

10 Ways to Give Feedback Successfully

It's not just what you say, but how and when you say it that can make all the difference in the world when giving feedback.

A lot of my work as a coach and a coach mentor involves giving feedback to my clients, so here are my top 10 tips for giving feedback successfully:

1. **Positive language:** Use words that express your message in a positive way. For example, 'What worked well is ... and what could have worked better is ...'
2. **Think win/win and remember the big picture:** Look for win/win opportunities when delivering feedback. The Crows coach Brenton Sanderson did this really well when he said after the Crows preliminary final narrow defeat: *'I could not be prouder, not just of their effort tonight, but the whole season.'*
3. **Be aware of your body language:** Manage your body language so it doesn't distract from your message, for example, face the person you're speaking to, make eye contact with them and don't fidget or play with objects, like your pen.
4. **Be supportive:** Encourage an open two-way discussion so the recipient of your feedback feels comfortable talking about the issue. For example, say 'Please feel free to jump in with any questions or comments you might have at anytime.'
5. **Be specific and succinct:** Don't be general when giving feedback. Give specific examples to illustrate what you mean. Also, don't pad what you need to say with waffle. Be clear and get to the point quickly so your message isn't lost or diluted.
6. **Be tactful:** Choose the right time and place to give your feedback. For example, one-to-one in a private setting and not in a team or board meeting.
7. **Be sensitive:** About 20% of the population are highly sensitive people and another 20% are moderately sensitive, so show sensitivity in your conversation. You could start by asking 'Would it be OK if I gave you some feedback about ..?'
8. **Make it timely and frequent:** Don't wait several months before giving feedback. To be most effective give feedback as soon as possible.
9. **Keep it balanced:** Never deliver a barrage of negative feedback. If you provide feedback on a timely and frequent basis you'll be able to avoid this happening. Always look for the good things that you can acknowledge as well.
10. **Check for understanding:** To be sure that your feedback has been fully understood, ask the person what they're taking away from your conversation.

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