

The importance of quality feedback conversations

'I don't want to give him feedback because I don't know what his reaction will be like.' 'I gave her some feedback and now she won't talk to me.' 'I tell my team that they are doing well all the time but they just shrug and don't seem to listen to me.' 'I don't respect him as a manager, so why should I listen to the feedback that he gives me?'

These are some of the statements people make about feedback. They highlight the pitfalls and concerns held about giving and receiving feedback.

Unfortunately most of us do not learn how to give feedback well. Equally, many people have not learned how to accept feedback. Sometimes, feedback results in deterioration in the relationship and one bad experience can lead to a lack of willingness to either give or receive feedback. Done well, feedback can improve self-confidence and esteem and improve working relationships.

Important factors in providing effective feedback include:

- picking the right time and place,
- setting the scene,
- being fair and impartial in the assessment of a situation and in the appraisal of performance,
- self-awareness and analysis of relevant factors affecting behaviour,
- achieving balance in the use of criticism and praise, and

- carefully choosing the language used so as to make the message clear.

Using generalisations, such as 'always' or 'never', can be very provocative. For example, the statement 'you are always late' is likely to cause distress in the person getting the feedback because 'always' is a generalisation and in most cases will be inaccurate — the person may often be late, but they won't be late every day.

Specific examples are required to back up any claims being made. If lateness is an issue that needs to be addressed, it is more effective to cite incidents of lateness and to find out the reasons why the person is late as a starting point for the feedback conversation.

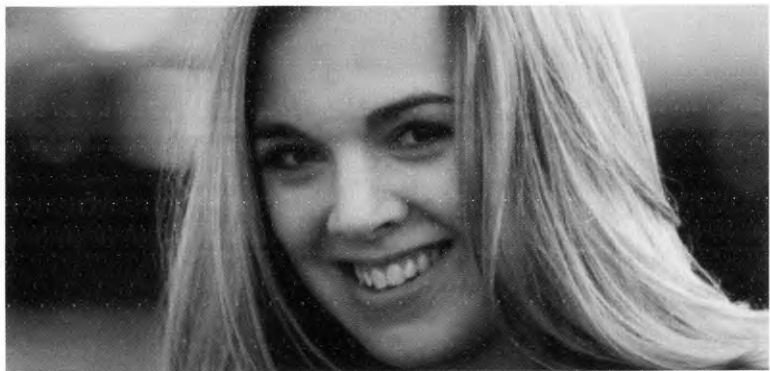
If you want to praise someone's performance, generalisations are equally unhelpful. Saying 'you always do good work' will be lost on the person hearing the statement, and it will not give any indication as to the behaviour that you most value. A specific example of good work is more helpful.

In mastering the art of persuasive communication, successful managers recognise that feedback is a great motivator in guiding

goal achievement and an essential tool for staff development. Asking for what you want and effectively listening to what is really being said to us are the cornerstones of the ability to influence others.

The NSW Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA NSW) deliver a short course titled: 'Giving and receiving feedback effectively' which develops the skills and confidence to have successful feedback conversations with others.

This and other short courses are available to ALIA personal and institutional members at a discounted rate. All of IPAA NSW courses meet the requirement for the ALIA CPD Scheme and attract one CPD point per hour. Go to the ALIA website for details on how to enrol [<http://alia.org.au/education/cpd/services.html>], e-mail cpd@alia.org.au, ph 02 6215 8258. If you would like further information on this or other short course please refer to the IPAA NSW website http://www.nsw.ipaa.org.au/04_learning_development/public_program.htm or contact IPAA NSW directly ph 02 9228 5225 or e-mail info@nsw.ipaa.org.au for more information. ■



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