

A manager's guide to effective coaching

Feedback, given effectively, is a gift that will help your employee develop & succeed in your SME. **But feedback can also pack an emotional punch. It can be difficult or confusing to hear. The employee may deny or resist or argue.**

As a leader coach, you can't control your employee's response & feelings, but you can be prepared to handle them. An effective coaching relationship requires effort & commitment from both the coach & the employee.

If the person you are coaching resists your feedback, your efforts will be severely limited, & more important, the employee will miss an opportunity to learn & develop. While you cannot force anyone to believe & respond to the feedback you give, you can review your approach to feedback & consider changing the way you deliver the message.

First, it is your job as a manager is to ensure your feedback is effective & constructive. Whether you are giving feedback in your coaching role, or in any other role, you should learn & practice techniques when giving feedback. Second, individualise the way you deliver feedback. People will respond in different ways to information about their behaviour & performance.

Recognising this & applying it to your coaching & feedback style will go a long way toward giving feedback that is heard & accepted. Tailor your coaching approach by:

1. Taking into account the specific situation. Giving feedback to a new employee who is anxious about his / her first presentation is a different situation than giving feedback to a confident, long-term employee who is eager for visibility.

2. Recognising that people process information differently. Some people understand your message quickly, others need time to absorb & consider what you've said. Some will want to focus on decisions, actions & implications. Others will want to ponder & work out possible solutions on their own.

3. Factoring in health, personal & family problems. Resistance or unexpected reactions to feedback may be connected to stresses & problems outside work. When you know about such difficulties, you may adjust the timing & content of your feedback. But don't assume you know what is going on, be prepared to handle the unexpected.

4. Draw on your employee's problem-solving abilities. People may resist your feedback because they don't agree with your conclusions. For example, you may think a shoddy production report indicates disinterest & not taking enough time. The employee may agree the report was shoddy, but is embarrassed to admit he doesn't understand the new method of calculation. Give the feedback about the report, but allow the other person to offer his or her own reason & possible solutions.

TIPS ON GIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Avoid when coaching

1. Assume.
2. Be vague.
3. Use accusations.
4. Judge the person.
5. Pass along vague feedback from others.
6. Give advice unless asked.
7. Psycho analyse.
8. Qualify your feedback by backing out of the description.
9. Use examples from your own experience.
10. Generalise with words like "always" or "never."
11. Label your feedback as positive or negative.
12. Sandwich your feedback with words like "but."

Do's when coaching

1. Be specific when recalling the situation.
2. Be specific when describing the behaviour.
3. Acknowledge the impact of the behaviour on you.
4. Judge the behaviour.
5. Pay attention to body language.
6. Use verbatim quotes.
7. Re-create the behaviour, if appropriate.
8. Give feedback in a timely manner.
9. Give your feedback, then stop talking.
10. Say "I felt" or "I was" to frame your impact statement.
11. Focus on a single message.
12. Be sensitive to the emotional impact of your feedback.