



Feedback for Positive Change

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I used to be surprised by the following scenario before realizing that it is human nature, even for seasoned leaders.

Client Michael would come to coaching sessions fuming over unacceptable behavior of an employee. We then brainstormed powerful ways to deliver feedback that would correct this behavior.

Michael returned to our next session reporting that he never found the *exact right time* to deliver the feedback. Too much time had now passed and it seemed irrelevant.

Fast forward to annual review time. Michael agonized for days over how to word his feedback. When I later asked how the actual review went, Michael responded: "I didn't want to hurt her feelings so only focused on the positive aspects of her performance." How will she improve with only partial feedback?

It is human nature to avoid hurting another person's feelings, yet it is your job to elevate each member of your organization to their highest level of performance. Allowing unacceptable behavior sabotages this goal.

Allowing poor behavior to continue creates unnecessary collateral damage throughout your organization.

The quicker it is acknowledged and dealt with, the less damage occurs. Below are my top '7' tips to strengthen your 'feedback muscles' in order to create positive change in your workplace (or at home):

Timing is everything—waiting too long after the incident or jumping on the feedback recipient immediately in a state of frustration will dilute your message.

Be in the right frame of mind—the focus is on the employee, not your frustration with the situation. Make your feedback well thought out and present it in a way that makes the recipient feel better about their future.

Make it constructive—the focus is on helping the recipient correct their behavior, not in reliving or magnifying the incident.

Ask for permission—especially when providing feedback to an associate, ask if they are open to it and if this is a good time. They may be finishing a project that needs their full attention. Or, they may actually not want your opinion. If it is an employee they don't have a choice of 'if', but they do on 'when'.

Read their body language—notice if the recipient is actually listening and getting your point. If they've tuned you out in their state of embarrassment or defensiveness your message is lost. Ask them what they've heard. If they are merely mimicking your words, chances are that they've not heard you.

Provide examples—while climbing the ladder you made plenty of mistakes. When appropriate and to ease the recipient's stress level, give examples of how you or others in similar situations learned, changed and grew.

Establish accountability—ask what specific changes they'll make as a result of your feedback. How will you know? Make them accountable for reporting back to you. It is now their responsibility, not yours.

Few people are living up to their full potential. Even Olympic athletes report that they can do better next time. If employees (or leaders) would improve on their own they would have done so already.

They need your feedback and encouragement to keep growing and changing into a more effective contributor tomorrow than they are today. If you're not happy with their performance chances are that they are not either. In fact they may be miserable but not know what or how to change.

I challenge you to strengthen at least one person in your organization through taking the above steps to provide significant, powerful feedback.

Read all of Ann's Writing and Wisdom at: <http://gvasuccess.com/writing-and-wisdom.htm>

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