

# GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

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The UN Performance Management and Development System is based on the principle that ongoing dialogue and feedback is the key to improved performance. This guide highlights, and offers advice on, the importance of having performance conversations, giving and receiving feedback and reducing tensions in performance conversations.

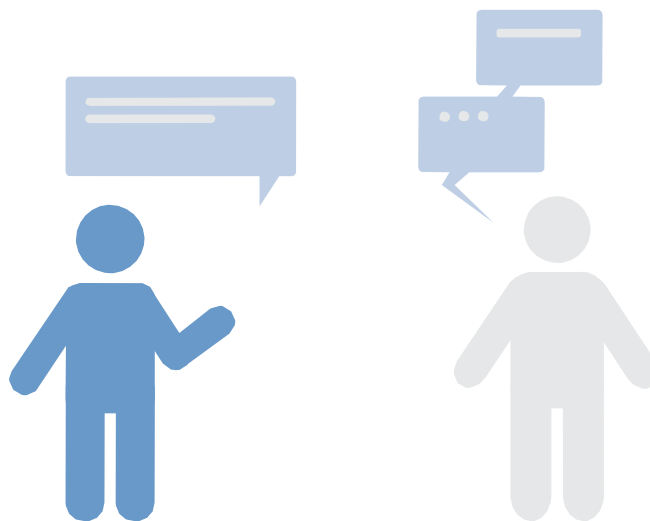
## What is Feedback?

Feedback involves communication to let someone know on a timely, ongoing basis how they are performing, and or the messages that they are sending. It is a skill to both give and receive feedback gracefully and can be:

- Positive or constructive
- Formal or informal
- Given upwards, downwards, and laterally in an Organization

Without frequent, specific feedback, employees often feel:

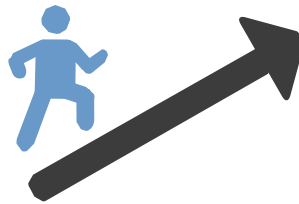
- A lack of motivation
- That their hard work is not being recognized
- That challenges at work are not being acknowledge
- That their extra effort is not seen by their manager



# Using Feedback to Improve Performance

The midpoint and end-of-year reviews provide time for formal, oral and written feedback on goals and competencies. Meetings should be planned carefully, and both parties should prepare feedback for each other.

As important and useful as these events are, feedback should certainly not be limited to twice a year! Studies have consistently shown that on-going feedback plays a significant role in increased motivation, productivity, and strong relationships between managers and staff.



## Perception vs. Reality?

- Managers often believe they provide sufficient feedback yet staff do not concur
- Feedback given at mid- and end-of-year reviews does not replace mini, informal reviews of performance every week, month, etc.
- Many staff members want more of these mini, and informal reviews
- Managers and staff should discuss the frequency of feedback that is required; this depends on staff members' needs
- Staff members should take the initiative to request feedback when in need
- Managers should encourage staff to give them feedback

### Feedback tips

- Focus on the performance, not the performer
- Be aware of your tone – polite, respectful, calm
- Use “I” statements, not “you” statements
- Suggest alternate behaviors
- End on a positive note
- If improvement is required, prepare a jointly agreed-upon action plan

# Tips for handling critical feedback

Being on the receiving end of critical feedback is not easy. It is a common reaction to get defensive, because it can threaten our self-image as a professional. Sometimes, we can go 'on the attack', which does not leave much room for productive, professional discussion.

The following 4 steps are helpful to consider if you are on the receiving end of critical feedback:

## Listen closely

Try to treat the feedback as constructive and helpful. Think of it as being delivered in the best interest of your learning and professional development.

## Analyze the validity of the feedback

Can you learn from this message? Have you heard similar feedback before, from other managers, colleagues, or team members? Does the person who is providing this feedback understand your work and know you well? Are his/her expectations reasonable? Did he/she provide good examples of performance to be improved? Are the expectations for improvement reasonable?

## How to Respond (3 options: you may use more than one in a conversation)

Ask questions to understand the specifics, and take appropriate action. Request examples if they are not provided. Admit the truth in order to move forward with actions.

Don't feel pressure to respond immediately; you can buy yourself some time by listening and acknowledging, without getting into a debate.

\*\*Remember to manage your emotions during the discussion.

Try to reach mutual agreement on corrective action and request a follow-up meeting to review progress.