel about public speaking.
- ✓ Are they comfortable with public speaking? If not, suggest some training they could take.
- ✓ Suggest how they could make some slight improvements:
 - Speak louder or slower.
 - Do not read directly from the slide.
 - Suggest ways they could engage the audience.

This is feedback that an employee can learn from and incorporate into their next presentation.

Feedback Scenario #3: Communicate Specific, Positive Feedback

It's important that you tell employees specifically what they are doing well – give them an example so they understand. By doing this, employees will keep repeating the positive behaviors, which will reflect well in their performance.

Not a good example:

- "Jim, you handled that meeting with the client well." While it's positive feedback, it doesn't tell him specifically what he did well.

A better example:

- "Jim, great job managing the client's expectations today. You confirmed back to him what he wanted done, you explained the next steps in detail, and you confirmed when you would get back to him – great job!"

This example reinforces to Jim "what" specifically he did well. He now knows that this is the right approach and will ensure he communicates this way again.

STOP, START, and CONTINUE Feedback Model

Another, easy-to-use model for quick feedback is the *stop, start, and continue* model. This model can be used when you do not have the time to set context before you meet with your employee. See the example below:

A manager needs to give an employee feedback on how to improve their communication skills.

"John, I would like you to work on improving your communication skills with team members. You need to **stop** interrupting your team members when we are in our weekly status meetings. Today, during the meeting you interrupted Sally three times when she was trying to make a point. You need to **start** listening to others' opinions as they have valuable insights to offer. I would like you to **continue** sharing your thoughts and opinions as you have great experience that others could learn from."

Coaching

Where feedback is generally focused on past behavior, coaching is focused on future behavior. It can be used to achieve performance and development goals that benefit both the employee and the organization. Effective coaching requires a manager to have the right foundation before they start coaching, as well as key behaviors.

Practice the Four As of Effective Coaching Behaviors



Actively Listen

Active listening is engaging with employees and their message, not just hearing what they are saying. It enables you to move beyond just what is said. Ultimately, active listening allows you to uncover information you did not already know and identify the real problem.

Key behaviors include:

- Provide your undivided attention.
- Try to understand what the employee is saying and might not be saying. Both listen to spoken words and observe body language.
- Genuinely try to understand what the employee is saying.

Ask

Active listening and asking questions go hand in hand. If you ask questions but don't listen to the answer, it doesn't matter that you asked a question. Ask thoughtful, powerful questions to learn more information and guide employees to uncover opportunities and/or solutions.

Key behaviors include:

- Ask questions and do not simply make statements with a question mark at the end. For example: "Is it cold outside?" vs. "What's the weather like outside?"
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Ask questions to learn something you didn't already know.
- Ask for reasoning (the why).
- Ask "what else?"

Sample questions to ask:

Opening Questions:

- What's on your mind?
- Do you feel you've had a good week/month? Why or why not?
- What is the ideal situation?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What areas do you want to work on?



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- What's a current issue you are facing?
- How can you provide even more value to the organization?
- How can you optimize the result of a given project or activity?
- What else?

Problem-Identifying Questions:

- Where are you now, relative to your goal?
- What skills and knowledge do you have that will help you with this?
- What has the most importance here? Or what is your priority?
- What is the challenge here for you?
- What are some other challenges?
- What is getting in the way of you achieving your goal?

Problem-Solving Questions:

- What options are available?
- What have you already tried? What worked and what did not?
- What have peers done in the past when facing the same situation?
- If you didn't have any restrictions, what action would you take?
- What are the pros and cons of each option?
- What possibilities have you not yet considered?
- How can you harness people around the organization (or even outside the organization) to help with this goal?
- What is the best alternative?
- How can I help?

Next-Steps Questions:

- What do you need to do, and when, to achieve your goal?
- What resources are required to achieve your goal?
- What process tweaks can help you achieve your goal faster and better? What skills and tools would support these improvements?
- How will you know when you have achieved your goal? What does success look like?
- When will you complete your goal?

Action Plan

Action planning is about holding employees and yourself accountable for progress and results. Ensure next steps, action plans, and responsibilities are clearly understood and agreed upon.

Key behaviors include:

- Collectively decide on a plan of action.
- If necessary, document next steps and action items.
- Follow up on action items.

Adapt

Coaching must be adapted to the individual employee and situation. Adapting means you are truly paying attention to the individual instead of adopting the same approach with everyone.

Key behaviors include:

- Recognize employees' unique characteristics.
- Appreciate the situation at hand and adapt your behavior and communication accordingly.



Be Mindful of Rater Bias

Keep biases front of mind while engaging in performance management. The goal is to apply accurate and fair ratings.

- **Halo/Horns Effect:** Occurs when an employee performs particularly well (or poorly) in one area and is then rated correspondingly high or low in all other areas.
- **Personal Bias:** The more characteristics a rater shares with an employee, such as age, gender, and work values, the more favorably the rater will tend to assess that employee's behavior.
- **Purpose Effect:** Occurs when the rater believes a specific rating or ratings will lead to a desired outcome, positive or negative, for the employee.
- **Leniency Effect:** Occurs when a rater wants to avoid being negative or fears repercussions, so they score employees higher than is realistic.
- **Recency Effect:** Occurs when a rater weighs an employee's recent performance too heavily, as opposed to assessing the employee's *average* performance over the entire performance cycle.

Employee Self-Assessment – How to Calibrate Their Assessment

Self-assessment is a great tool to gain insight into how employees think they are progressing on a goal or competency. It gives the employee ownership over their performance and development as they are part of the entire process.

In each check-in meeting, ask employees how they rate themselves in each category (expectations, competencies, and goals).

- Ask why they think the rating accurately represents their performance.
- Ask for examples that support the rating.
- **If the employee rated themselves higher:**
 - If they rated themselves as Exceeds and you rate them Delivers – ask the employee to articulate why they rated themselves that way.
 - This will get them to think and communicate to you the additional work/tasks they accomplished that support their viewpoint.
 - This not only gives you more information about what they actually accomplished, but it also gives you more insight into what they view as “strong” performance.
 - Take this opportunity to calibrate and explain in detail (with examples) the difference between a Delivers and Exceeds rating.
 - Articulate why you rated them as Delivers and be clear on what they need to do to achieve an Exceeds rating.
 - Use specific job examples the employee can relate to.
 - Ask them if they understand the difference now that you have explained it further.
 - Before moving on, ensure you come to agreement on the rating, and they completely understand how they performed from your perspective.
- Self-assessments throughout the year will make the final review and performance rating discussion a breeze. There shouldn't be any surprises as you have been giving your feedback and providing coaching and assessments all year.



Check-In Meeting Guide

Accountabilities

The following information outlines basic accountabilities for both managers and employees throughout the check-in process. Understand the accountabilities that apply to you as well as those of your manager/employee.

Manager Accountabilities	Employee Accountabilities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make the time to meet with employees for a minimum of 60 minutes once a quarter. This can be done in regular one-on-one meetings. 2. Ensure that you have set expectations and determined the core competencies for the employee's current role. 3. Set and review business goals and growth and development goals in every meeting. 4. Assess and calibrate the employee's performance rating based on their self-assessment. 5. Give honest, direct feedback on how to further improve performance or develop the employee. 6. All feedback should be focused on development and what success looks like. 7. Give career advice. 8. Ask the employee if they are having any issues and help them overcome obstacles they are encountering. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Book the meeting with your manager – quarterly check-ins throughout the year. 2. Be prepared to discuss your goals/objectives from previous meetings (bring your current version of the <i>Performance Review Template</i>). 3. Discuss your accomplishments and areas where you felt you had some difficulties. 4. Conduct a self-assessment against role expectations, competencies, and goals. 5. Solicit feedback from your manager. 6. Listen to the feedback with an open mind. 7. Clarify if you don't understand, and if you disagree, ask for some more direction or examples. 8. Document the conversation, goals, and outcomes in the tracking template and send it back to the manager to confirm that it accurately reflects the outcome of the check-in meeting.

Check-In Questions

Use the following questions as a starting point for conducting your check-in meetings.

Questions for Managers to Ask Employees	Questions for Employees to Ask Managers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specifically would you like to work on next? • How do you feel that you are currently doing? • What parts of your role are you enjoying the most? And the least? • Since we last met, what accomplishments are you most proud of? • On your last project/assignment, what do you think you could have done better? Why? • What have you learned? • What are some of your short-term career goals? How can I help you achieve those? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think I am performing? • What areas do you think I need to further develop? • Can you give me some specific examples that will help me with my development? • For my next role, I am interested in [insert initiative or development request here]; can you give me some feedback on how you see me fitting into that role? • What skills would I need to develop?