CONSTRUCTIVE PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK

1. **Performance Feedback Should Be Constructive to Be Productive**
   - Feedback has the best results when it targets and guides desired behavior.

   - Negative feedback highlights what's bad, not what's desired.

   - Generalized feedback doesn't explain what behavior to repeat or avoid.

   - Constructive feedback tries to reinforce the positive and change the negative by:
     - Identifying what was done well or poorly.
     - Describing what action or behavior is desired.
     - Explaining the effects of the observed and desired acts or behavior.

2. **Constructive Feedback Focuses on the Behavior, Not the Person**
   - Avoid attacks, judgments, and name-calling.
     - Say "this happened" rather than "you are."
     - Encourage the person to listen rather than go on the defensive.
     - Use "I" messages.

   - Take time to point out positive behaviors that can be repeated.
     - Say "You have one of the best programs in the state. " rather than "You're doing a great job."

3. **Constructive Feedback Uses Examples**
   - Include specific examples to make feedback useful.
     - "You covered the agenda topics well during your presentation, but you didn't give others a chance to ask questions" or "You did a great job running that meeting. All the topics were covered, and everyone had a chance to participate."

   - Explain the results or effect of the action or behavior.
     - "Thanks to the extra time you put in, we were able to meet our deadline" or "One of our clientele has asked for help from someone else because you didn't follow up with them in time."
   - Reinforce behavior you want repeated.

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- o "Your attention to detail in planning the 4-H banquet really made us look good to the county officials. We really value your skill."
  - Explain how you want inadequate behavior replaced.
    - o "The next time it's important to make sure everything we need for an event is ready in time."

4. An Effective Feedback Process Involves the Employee

- Ask the employee for suggestions on how to improve inadequate behaviors or continue positive ones.
  - o "What can we do to keep this going?"
  - o "Do you have any thoughts about how to turn this around?"

- Check that the employee understands what you want and why.
  - o Ask the person to restate your feedback (e.g., "Would you mind summarizing this for me so I know we're on the same page?").
  - o Invite the person to ask questions.

- Agree on a plan to turn the feedback into positive action.
  - o "So it seems like we can help you continue to provide this high level of customer service by getting you daily updates."
  - o "Then you're going to write notes on your meeting agenda reminding yourself to stop for questions at the end of every topic, right?"

- Continue to provide feedback on the employee's progress (e.g., "You're continuing to set a standard for great programming" or "Today's meeting was organized and productive, especially the question and answer session ….").

Performance Feedback Tips

- Make the feedback specific.

- Base feedback on a specific event, behavior, etc.

- Describe exactly what was done well and/or what could be improved.

- Give the feedback as quickly as possible after the incident took place.

- Consider the employee's feelings; focus on the action, not the person.

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- Let the employee know what behavior you expect, whether you desire to reinforce positive behavior or make changes.

- Explain how the positive or negative behavior affects job performance, co-workers, the department, customers, or the organization.

- Give feedback out of a genuine desire to be constructive, not to hurt.

- Limit feedback to one aspect of behavior at a time.

- Work with the employee to come up with ways to repeat positive behaviors and correct inadequate ones.

- Follow up with more feedback and action plans as needed.

Adapted from: Business & Legal Reports, Inc.