



Giving feedback virtually

LEADING AND WORKING IN VIRTUAL TEAMS – A TOOLKIT



Most experiences with feedback in a work environment are annual performance reviews. These are usually top-down, one-sided conversations that rarely leave a huge impact on you once you leave the meeting room. Take that to the virtual space, where we're missing vital body language cues and potentially even eye contact, and it's a recipe for something less than success.

Feedback online certainly shouldn't be a once a year affair. To create meaningful feedback, you need to give it regularly – and also be prepared to receive it.

Fundamentals of feedback



1. Feedback is a gift

Think about the last time you received a gift – what did you say when you received it? It's highly likely that you said thank you – even if it was something you felt was less than helpful.

As with getting a gift, remember to always thank the person who is giving you feedback before choosing what to do with it afterwards.

2. Knowing how to receive feedback is just as important as giving it

When someone gives us feedback on our behaviour, we can:

- Maintain the same behaviour (ignore the feedback)
- Reinforce the behaviour (deny or justify your behaviour)
- Change the behaviour (attempt to understand the feedback)

Many people's initial reaction towards feedback is to go into defense mode because we feel personally attacked - this can happen even more online. By trying to empathise with the person who feels uncomfortable with our actions though, we can gradually improve our relationships with others and with ourselves.

3. When giving feedback, focus on how you felt about someone else's actions

The most important thing is to focus on the impact of someone else's actions, not the person. It's important to state the action and say how that action made you feel. For example, a team member might not answer any of the team inbox emails that are supposed to be shared around the whole team. Instead of saying, "You're selfish because you never chip in to answer emails" it would be better to say, "I've noticed you don't seem to answer the team emails and I feel frustrated, because it increases the workload for the rest of the team."

This way of focusing on your feelings is a common technique used in conflict resolution. By doing so, you avoid making accusations that would make the other person feel less open to dialogue and prevent them from going on the defensive. Getting people to feel comfortable to communicate about how they feel is crucial, so anything that eases dialogue should be prioritised.

4. Don't be afraid of feedback

"At the end of the day, we're all people – and people have feelings."

Being capable of opening up and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable with the people we spend most of our time with is probably one of the best things we can possibly do for ourselves – and it just happens to make teamwork more effective too.

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