

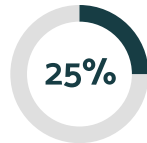
Your Guide to Coaching Conversations

Feedback

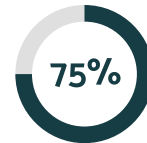
Feedback is one of the most powerful tools managers and leaders can use to successfully direct their teams. It's also commonly overlooked, underutilized, and misunderstood. In a recent survey conducted by [Office Vibe](#):



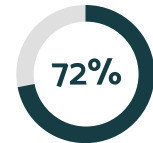
of millennials say the feedback they receive from managers is not meaningful



feel like the feedback they receive is frequent enough to help them understand how to improve



of employees who display low engagement levels or leave their jobs say that it's due to their manager or leadership



of employees get praise less than once a week








Training leaders on feedback can be difficult because the word itself can invoke negative feelings in some while others presume to be feedback experts. Many leaders and managers struggle to know how to give constructive feedback that manages any performance issues while still making the employee feel their value.

While it's true that some people may be great at giving feedback, it's important to note that providing feedback is a constantly developing skill that requires daily practice – it's like riding a bike, but with higher stakes that can unexpectedly happen at any time, so it's important to be prepared!

What's the big deal?

Let's begin with impacts on the organization because the stakes for poor or negative feedback reflect in some major ways, such as:

-  High turnover
-  Increased hiring and training costs
-  Stunted production
-  Lower year-over-year growth
-  Difficulty finding qualified candidates

Feedback almost always feels personal to the recipient, which is why good intentions alone are not enough when providing criticisms or instructions.

Think of feedback as the railings on a narrow bridge between your employees and the desired outcome.

Technically, someone could walk across that bridge without assistance given that they have incredible balance, focus, and courage, but odds are, most people are going to slip several times before making it across or will give up trying altogether.



They are also more likely to slip if they feel an immense amount of pressure, fear failure, are micromanaged, or are receiving instructions in a negative tone or context. Every time that happens, it causes interruptions that can translate to real monetary losses to the organization.

These interruptions can result in high turnover, low engagement, and costly mistakes. Whereas organizations that employ meaningful, positive feedback methods tend to show low levels of turnover, positive company culture and morale, lower costs in areas like training and retraining, faster project completion rates, and higher ROI.

The effects of bad feedback are noticeable. Look for departments that have chronic turnover or a high volume of incidents. You may just find that with a little more constructive, positive feedback you can transform these departments from notoriously difficult into stories of success.

Types of feedback

When it comes to giving [feedback that drives positive results](#), there are two common categories to be familiar with: **constructive and positive.**

While the two can go hand-in-hand, there are a few distinguishing factors for each.

What is constructive feedback?

The definition of constructive feedback could also be described as coaching, which is what we most typically think of when hearing the word feedback.

To define constructive criticism, think about how it is delivered. Its delivery is concise and focused solely on a given behavior, project, process, or product that needs to be changed for the employee to be successful in their endeavors. The last part is key because it gives the employee a vetted interest in enacting the suggested feedback.

Delivery of constructive feedback should be laser-focused on the desired outcome, and should never be blaming, shaming, or attacking someone personally.

What is positive feedback?

Positive feedback is an acknowledgment of a job well done! It's also been called praise or a shoutout.

You may think that positive feedback isn't as important to hitting your KPIs as constructive feedback. In actuality, positive feedback can be just as important. It not only communicates what someone is doing well but provides vital encouragement that boosts company culture and morale!



Use Positive Coaching

To give constructive feedback, avoid starting sentences with the words ‘you’ or ‘your’ which to prevent employees from feeling attacked. Focus on the behavior, rather than the person, to keep defensiveness at bay.

**Pro-tip: Encourage managers to use “I” statements when giving feedback and always ask if the employee has questions or needs further clarification. Remember, it’s about making sure they have the information and tools they need to execute the desired behavior change or project successfully.



Be Specific

Vague feedback is frustrating and leaves too much room for misinterpretations or errors. Eliminate the space for mistakes through clear, concise instruction. And again, encourage managers to ask if they understand! Managers can even request the employee explain the feedback they just received back to you in their own words to see that they understood the information and expectations.



Don’t Let Fear Hold You Back

Feedback is a natural part of communicating with others. We see it at home, in schools, and even out in public, so there is no reason to be afraid to let someone know how they’re doing at their job! It’s all in the way it’s communicated, just note that honesty without compassion is cruelty, and that never sparks long-lasting positive change.

Renowned social scientist and researcher, [Brené Brown](#), had this to say about giving feedback.



“ We avoid tough conversations, including giving honest, productive feedback. Some leaders attributed this to a lack of courage, others to a lack of skills, and, shockingly, more than half talked about a cultural norm of ‘nice and polite’ that’s leveraged as an excuse to avoid tough conversations. ”

There are noteworthy skills and strategies for providing great feedback.

Necessary skills for giving constructive feedback include **communication, emotional intelligence, discernment, sensitivity, patience, and problem-solving.**

To help your managers and leaders be expert feedback givers, prioritize assigning training content in each of these skill categories! Ongoing development and practice of feedback skills ensure long-term impacts in your organization like **reduced turnover, increased productivity, and a company culture of positivity.**

How to Create a Successful Coaching and Feedback Skills Training Program

Assess Current Competencies and Define Objectives

As a first step, gather data on where your employees stand in regard to their coaching and feedback skills. Determine if your program will be for managers, for leaders, or available to everyone. Send out skill gap surveys that help your leaders evaluate how developed their coaching skills are and what they need and want to improve the most. Once you've collected data on key coaching competencies your employees need to focus on, define the goals you want to accomplish with the program. Some common goals are to improve succession planning, enhancing team performance, or boosting employee retention.

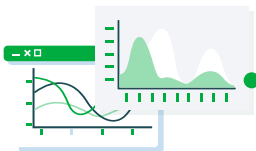
Learn more about developing the right goals for your training program [in this article](#).

Define KPI's for Your Program

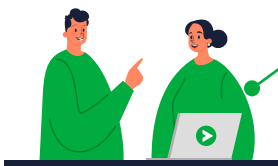
Defining the KPI's you will use to measure your program's effectiveness is key. You should assess your program early and often and use the data you collect to inform any adjustments you make to improve it. Some useful KPI's you should consider using for your coaching skills program are:



Competency / skills improvements – Great for skill-focused coaching scenarios like sales coaching. Post training knowledge assessments can be a great tool to gather data for this KPI.



Behavioral changes – Measure how employees are applying what they're learning on the job. Observational assessments and efficiency metrics can be great tools to gather this data.



Coaching session feedback – Conduct employee surveys involving questions designed to assess their leader's coaching habits/skills/etc. This will help you round out the picture of how well your program is helping employees turn theory into practice. Check out [this article](#) to delve deeper into how to build KPI's for your L&D programs.

Tailor Your Training Program

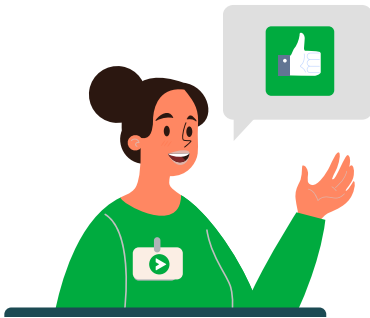
Make sure that the content and structure of your program is tailored to match the needs of the different roles and competencies within your organization. Including topics like how to give constructive feedback, receiving feedback with an open mind, and how to hold coaching conversations would be critical for current managers and leaders in certain departments but might not be as relevant for others. For example, a sales team leader would certainly benefit from a sales performance coaching content addition to their learning track, while an HR professional might prefer lessons around onboarding or compliance management.

Evaluate and Adjust Your Program

A big part of the success of your program will be based on how early and often you evaluate the progress and impact of your training, and how efficiently you make improvements as the program is implemented.

One way to do this is by analyzing the data you've collected against your KPI's and drawing out trends like engagement levels, completion rates and how relevant your employees feel the training has been – using artificial intelligence to analyze larger datasets can be very useful here. You can also use an evaluation framework like Kirkpatrick or CIRO models to know what questions to ask and what to do with your data. Make sure to use your findings to make changes within the first 30 days of your program and continue doing so on a regular basis.

Read more about a useful training evaluation framework [in this article](#).



Real, honest feedback executed with kindness builds trust.

Research shows that employees who trust leadership to be supportive and feel their managers believe in them are the most powerful tool for cultivating expert talent and a thriving company culture. By following these simple tips, you will lay the groundwork for long-lasting, positive change in your organization.

Develop your managers and leaders with Biz

BizLibrary's on-demand leadership and management training library puts an extensive collection of expert-led, up-to-date learning content at your employees' fingertips. [Talk to a BizRep for more information](#) on how to develop the coaching skills of your managers and leaders.