

Getting and Giving Great Feedback

People that consistently seek feedback are more successful. This worksheet's goal is to give you the skills and best practices needed to obtain more insightful, actionable feedback.

Asking for Feedback

If possible, let the individual(s) know in advance that you will be seeking feedback after your presentation. Doing so manages their expectations and can increase their attention to you.

Asking something general like, "How was I?" rarely gives you anything back other than "fine," "good," or other brief answers that are not very helpful without greater explanation. Instead, ask for specific feedback because that makes it easier for the individual to give a focused response. For example, you might ask, "Did I speak too quickly?", "Could I be heard throughout?" or "Were my messages clear?"

Receiving Feedback

It's normal to feel a need to explain or justify one's performance when receiving constructive feedback. Unfortunately, doing so makes you sound defensive, makes the person giving feedback uncomfortable and leads to fewer, less helpful feedback opportunities. Try to confine yourself to three key responses when receiving feedback:

1. Thank you.
2. Tell me more.
3. What would a 'win' look like?

While I advise against defending or justifying your performance, I'm not suggesting that you must accept the feedback; your role is to decide what feedback is helpful versus what should be ignored.

Giving Positive Feedback

General observations like 'good,' 'fine' or 'fantastic' are not very helpful because they do not provide specific insights into what the feedback recipient should continue to do in the future. Positive feedback should identify the precise aspects of the performance that were good so that the individual will know where they are making progress and should continue making similar choices.

Giving Constructive/Negative Feedback

Questions to ask yourself before you start:

- Am I comfortable giving this feedback? (Your discomfort will be telegraphed to the listener)
- Are you intending to help or just going through the motions? (They will know it.)
- Is it the right time for the individual to receive the feedback? (When in doubt, ask.)
- Is it the right location? (Give praise in public, constructive feedback in private.)

Use the 3-I Corrective Feedback Model

1. Issue
 - ✓ Identify the specific issue/behavior that needs to change
 - ✓ State exactly what was said or done
2. Impact
 - ✓ Explain the impact of this behavior on the audience
3. Improvement
 - ✓ Offer 1-2 specific suggestions for improving the behavior
 - ✓ Demonstrate the desired behavior

Getting and Giving Great Feedback

Harmful Feedback Tactics to Avoid

Tactic	Specific Harmful Examples	Adverse Impacts of Such Feedback
Being vague	<i>"That was pretty good – good job." "I think you need to improve your voice." "Your opening just lacked oomph."</i>	Does not provide specifically identify the issue/problem or how to improve. Confuses the participant.
Overloading	<i>"You didn't provide a clear objective, your stance was too wide, your voice was too soft, and you need to rework your first..."</i>	Overloads the participant and prevents him/her from remembering specific issues and improvement
Confronting/ Insulting	<i>"Why in the world did you do/say that?" "This needs a major overhaul." "I just don't know where to start."</i>	Offends the participant and can create defensiveness and resentment. Distracts from learning and improving.
Lying/Petty Praise	<i>"You didn't look nervous." (but they did!) "The color of your shirt is nice." "Your 'uhs' weren't that distracting."</i>	Can cause the participant to distrust the evaluator and/or fail to improve upon behaviors that are not identified.
Comparing	<i>"You should do what he just did." "She had a much better delivery style." "You were the best in this group."</i>	Forces the participant to compare him/herself to and compete with others. Demotivates. Diverts focus to others.

Helpful Examples of Constructive Feedback

Issue	Share Impact on Audience	Improvement Suggestions to Offer
Limited eye communication	<i>"It felt like it limited your ability to maintain connection and rapport. When you lost eye communication you became less engaging."</i>	Keep better eye communication; work on ending sentences while looking at people in the room.
Few if any pauses	<i>"It felt fast. As result, it was hard to keep up and communicated that you might be nervous."</i>	Slow down, pause, and connect. Set times in your talk where you will plan to break and ask a question.
Played with pen	<i>"The clicking was distracting and made it hard to follow. It also seemed to show that you were nervous."</i>	Put the pen or anything else away that you might be tempted to fidget with during performance.
Raised pitch when ending sentences	<i>"It sounded like up-talking. This made your statements seem like questions and took away from the power of your talk."</i>	Work to end each sentence by lowering your pitch and providing a definitive end to sentences.
Could not be heard	<i>"I had trouble hearing you. Apart from missing your message, it undermined the appearance of your confidence."</i>	Work on vocal projection. Look at me during meetings so I can signal you when you need to increase volume.