



Feedback: A Powerful Tool for Growth

“Feedback is a free education to excellence. Seek it with sincerity and receive it with grace.” – Ann Marie Houghtailing

Feedback can be an impactful catalyst for growth and development and can even build trust in relationships and teams. It is a critical component of creating a growth and learning culture in teams and organizations. Despite the benefits, feedback is often relegated to yearly performance reviews and, with this structure, offers very little opportunity for actual growth. Leaders play a crucial role in normalizing and encouraging feedback, both for others and from others. Key skills and practices can aid in creating a culture of accountability and trust which encourages feedback, growth, and development in all.

Great leaders get in the habit of giving feedback often and know that for feedback to be most effective, it must be a continual process. It must also be given in the right setting, and it must be interactive. It should not be a one-sided conversation and the other person should be given time to process and respond. The best time to praise good performance is as soon as possible and the rule of thumb is that this can be done in public or private, based on preference. Any feedback about changing behavior should be brought up within 24 hours and should be done in private. As you work on getting in the habit of giving feedback often, you can use the AIR Model below to plan how to give effective feedback.

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How to Give Effective Feedback Using the AIR Model

When giving feedback, you can take steps to avoid provoking defensiveness and ensure that the feedback has the best chance of impacting future behavior. To do so, you can consider the AIR Model.

Action – Identify and share the behavior or action that you witnessed. It is important to be specific about what the person has done or not done, without judging intent. This should describe what happened from your perspective, which opens opportunities for interaction about how the behavior or action may have felt different from their perspective.

Impact – Share how the behavior or action affected/is affecting you, the team, or the organization. Outlining the impact helps to connect the specific action to a specific outcome.

Request – Lastly, end the feedback with a request. In cases of praise, that may be to ‘keep doing’ that behavior. In cases of constructive feedback, ensure that the request is a SMART one – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.