



How to Share Useful – and Respectful – Feedback

Feedback is information about performance and is information that people can act on. Frequently, you share feedback with individuals and groups in your client's organization. Usually, feedback is what your client wants you to provide. The feedback might be about your client's actions and ideas, or the results of assessments in your client's organization. Feedback is extremely useful during evaluations of the project and in generating learning from activities in the project.

Feedback can be a powerful means of identifying and solving problems. However, the feedback must be shared in a manner that is understandable to your client and is perceived by them as being provided in a highly respectful manner. Sharing feedback involves guidelines from several other subsections in this overall section, especially the skills in authenticity, effective listening and verbal communication. Consider the following guidelines, as well.

- 1. Be clear about what you want to say.**
You might have already sensed what feedback you want to convey to your client. However, you should think about what points you want to convey and how you want to convey those points.
- 2. Be concise and specific.**
People often lose specificity when they speak because they say far too much, rather than not enough. Or, they speak about general themes and patterns. When giving feedback, give details about what you see or hear.
- 3. Avoid generalizations.**
Avoid use of the words "all," "never," and "always." Those words can seem extreme, lack credibility and place arbitrary limits on behavior. Be more precise about quantity or proportion, if you address terms of quantities, at all.
- 4. Be descriptive rather than evaluative.**
Report what you are seeing, hearing or feeling. Attempt to avoid evaluative words, such as "good" or "bad." It may be helpful to quickly share your particular feeling, if appropriate, but do not dwell on it or become emotional.
- 5. Own the feedback.**
The information should be about your own perception of information, not about their perceptions, assumptions and motives. Use 'I' statements as much as possible to indicate that your impressions are your own.
- 6. Be careful about giving advice.**
When giving feedback, it is often best to do one thing at a time – share your feedback, get their response to your feedback, and then, when they are more ready to consider additional information, share your advice with them.

Note that if you are sharing feedback in a meeting with members of your client's organization, for example, about results of an assessment, you should follow a carefully designed agenda for the meeting.