

GIVING FEEDBACK & HAVING CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

These notes are from the session on 27th & 28th January with some additional pointers. As always, use your judgement and bear in mind that not all pointers are applicable all the time.

Top tips

Find the right environment

Particularly for challenging feedback and conversations, holding this in a quiet and confidential place, in an informal setting, is very helpful.

Think about body language

When someone looks angry or defensive, we tend to respond in the same way which is not constructive; if someone looks caring and open, we respond positively.

Be constructive

Talk about the future and how to move forward, with helpful suggestions, rather than focusing on allocating blame or criticising people. Make suggestions that are specific, measurable, attainable, and if applicable, include a deadline or timeframe.

Explore the issue

Ask why something is happening or not happening, you might be surprised by the answer and it might throw up a different solution.

Ask for a solution

It can be helpful to ask the person what the solutions could be and if possible, for them to choose the solution that works best for them. This works with feedback as well as issues; someone who comes up with the answer for themselves will be committed to it, empowered and grow in confidence.

Explain your view

Have examples to hand, so you can be quite specific. This can help you to both analyse the situation and work out what is really going on.

Own it

Use sentences such as 'I feel', 'I think', 'I find'. Don't give second-hand feedback. Talk about behaviours and actions, not people – 'e.g. I sometimes hear you being quite abrupt with customers on the phone' rather than 'You are a rude person'.

Be kind

You don't know the circumstances or challenges someone is facing, so whatever you feel, be kind in the view that you take.

Build relationships

Take time to get to know people and share yourself with others. Show that you care about the person and not just the job.

Share your experiences

Be generous in sharing your hard-earned wisdom and knowledge when it's asked for. (But avoid sharing it too much if it isn't asked for – see 'ask for a solution' above!)

Time it right

Make sure you and the other person have time to have an in-depth conversation, if that has been asked for or is needed, properly.

Build feedback into your culture

Start to tell people specifically what they've done well, and people will soon start sharing concerns they have about what didn't go so well, e.g. 'I thought it was really effective the way you presented that information on xx by using a diagram and images.'

Ask other people for feedback about you informally, and they'll soon reciprocate, e.g. 'I found that person really difficult to deal with, do you think I could have done anything differently?'

Be clear

Ultimately, if you reach the point where you need to tell someone to do something, be clear that this is now an instruction, very clear about what you want to happen, how you want it to happen, how you want to know when it has happened, when you want it done by and when you will meet again to discuss progress.