



**LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY:**  
**PROVIDES AND SOLICITS FEEDBACK**

***“Feedback is the breakfast of champions”.***

--- Ken Blanchard

**Defining Characteristics**

- In a direct, yet tactful manner, lets others know how they are doing.
- Uses specific examples to illustrate the impact they have had on others or on the task at hand.
- Acknowledges positive achievement and gives constructive feedback for areas of improvement.
- Understands the appropriate time, place and manner to provide feedback.
- Knows how to effectively solicit and receive feedback.

**Development Activities**

1. Separate positive feedback from corrective feedback whenever possible. Immediately after a performance, provide positive feedback to the individual on those things he or she did well to encourage a repetition in the future. Immediately before performing a similar activity again, coach the individual on those things that might enhance his or her performance. Corrective feedback immediately after the effort can be viewed as negative and demotivating. The same feedback, if given prior to performing the activity, is more likely viewed as “helpful coaching”.

2. Try to avoid “sandwich feedback”, i.e. saying something positive, followed by a criticism, and then closing with more positive feedback. People are smart. They will soon recognize the feedback “formula”. After hearing the positive feedback, they will be waiting for “the other shoe to drop”—anticipating the negative feedback and tuning out the positive feedback that came before or after the corrective feedback. The person may discount the positive feedback, assuming it is insincere and simply a means to “soften the blow” of the negative feedback.
3. Review the current performance management system in your organization. Determine if the process is designed to focus more on an individual’s strengths or if the emphasis is more on needs for improvement. Consider a greater focus on strengths and how one can leverage those strengths in new ways in the future. Provide constructive coaching feedback closer to the time of the actual performance.
4. Set a personal goal to give positive, motivational feedback to at least five people a day. Seek out examples of improvement, effort, creativity and results.
5. When you give feedback, be specific. Instead of saying: “Great job!” tell the person *specifically* what she or he did that worked well, so the performance can be repeated again in the future.
6. Solicit feedback from your key stakeholders (manager, subordinates, colleagues, family or friends) on those behaviors you are trying to change. Let them know you are trying to change a particular behavior and to solicit their support in giving you feedback when they see you engaging in old behavior or, conversely, when they notice a positive change. People will appreciate your openness and your willingness to solicit their support in making the change.
7. If you solicit feedback from someone, just listen and say “thank you”. When you solicit feedback, you must be open to hearing what the person has to say and resist the temptation to defend yourself.

8. When giving feedback to improve performance, use the **STAR** model. Be sure your feedback is:
  - **S**pecific—identify the specific behavior that needs to be changed or improved
  - **T**argeted---- Give examples so that they have a picture of what needs to be improved
  - **A**ctionable---Identify any resources that can support them in overcoming barriers to success
  - **R**easonable—Make your request realistic in terms of time frame, the individual’s capacity to change, and the resulting change you expect.
9. Describe specific behavior you observed when giving feedback. Don’t attempt to guess at their motivation or make assumptions about their behavior. Simply describe what you observed, heard or read.

## Recommended Reading

1. Adler, Ronald B., and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Business and the Professions, McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., New York, 1996.
2. Budd, Matthew and Rothstein, Larry. You Are What You Say. Three Rivers Press, 2000.
3. Gabarro, John, and Kotter, John P., “Managing Your Boss,” Harvard Business Review Classic. [www.hbr.com](http://www.hbr.com).  
This classic article, presents giving upward feedback in a manner that is easily accessible.
4. Hathaway, Patti, Giving and Receiving Feedback: Building Constructive Communication (A Fifty-Minute Series Book), Crisp Publications, 1998.
5. Higgins, Jamie and Diane Smith, “The Four Myths of Feedback,” Harvard Management Update Article; Harvard Business School Publishing, 1999, [www.hbsp.harvard.edu](http://www.hbsp.harvard.edu)
6. Kegan, Robert and Lahey, Lisa Laskow, How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work, Jossey-Bass
7. McDonald-Mann, Dana and Raoul J. Buron, Giving Feedback to Subordinates, Center for Creative Leadership, 1999.
8. Poertner, Shirley and Karen Massetti Miller, The Art of Giving & Receiving Feedback (Ami How-To Series), Provant Media, 1996.

## Other Resources

1. Customized training solutions for enhancing Communication Skills, Giving and Receiving Feedback, Active Listening and Conflict Management. Leadership Talent Solutions – [www.LeadershipTalentSolutions.com](http://www.LeadershipTalentSolutions.com) 310-306-9898.
2. Effective communication, Feedback and Listening” <http://web.cba.neu.edu/~ewertheim/interper/feedback.htm>  
Exercises, roleplays and case studies to support understanding of the feedback process.
3. Kirn, Steven P., The Balanced Scorecard at Sears: A Compelling Place for Feedback and Learning, Harvard Business School Publishing, 2000. [www.hbsp.harvard.edu](http://www.hbsp.harvard.edu)