



## Manager Guide: How to Provide Employee Feedback

Effective performance feedback looks both at a person's job competencies and their alignment with the Company's core values.

### Performance reviews should focus on:

- Observable and measurable performance
- Include specific examples and next steps to take
- Clear and concise information
- Should point out opportunities for learning and adjustment rather than focusing on failures

### Effective performance review phrases could include:

- Improved production by X% by...
- Exceeded the original goal of X by X% through efforts to...
- Created a program that delivered X results, which were beyond our goal of Y...
- Continuously seeks to improve processes by...
- Effectively communicates status updates on important projects to key stakeholders...
- Has built strong working relationships with key partners, including...
- Initiates and executes innovative ideas such as...
- Makes a concerted effort to learn new skills and stay up-to-date on industry trends such as...
- Has made considerable progress offering solutions to problems, including...
- Goes above and beyond in their work. Examples include...
- Could be even more effective if...
- Can exceed goals next year by improving...

Reference: [10 performance review tips to drastically move the needle. Bethany Klynn, PhD](#)

Here are five words and expressions that will help you effectively highlight an employee's contributions:

- **Achievement:** Incorporate this into a phrase, such as "achieves optimal levels of performance with/for."
- **Communication skills:** Phrases like "effectively communicates expectations" or "excels in facilitating group discussions" go a long way with an employee.
- **Creativity:** Appreciating employees' creative side can make for happier, more motivated staff. In a performance evaluation, try phrases like "seeks creative alternatives," followed by specific examples and results.
- **Improvement:** Employees like hearing that they are improving and that it's being noticed. "Continues to grow and improve" and "is continuously planning for improvement" are two constructive phrases to use in a performance review.

- **Management ability:** Leadership skills and the ability to manage others are key to employee success. Phrases such as “provides support during periods of organizational change” carry weight with your employee.

**Reference:** [Conducting a Great Performance Review, Brian Rhonemus](#)

### 1. How to conduct performance reviews

- Convey positive intent.** Whether you’re speaking with an all-star employee or a chronic underachiever, start by stating that your goal is to set them up for future success.
- Describe specifically what you have observed.** The more specific and descriptive your feedback, the more likely your employee is to understand what you’re hoping they’ll start, stop, and continue doing.
- State the impact of their behaviors and actions.** Lay out the cause and effect. For example, rather than saying, “You didn’t connect with the buyer,” try, “You interrupted people in the meeting, and this resulted in the buyer being less open to listening to your ideas.”
- Ask how your feedback is landing.** This isn’t simply a polite thing to do. It allows your direct report to challenge your assumptions, add relevant context, and communicate important information that you might not have been privy to.
- Address the question: Now what?** Be clear about next steps and what exactly you will be tracking, measuring, and assessing in the coming year — as well as what kind of support you can offer moving forward.

**Reference:** [Great Managers Conduct Great Performance Reviews, Riyal Shareef](#)

### 2. The Right Way to Give Negative Feedback

- Question.** Spend some time observing the behavior of an employee, think about whether or not the situation warrants a conversation. If you notice unacceptable behavior repeatedly, you should bring it up.
- Prepare.**
  - 1) Block time on your employee's calendar. Let him/her/them know (in person or via email) that you want to meet with them briefly and be clear on what it’s about.
  - 2) Identify what you want to say at the start of the conversation. This is important because it will set the tone for the rest of the conversation.

The structure the words:

- Express gratitude
- Framed your concern in a constructive way
- Proceed by agreement. Ask him/her/them if he/she/them is okay with having the conversation.
- Pick a feedback method.** Use the Situation-Behavior-Impact (SBI) feedback model — a no-nonsense, three-step model that sets the stage for a two-way dialogue. When correctly applied, SBI is entirely non-judgmental, making it a great tool for difficult conversations. If you

are specific and avoid generalizations, your feedback is more likely to be heard and reflected upon rather than rejected.

#### How each step in the SBI model translates:

- **Point out when and where a specific behaviour occurred (the situation) to set the context:** “During our team meeting this Thursday, while you were presenting the market research...” Explain in detail what you saw or heard (the specific behaviour): “During our team meeting this Thursday, while you were presenting the market research, I noticed that mistake/typo/issue in the information you provided...”
- **Describe the impact (how the behaviour made you think and feel):** “During our team meeting this Thursday, while you were presenting the market research, I noticed that mistake/typo/issue in the information you provided. Try to avoid such mistakes since it will show your attitude towards your work and it can be seen as unprofessional”.
- Have the conversation.** Once you’ve delivered your core message, take a pause. Give your employee sufficient time to reflect and respond. Waiting even a few seconds may feel like an eternity, but be patient.

If you are met with anger or defensiveness instead of compassion, there are a few ways you can soften the blow:

- Apologize for the impact (not your behavior), outline your intention, and ask for clarification. “I’m sorry this upsets you. I wanted to have a conversation that could help me grow and help us work better together. Could you help me understand why my feedback upsets you?”
- Say nothing. Remaining silent often helps ease the tension, allowing the other person to blow off steam. Wait for the other person to finish talking. Then, consider suggestion one.
- Walk away (respectfully). “I’m sorry this upsets you. Perhaps we can talk about this some other time?” to allow for a cooling-off period before he brought it up again (that is if the behaviour persisted).
- End with a thank you.** Showing gratitude increases well-being and builds stronger relationships at work. The relationship between managers and employees is not just a strong predictor of team performance, it has a great impact on a team's growth and development. Use the SBI model to guide your efforts.

**Reference:** [The Right Way to Give Negative Feedback to Your Manager, Tijs Besieux](#)

### 3. Feedback methods

#### 5 Word Review

- Ask your employee 5 words that describe them (2-3 positive, 2-3 negative)
- Ask them to describe the meaning of each word

#### Feed forward

- Discuss the areas that the employees need to improve
- Provide suggestions/advice that would help with that area
- Keep tracking and giving positive suggestions

### **One on ones**

- Prepared. Taking time before your one on one gives you an opportunity to seek advice, consider multiple options, and prepare some examples that may help them better understand your feedback.
- Contextual. If you listen carefully to what they bring to the meeting before diving into your feedback, you may find added context that changes how you deliver it. It also gives you a better way to transition to discussing it.
- Frequent. Giving feedback in any form can help improve performance, but it's the act of checking in regularly that ensures the greatest improvement. A one on one is already something you have on a regular basis, making it easy to check in on feedback over time.

### **Prepare-Listen-Act Model**

- Prepare: Take time to think about their recent issues and the importance of them. Identify patterns across them, and the best examples you'll then share with them.
- Listen: Start their 1 on 1 by asking how they're doing and hearing about any issues they may have. They could change your approach to the most important problem to solve with them.
- Act: All the talk in the world doesn't matter if they do not make changes. Document what needs done, set clear next steps, and then check in next time you meet (ideally in weekly 1 on 1s).

### **Trade Praise for Feedback**

When given correctly, praise can be a huge motivator. It can make people work harder and longer on their work, while applying themselves to grow. Done wrong, it can cause people to actually avoid new challenges and perform more poorly.

- Positive. People are motivated to continue to improve if you keep noticing improvements in their areas of weakness.
- Anticipated. People look forward to praise, while often dreading criticism. Studies show the highest engagement comes when workers feel managers are genuinely interested in them; paying attention to their work enough to praise clearly demonstrates that interest.
- Motivating. When you give effective praise, you will tap into the motivation and drive of your team. This is not always the case when you deliver critical feedback.

**Reference:** [6 Awesome Ways To Give Feedback To Your Team, Jeremy Brown](#)

## **4. Top 10 biases affecting performance reviews**

Bias is an error in judgment that happens when a person allows their conscious or unconscious prejudices to affect their evaluation of another person. And when it comes to performance reviews, biases have a huge impact.

- Recency bias** is the tendency to focus on the most recent time period instead of the total time period.

Prevention strategy:

- Develop a habit of collecting feedback on employees at different points in time throughout the year.
- Send his/her colleagues a request for feedback about the completed task so you can get some data on how well they did.
- Request feedback from the instructor about their participation in the internal training.

- Primacy bias** is the tendency to emphasize information learned early on over information encountered later.

Prevention strategy:

- By putting together a dossier of performance snapshots that include feedback from multiple points in time, you can dampen managers' tendency to weigh their first impressions too heavily.

- Halo/horns effect bias** is the tendency to allow one good or bad trait to overshadow others

Prevention strategy:

- Evaluate performance on multiple dimensions of performance instead of leaving it open to interpretation. To get a holistic view, make sure to assess at least 2-3 different aspects of performance so that one awesome or awful trait or skill doesn't overshadow everything else.

- Centrality bias** is the tendency to rate most items in the middle of a rating scale.

Prevention strategy:

- To eliminate the neutral option from the rating scale, such as switching from a 5-point scale to a 4-point or 3-point scale. This way, evaluators have to make a choice one way or the other.

- Leniency bias** occurs when managers give favorable ratings even though they have employees with notable room for improvement

Prevention strategy:

- Try using a rating scale that reflects the way people actually talk about and think about their team members. For example, not meeting the performance expectations of the job; sometimes meeting the performance expectations of the job; consistently meeting the performance expectations of the job.

- Similar-to-me bias** is the inclination to give a higher rating to people with similar interests, skills, and backgrounds as the person doing the rating.

Prevention strategy:

- Reduce the effect of similar-to-me-bias by requiring specificity in manager’s assessments. First agree to the criteria used in an assessment and then you make the evaluation, you are less likely to rely on stereotypes, and your assessments are less biased.
- Idiosyncratic rater bias** occurs when managers highly evaluate skills they’re not personally good at.

**Prevention strategy:**

- To be self-aware of the potential of this bias and ask yourself if you are rating the employee based on their actual skill or if you are comparing to yourself.
- Gender bias.** When giving feedback individuals tend to focus more on the personality and attitudes of women. Contrarily, they focus more on the behaviors and accomplishments of men.

Prevention strategy:

- Set a criteria that talks about situations, behaviors, and impacts rather than personality or style
- The law of small numbers bias** is the incorrect belief that a small sample closely shares the properties of the underlying population.

Prevention strategy:

- Use calibration, it is when all reviews and ratings are looked at holistically to ensure that your definition of “above average” is similar to everyone else’s definition of “above average.”

**Reference:** [10 performance review biases and how to avoid them, Kevin Campbell](#)