



### Informal Feedback Drives Performance

Informal feedback is ongoing, in-the-moment development advice given to employees (by managers outside of the formal review) that can provide employees with a clear idea of their ongoing performance throughout the year. Informal feedback that is fair and accurate can **improve performance by up to 39.1%**.

### Provide Continuous Feedback

Managers should aim to provide effective informal feedback throughout the year to improve employee performance through in-the-moment development guidance to decrease the chance that the formal review surprises the employee. Regular feedback helps build a relationship of trust and solidifies the impression that performance management is consistent and fair.

## PROVIDING INFORMAL FEEDBACK

### Prepare to Provide FAST Feedback

The benefits of informal feedback occur when feedback conversations occur regularly—whenever an opportunity for praise or a development situation arises. To help you remember the basics of informal feedback, feedback should be FAST:

**Frequent**—Managers should provide feedback on an ongoing basis so that employees have an accurate and up-to-date understanding of their performance strengths and development areas.

**Actionable**—Feedback should help the employee to do his or her current job better, or recognize actions or work that were ideal for the current position. Ensure recommended actions or behaviors are within the employee's control in his or her current position.

**Specific**—Managers should identify specific actions the employee took or specific things that were appropriate or inappropriate. Specific and targeted feedback has up to a 6.6% positive impact on employee performance.

**Timely**—Managers should give feedback as soon as possible after the action or event. This will maximize the impact of feedback on the employee's performance and minimize the chances of resentment.

### Pre-Conversation Checklist

- Is your feedback fair, accurate, and directly applicable to the employee's tasks?
- Do your comments focus on single behaviors that direct the employee's attention to a few specific and important improvements?
- Are your planned comments straightforward, without any personal opinions?
- Were any of the current development areas discussed previously? If so, are you prepared to incorporate that into the current conversation?



#### Avoid Common Mistakes

- **Making Interpretations:** Limit feedback to the employee's behavior without using any personal interpretations.
- **Talking Too Much:** Once you have acknowledged the situation, behavior, and impact in question, allow the employee to provide his or her opinion on your feedback.
- **Focusing on Weaknesses:** Frame missing skills not as weaknesses, but as obstacles the employee should overcome.

Source: CEB analysis.



## PROVIDING INFORMAL FEEDBACK



### Checklist of Daily Reminders of When to Provide Performance Feedback

- Did any of your employees do anything exceptional today (either good or bad)?
- Did you see your employees doing anything inefficiently?
- Are there development areas where you have seen an improvement or drop-off in performance?
- Did an employee's performance have a positive or negative impact on a client or colleague?
- Have any of your employees missed deadlines?

### During the Conversation, Identify the Situation, Behavior, and Impact of the Action or Event

After reviewing the basics of what should be covered in informal feedback conversations, use the Center for Creative Leadership's three-step process to increase the quality and effectiveness of the feedback. To keep your feedback relevant and focused, identify the situation, behavior, and impact of the action or event. Although this method works for positive and negative informal feedback, any serious performance issues will require a more structured performance discussion. Here are some examples of how to differentiate positive and negative feedback using the situation-behavior-impact framework:

1. **Situation**—Describe the situation in which you observed the employee.
2. **Behavior**—Describe the behavior you observed.
3. **Impact**—Describe the impact of that behavior on you or others who were present in the situation.

Positive Feedback	Development Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>State the Behavior and Its Valuable Aspects:</b> "Thank you for helping Mark with that software yesterday."</li> <li>▪ <b>Note the Behavior's Impact on Productivity or Environment:</b> "Helping him really boosted his enthusiasm for the task."</li> <li>▪ <b>State Your Appreciation:</b> "I was able to spend time on another important project while you helped Mark."</li> <li>▪ <b>Provide Impetus for Continuing Behavior:</b> "As you work toward your next role, I'm hopeful that you will continue to play a crucial role in the team."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>State Unacceptable Behavior:</b> "I've noticed that your e-mails often have spelling errors."</li> <li>▪ <b>Note the Behavior's Impact on Productivity or Environment:</b> "I worry about what our clients will think when they see a misspelled word."</li> <li>▪ <b>Describe Alternative Behaviors and Desired Outcome:</b> "We want to send 100% error-free information. Please spend a minute to re-read and spell-check your e-mails before hitting the 'Send' button."</li> <li>▪ <b>Set Goals for the Future:</b> "The team needs you to help preserve our image, and sending error-free e-mails is one way to do that best."</li> </ul>

Source: Sloan Weitzel, "Feedback That Works: How to Build and Deliver Your Message," *Center for Creative Leadership*, 2003, <http://www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/publications/readers/reader405ccl.pdf>; CEB analysis.



### Informal Feedback Drives Performance

Informal feedback is ongoing, in-the-moment development advice given by managers to employees outside of the formal performance review. Informal feedback that is fair and accurate can **improve performance by up to 39.1%**.

### Provide Continuous Feedback

Managers should proactively provide feedback as soon as possible after the event to which the feedback is related. For help identifying opportunities to provide informal feedback, see our Manager Guide for Identifying Opportunities to Provide Informal Feedback.

## IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH INFORMAL FEEDBACK

### Five Key Characteristics of Informal Feedback

Ensure that the feedback you provide meets the following five criteria for high-quality informal feedback:

#### Specific

Feedback should reference specific actions the employee took or specific pieces of his or her work.

#### Timely

Give feedback as soon as possible after the action or event.

#### Proactive

Provide feedback proactively, not just when employees request it.

#### Relevant

Feedback should help the employee do his or her job better and be within the employee's power to improve.

#### Constructive

Development feedback should be framed as an opportunity to improve performance rather than as a weakness.

Source: CEB analysis.



# IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH INFORMAL FEEDBACK

## Avoid Common Mistakes



### **Making Assumptions**

Feedback should be limited to the employee's behavior without making assumptions or interpreting the behavior as a sign of something else.

#### **Example (Making Assumptions):**

"I've noticed that you don't like doing administrative work."

#### **Example (Observing Behavior):**

"I've noticed that recently you haven't been submitting your administrative paperwork on time."

### **Providing Vague Feedback**

When feedback is specific and detailed, employees are more likely to repeat desired behaviors or stop incorrect behaviors.

#### **Example (Vague):**

"You're doing a great job at being a team player."

#### **Example (Detailed):**

"Thank you for volunteering to complete the project for Sandra while she was out sick last week. Your willingness to step up and help your colleagues when they need it makes you a great team player."

### **Overemphasizing Development Feedback**

Feedback should be provided on strengths as well as development areas.

#### **Example (Focus on Development):**

John only provides feedback when he is correcting mistakes, adjusting behaviors, and addressing inefficiencies.

#### **Example (Balanced Feedback):**

Gary provides informal feedback on areas for improvement, but also provides feedback when he thinks his employees perform well, improve in a development area, or go above and beyond his expectations.

Source: CEB analysis.



### Proactively Offer Feedback to Employees

Managers who are likely to provide feedback proactively **can improve employees' performance 16% more** than managers whose employees must seek out informal feedback.

### Provide Feedback as Close as Possible to the Event

Timely, informal feedback can improve employee performance by as much as 25%.

## IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE INFORMAL FEEDBACK

### Reflect Often to Identify Feedback Opportunities

There are many opportunities to provide feedback to your direct reports. Ask yourself the following questions each day to identify opportunities to provide high-quality, informal feedback. These will serve as a reminder to provide feedback as soon as possible after the event. (Suggestion: post this list of questions in your office.)

Positive Feedback Opportunities	Development Feedback Opportunities
✓ Did any of my employees demonstrate improvement in a development area?	✓ Did I see opportunities for improvement in my employees' work?
✓ Did my employees go out of their way to support their teammates or other colleagues?	✓ Did I see behaviors from my employees that reflect poorly on the team?
✓ Did my employees demonstrate the organization's values?	✓ Did any of my employees fail to meet my expectations for their performance?
✓ Did any of my employees go above and beyond what I asked of them?	✓ Are any of my employees struggling with a particular task or skill?
✓ Have I heard positive feedback from others about my direct reports?	✓ Have I received constructive feedback from others about my direct reports?

Source: CEB analysis.

### Use All Available Feedback Channels

Don't let the challenge of finding time for face-to-face interactions limit the amount of feedback you provide. Although face-to-face conversation is the most common method of delivering informal feedback, it is not the only method at your disposal. Other feedback channels have been shown to be just as effective as face-to-face, including:

- E-mail,
- Phone conversations, and
- Written notes.