

**Giving
Positive & Negative
Performance Feedback**



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A SITE Approach For Giving Positive Feedback

Unfortunately, positive feedback is not given nearly as much as it should be. This doesn't mean that every time someone performs his or her job you must deliver a compliment. But it does mean that periodic positive statements should be part of the performance feedback process. Doing so not only increases confidence, but also encourages motivation, commitment, and continued performance.

Use the **Specify, Impact, Thank, Encourage** Approach to give positive feedback:

S-Specify: Be specific and descriptive about performance. Tell the person what he or she did right. Use facts, figures, and other data.

I-Impact: Describe the value, contribution, significance of the performance. Tell the person the impact of the behavior and how it will affect others.

T-Thank: Tell the person "thanks" and express your appreciation.

E-Encourage: Encourage more of the same positive performance.

Vague "Positive" Performance Feedback:

"Great report on the Statistical Report Tanya. Looks really good."

Specific Positive" Performance Feedback:

"Tanya, you really did a great job on the Statistical Report. I was especially impressed with the analysis of the numbers and how well you explained the recommendations for improvement (specific, descriptive positive feedback). That information will allow the managers to establish clear goals and develop better solutions for conducting health risk assessments (impact, value, contribution, significance of the performance). Thanks for doing such a thorough job (thank the person). Keep up the good work (encourage more of the same positive performance).

Types of Negative Feedback

There are three types of negative feedback: (1) VALID, bona fide, negative feedback, (2) VAGUE negative feedback or where there is a difference of opinion, and (3) UNJUSTIFIED/INVALID negative feedback.

(1) VALID Negative Feedback is **specific** and involves a behavior within the capabilities and control of the other person. It describes what the other person did or did not do in relationship to performance expectations.

“Your expenditure reports did not include deductions for advance payments.”

“You have been late three times for our meetings this week.”

(2) VAGUE Negative Feedback is **general** rather than specific. It focuses on **personal beliefs** rather than professional issues, or emphasizes **opinions/values** rather than facts.

Vague Negative Feedback

“The report you submitted was wrong.”

“You are always late for our meetings.”

Specific Negative Feedback

“Your expenditure report did not include deductions for advance payments.”

“You have been late three times for our meetings this week.”

(3) UNJUSTIFIED/INVALID Negative Feedback involves expectations that are inappropriate or unreasonable for a variety of reasons:

- The person does not possess the skills to do the job.
- The person has no, limited, or inadequate resources/tools/equipment/information to do the job.
- The person was not advised of performance standards or expectations.

In other words, you can't criticize someone for something they can't do, they don't have the resources to do, or they didn't know they were supposed to do.

Pros And Cons Of Negative Feedback Approaches

I. AVOID giving “sandwich” feedback: This is negative feedback that is sandwiched in between two pieces of positive feedback.

“Sam, the report, looks pretty good. *You just need to change the statistics on page 6. They don’t match the text.* By the way, I really like how you conducted the research for this report. It really brings home the point our Audit is trying to make.”

Unfortunately, the “**sandwich**” approach *negates positive reinforcement and clouds negative reinforcement*. It negates positive reinforcement because the next time someone hears you give positive feedback, the person will automatically assume you will follow it with negative feedback.

As for clouding the negative reinforcement, when negative feedback is sandwiched, the message could be unclear. In other words, did the receiver actually get the negative feedback? Will they walk away thinking about it? Will they hear they did a great job or that they messed up the statistics?

II. REPLACE “sandwich” feedback with the following:

“Sam, on that Audit report you completed, I noticed an error on page 6 with the statistics. The stats don’t match the text on that page. The text needs to be changed so it coincides with the statistics. Once you make that correction, the report will really bring home the point our Audit is trying to make. *Thanks for your contributions.*”

III. ELIMINATE the “You did good, BUT!” Technique:

“Sam, the report, looks pretty good. **BUT!** *You just need to change the statistics on page 6. They don’t match the text.*”

The word “**BUT**” acts as an erasure, eliminating everything that came before it. People will usually only remember whatever you said after the “**BUT**” or, like the “**sandwich**” technique, whenever a person hears “praise” he or she will automatically expect “criticism.”

Do's And Don'ts For Giving **NEGATIVE** Performance-Feedback

DO	DON'T
Describe the other person's behavior objectively Use concrete terms	Describe your emotional reaction to the behavior Use vague terms
Describe a specified time, place, and behavior	Generalize all the negative behaviors you have observed over a prolonged period
Describe the action, not the "motive"	Guess motives or goals
Direct yourself to the specific problem or behavior	Attack the entire character of the person
Request a small change	Ask for too large or too many changes
Specify the concrete actions you want stopped, started, or improved	Merely "imply" you'd like a change if change must happen
Give negative feedback as close to the actual behavior or action as possible	Wait until a prolonged period after the behavior or event
Reaffirm the other person's ability to make	Say that you doubt their ability to change
Deliver negative feedback in private	Deliver negative feedback in public
Deliver negative feedback when you are calm and focused	Deliver negative feedback when you are angry or testy
Let the person participate in the solution when possible	Ignore ideas or suggestions from the other person
End on a positive note	Send the person away concentrating on "how" you handled the criticism versus what they did incorrectly

Negative Feedback That Is Directing, Suggesting, Or Asking

How you structure your requests for a change in behavior can depend on “who” you are talking to and your goal during the discussion. Consider the following situations:

A. Boss-to-Subordinate: ***Directing Without Participation***

“Beth, I noticed that participants at our planning meeting were not prepared to discuss the items because they did not receive the necessary materials in time. As a result, they couldn’t provide us with the data we need to proceed immediately. For future meetings, I would like you to send materials to all participants one week prior to the meeting.”

B. Boss-to-Subordinate: ***Directing With Participation***

Consider this approach when there is room, time, opportunity for negotiation or when you want to encourage participation in the decision.

“Beth, I noticed that participants at our planning meeting were not prepared to discuss the items because they did not receive the necessary materials in time. As a result, they couldn’t provide us with the data we need to proceed immediately. What do you think you could do to help participants be more prepared in the future?”

C. Colleague-to-Colleague: ***Suggesting***

“Beth, I noticed that participants at our planning meeting were not prepared to discuss the items because they did not receive the necessary materials in time. As a result, they couldn’t provide us with the data we need to proceed immediately. In the future, you might try sending out the materials one week before our meetings. That way, the participants would have time to review the items and prepare.”

D. Subordinate-to-Boss: ***Asking***

“Beth, I noticed that participants at our planning meeting were not prepared to discuss the items because they did not receive the necessary materials in time. As a result, they couldn’t provide us with the data we need to proceed immediately. When I have attended other planning meetings, I have found it helpful to have the materials about one week prior to the meeting. Do you think that would help participants be more prepared in the future?”

A FINE Technique For Giving Negative Feedback

Use the **Facts, Impact, Need, Encourage (FINE)** Technique to structure your performance feedback and ensure that you deliver “negative feedback” in a constructive manner.

F-FACTS: Use facts to describe the behavior. State what you *saw* or *heard*. Use statistical information such as *quantity, frequency, duration, or size*. Clarify particulars—is it “what, how, when, or where” something happened?

- “When you arrived this morning...”
- “I heard you telling the office manager...”
- “The reports indicate the following...”

I-IMPACT: Explain the impact of the behavior. Identify “who” the behavior impacts and “what” the behavior impacts. Consider things like the person’s workload or the workload of others. Specify how the behavior affects the achievement of personal goals as well as goals for your organization.

- “This approach will cause...”
- “The impact on our Research and Analysis Division is...”
- “When you arrive late, I am unable...”

N-NEED: Determine what needs to happen next. One approach is to *Direct* the person to change the behavior by telling him or her what you want. Another approach is to *Make A Suggestion* regarding the change in behavior. Or, you can *Ask For Suggestions*.

- “I need you to...”
- “The correct approach requires...”
- “What do you recommend...?”
- “How do you think...?”
- “Have you ever tried...?”

E-ENCOURAGE: End the conversation by letting the person know that you feel positive about his or her ability to change the behavior. This is also where you confirm the person’s understanding about your expectations. Include details about follow-up and feedback if necessary.

- “Glad you found the suggestion helpful. I bet we’ll see a difference at our next planning meeting.”
- “This involves a small error which I know is easy for you to correct. I look forward to receiving the corrected report tomorrow morning.”
- “I think that idea will work. Let’s get together this afternoon and look at a draft of the report.”
- “Let’s proceed with your recommendations. Our materials are due tomorrow at noon. When will you have the charts ready for inserting into the final package?”