RESEARCH READS

From Grant Wiggins' *Seven Keys to Effective Feedback*

Goal-Referenced

Effective feedback requires that a person has a goal, takes action to achieve the goal, and receives goal-related information about his or her actions. I told a joke—why? To make people laugh. I wrote a story to engage the reader with vivid language and believable dialogue that captures the characters' feelings. I went up to bat to get a hit. If I am not clear on my goals or if I fail to pay attention to them, I cannot get helpful feedback (nor am I likely to achieve my goals).

Information becomes feedback if, and only if, I am trying to cause something, and the information tells me whether I am on track or need to change course. If some joke or aspect of my writing isn't working—a revealing, nonjudgmental phrase—I need to know. Note that in everyday situations, goals are often implicit, although fairly obvious to everyone. I don't need to announce when telling the joke that my aim is to make you laugh. But in school, learners are often unclear about the specific goal of a task or lesson, so it is crucial to remind them about the goal and the criteria by which they should self-assess. For example, a teacher might say…The point of this writing task is for you to make readers laugh. So, when rereading your draft or getting feedback from peers, ask, How funny is this? Where might it be funnier?

As you prepare a table poster to display the findings of your science project, remember that the aim is to interest people in your work as well as to describe the facts you discovered through your experiment. Self-assess your work against those two criteria using these rubrics. The science fair judges will do likewise.

Tangible and Transparent

Any useful feedback system involves not only a clear goal, but also tangible results related to the goal. People laugh, chuckle, or don't laugh at each joke; students are highly attentive, somewhat attentive, or inattentive to my teaching.

Even as little children, we learn from such tangible feedback. That's how we learn to walk; to hold a spoon; and to understand that certain words magically yield food, drink, or a change of clothes from big people. The best feedback is so tangible that anyone who has a goal can learn from it.

Alas, far too much instructional feedback is opaque, as revealed in a true story a teacher told me years ago. A student came up to her at year's end and said, "Miss Jones, you kept writing

this same word on my English papers all year, and I still don't know what it means." "What's the word? " she asked. "Vag-oo," he said. (The word was vague!)

Sometimes, even when the information is tangible and transparent, the performers don't obtain it—either because they don't look for it or because they are too busy performing to focus on the effects. In sports, novice tennis players or batters often don't realize that they're taking their eyes off the ball; they often protest, in fact, when that feedback is given. (Constantly yelling "Keep your eye on the ball!" rarely works.) And we have all seen how new teachers are sometimes so busy concentrating on "teaching" that they fail to notice that few students are listening or learning.

That's why, in addition to feedback from coaches or other able observers, video or audio recordings can help us perceive things that we may not perceive as we perform; and by extension, such recordings help us learn to look for difficult-to-perceive but vital information. I recommend that all teachers videotape their own classes at least once a month. It was a transformative experience for me when I did it as a beginning teacher. Concepts that had been crystal clear to me when I was teaching seemed opaque and downright confusing on tape—captured also in the many quizzical looks of my students, which I had missed in the moment.

Actionable

Effective feedback is concrete, specific, and useful; it provides actionable information. Thus, "Good job!" and "You did that wrong" and B+ are not feedback at all. We can easily imagine the learners asking themselves in response to these comments, What specifically should I do more or less of next time, based on this information? No idea. They don't know what was "good" or "wrong" about what they did.

Actionable feedback must also be accepted by the performer. Many so-called feedback situations lead to arguments because the givers are not sufficiently descriptive; they jump to an inference from the data instead of simply presenting the data. For example, a supervisor may make the unfortunate but common mistake of stating that "many students were bored in class." That's a judgment, not an observation. It would have been far more useful and less debatable had the supervisor said something like, "I counted ongoing inattentive behaviors in 12 of the 25 students once the lecture was underway. The behaviors included texting under desks, passing notes, and making eye contact with other students. However, after the small-group exercise began, I saw such behavior in only one student."

Such care in offering neutral, goal-related facts is the whole point of the clinical supervision of teaching and of good coaching more generally. Effective supervisors and coaches work hard to carefully observe and comment on what they observed, based on a clear statement of goals. That's why I always ask when visiting a class, "What would you like me to look for and perhaps count?" In my experience as a teacher of teachers, I have always found such pure feedback to

be accepted and welcomed. Effective coaches also know that in complex performance situations, actionable feedback about what went right is as important as feedback about what didn't work.

User-Friendly

Even if feedback is specific and accurate in the eyes of experts or bystanders, it is not of much value if the user cannot understand it or is overwhelmed by it. Highly technical feedback will seem odd and confusing to a novice. Describing a baseball swing to a 6-year-old in terms of torque and other physics concepts will not likely yield a better hitter. Too much feedback is also counterproductive; better to help the performer concentrate on only one or two key elements of performance than to create a buzz of information coming in from all sides.

Expert coaches uniformly avoid overloading performers with too much or too technical information. They tell the performers one important thing they noticed that, if changed, will likely yield immediate and noticeable improvement ("I was confused about who was talking in the dialogue you wrote in this paragraph"). They don't offer advice until they make sure the performer understands the importance of what they saw.

Timely

In most cases, the sooner I get feedback, the better. I don't want to wait for hours or days to find out whether my students were attentive and whether they learned, or which part of my written story works and which part doesn't. I say "in most cases" to allow for situations like playing a piano piece in a recital. I don't want my teacher or the audience barking out feedback as I perform. That's why it is more precise to say that good feedback is "timely" rather than "immediate". A great problem in education, however, is untimely feedback. Vital feedback on key performances often comes days, weeks, or even months after the performance—think of writing and handing in papers or getting back results on standardized tests. As educators, we should work overtime to figure out ways to ensure that students get more timely feedback and opportunities to use it while the attempt and effects are still fresh in their minds. Before you say that this is impossible, remember that feedback does not need to come only from the teacher, or even from people at all. Technology is one powerful tool—part of the power of computer-assisted learning is unlimited, timely feedback and opportunities to use it. Peer review is another strategy for managing the load to ensure lots of timely feedback; it's essential, however, to train students to do small-group peer review to high standards, without immature criticisms or unhelpful praise.

Ongoing

Adjusting our performance depends on not only receiving feedback but also having opportunities to use it. What makes any assessment in education formative is not merely that it precedes summative assessments, but that the performer has opportunities, if results are less than optimal, to reshape the performance to better achieve the goal. In summative assessment, the feedback comes too late; the performance is over. Thus, the more feedback I can receive in real time, the better my ultimate performance will be. This is how all highly successful computer games work. If you play Angry Birds, Halo, Guitar Hero, or Tetris, you know that the key to substantial improvement is that the feedback is both timely and ongoing. When you fail, you can immediately start over—sometimes even right where you left off—to get another opportunity to receive and learn from the feedback. (This powerful feedback loop is also user-friendly. Games are built to reflect and adapt to our changing need, pace, and ability to process information.)   It is telling, too, that performers are often judged on their ability to adjust in light of feedback. The ability to quickly adapt one's performance is a mark of all great achievers and problem solvers in a wide array of fields. Or, as many little league coaches say, "The problem is not making errors; you will all miss many balls in the field, and that's part of learning. The problem is when you don't learn from the errors."

Consistent

To be useful, feedback must be consistent. Clearly, performers can only adjust their performance successfully if the information fed back to them is stable, accurate, and trustworthy. In education, that means teachers have to be on the same page about what high-quality work is. Teachers need to look at student work together, becoming more consistent over time and formalizing their judgments in highly descriptive rubrics supported by anchor products and performances. By extension, if we want student-to-student feedback to be more helpful, students have to be trained to be consistent the same way we train teachers, using the same exemplars and rubrics.

The A-B-Cs of Giving Feedback to a Colleague

Ashley Hurley
September 04, 2014

Providing feedback. It's so much more than sharing some helpful information with another person regarding his or her work. It's a gift -- a chance to help someone improve themselves or their work, and ultimately our students will benefit.

If you think about it, feedback is as much about *you* as the person you're providing it to. Your feedback is a reflection of you. The quality of it, and the time you spend giving it, shows how much (or how little) you value the feedback process. The fact that someone is asking you for your feedback speaks volumes. After all, someone has made himself or herself vulnerable to you. They have invested time in their work and trust you and your professional opinion. I hope thinking about feedback this way puts you in the right frame of mind when evaluating someone's work, or, more accurately, their labor of learning.

While there are many things to consider before providing feedback, narrowing the focus to a few simple A-B-Cs can be quite helpful.

A. Feedback should be accessible and action-oriented.

Any ideas you provide should be easy to understand and conveyed as suggestions or questions. Reactions need to be shared in a friendly, helpful way. Try to avoid expressing a feeling of "change this, or else what you've done won't be any good." Also, if it's fitting, suggest a possible action that the person you're providing feedback to can take that may lead to project or performance improvement. A great way to start an accessible, actionable feedback statement is in the form of a question that begins with the words "What if…?" or, "How could…?"

B. Feedback should be basic.

Don't bury your feedback in fluff. Keep it basic. If you're working on a lesson plan, for instance, focus your feedback on what you have in front of you. Your colleague simply wants to know what he/she has done well and what can be improved. You've been asked for your thoughts, so share them. Don't hide

your message or lead your colleague astray with ambiguous, indirect communication.

Instead of this...	Try this...
You need to change the opening activity for this lesson.	What if students have the opportunity to do some predicting before they begin reading the text?
This lesson has a lot of writing activities in it that may or may not be connected.	You include many opportunities for students to show their thinking through their writing, which is excellent. How could you clearly outline the writing components of your lesson to show how they align with the Common Core State Standards?

C. Feedback should be connected to the content.

Let's say you're reviewing a lesson plan or instructional unit for a colleague. Rather than going on and on about an instructional move you personally would make, consider quoting a specific section of the plan where growth can occur or improvement can be made; then ask a guiding question. Give your colleague (the lesson developer) a chance to self-discover answers. I think this leads to a stronger lesson and honors the lesson developer's ownership. After all, feedback isn't about compliments. It's about helping one another to work better and providing meaningful instruction that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Instead of this...	Try this...
You are very thorough.	I noticed that you're including three different texts that connect to the theme you'll be teaching. This will ensure multiple access points to the content.
You have a lot to share with your students.	Is there a time during the lesson where students could turn and discuss the content with one another?
Great job incorporating technology.	The template you used to plan your lesson -- and the way you included how you'll use the selected apps -- shows purposeful use of technology. It's great to see you focusing on the learning, not the tech tools.

Perhaps the best thing we can do when we're asked to provide feedback is to think about what *we* hope for when we are the recipients of feedback, and then provide our "hope-fors" to the colleagues we're helping. More specifically,

I hope that the person reviewing my work is present and attentive, and that his or her goal is to provide insight that will help not only my learning process, but that of the students I have the fortune to guide. If I allow that thinking to guide my work, I can feel confident my focus and my motive are on point, and my feedback is **A**ccessible and **A**ction-oriented, **B**asic, and fully **C**onnected to **C**ontent.

Resources

Video Playlist: Strengthening Lessons for the Common Core (Teaching Channel) - Watch how teachers use the EQuIP Rubric to check lessons for Common Core alignment, and then give effective feedback for improvement.

EQuIP Rubrics for ELA & Math (Achieve.org) - Get the tools you'll need to evaluate and discuss Common Core alignment.

7 Key Characteristics of Better Learning Feedback (TeachThought) - Grant Wiggins shares the criteria needed to craft meaningful feedback.

Podcast to Personalize Feedback (Teaching Channel) - Watch how Sarah Brown Wessling takes advantage of technology to give personal feedback to her students.

TRADITIONAL
FEEDBACK

THE
FEEDFORWARD APPROACH

Affirms what the person already knows.

"You're really good at that."

Regenerates talent.

"Would you lead a training on that?

Points out problems.

That idea won't work because...

Expands possibilities.

What if we added this?

Is an "information dump."

Think rubrics with 10-20 different measurements.

Is **Particular**.

Is ongoing, embedded in instruction, and focuses on just a few things.

Tries not to be mean.

"Praise sandwiches" hide criticism inside gauzy praise.

Is **Authentic**.

Describes the problem and its impact, then prompts the person for a solution.

Doesn't always offer a plan of action.

Focus is on measurement, not a plan for change.

Has an **Impact**.

Has the person create a specific, step-by-step plan for improvement.

Comes from the top down.

Delivered within a strict hierarchy, from people on the same team.

Refines group dynamics.

Rich, varied input comes from people with different viewpoints and skill sets.

CULT OF PEDAGOGY

TYPES OF FEEDBACK – Robyn Jackson

DIAGNOSTIC FEEDBACK...identifies the root cause of why something is or is not working. It helps teachers understand more fully the reason for their struggle and clarifies for them the expectations for their future performance and core principles that should guide their work. <u>This kind of feedback is best used with those who are struggling because they lack an understanding of the key concepts involved in the work they are doing.</u>

PRESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK...is designed to help teachers understand what they should be doing differently to be more successful. This kind of feedback helps teachers understand what options they have to improve and what they should do next. <u>Thus, it is best suited for those who have tried something unsuccessfully and need specific help or direction to improve.</u>

DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK...is perhaps the most common feedback we give because it is what we have been trained to give. This kind of feedback, in which detailed descriptions of performance are provided, is like holding up a mirror and clearly showing teachers what they did well and where they need to improve. This feedback works well for those who have a good foundational understanding of the core expectations and principles that guide their work and have the capacity to be reflective and make adjustments based on their reflection. <u>However, this feedback will not be as effective for those who are still struggling to understand or implement the basics or for those who are not reflective.</u>

MICRO-FEEDBACK...works best with teachers who have already demonstrated a degree of expertise. Micro-feedback provides small nuances, tweaks, and minor adjustments that will significantly improve an already good performance. <u>This kind of feedback not only adds value to effective teachers' performances but also keeps those teachers consistently improving and growing.</u>

Insight
EDUCATION GROUP

"6 Step" Feedback Guide for Post-Observation Coaching

Adapted from "Leverage Leadership", Uncommon Schools, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo

Teacher's Name		Grade		Subject	
Observer/Facilitator		Date and Time			

Leader Should Bring: - Coaching Tracker (Excel) - Pre-planned script for the meeting (following Conversation Guide format)	**Teacher Should Bring:** - Laptop, lesson plan, materials for lesson, data/student work (when appropriate)

Step 1 *PRAISE* 1-2 minutes	**Praise – Narrate the positive**
Step 2 *PROBE* 1-2 minutes	**Probe – Start with a targeted question**
Step 3 *POLISH AREA and ACTION STEP* *3-5 minutes*	**Polish Area and Action Step – Bite-sized Action Step and highest level (add scaffolding as needed)**
Step 4 *PRACTICE* 5-8 minutes	**Practice – Role play/simulate how to improve current or future lesson/instructional delivery**
Step 5 *PLAN AHEAD* *3-5 minutes*	**Plan Ahead – Design/revise upcoming lesson plans to implement this action**
Step 6 *PREPARE FOR REVIEW* *1-2 minutes*	**Prepare for Review – Set a timeline for follow-up to review implementation** .

"6 Step" Feedback Guide for Post-Observation Coaching

Leader Should Bring:		Teacher Should Bring:
- Coaching Tracker (Excel) - Pre-planned script for the meeting (following Conversation Guide format)		- Laptop, lesson plan, materials for lesson, data/student work (when appropriate)

Step 1 **PRAISE** 1-2 minutes	**Praise – Narrate the positive**
	What to say: Last time we set a goal of _____ and I noticed in my most recent observation how you [met goal] by [state concrete positive actions teacher took]. What made you successful? How did it feel?
Step 2 **PROBE** 1-2 minutes	**Probe – Start with a targeted question**
	What to say: Choose a specific area of focus for TEAM Rubric/Goals/Previous Obs. How did you use _____ to increase students' understanding and mastery of the lesson?
Step 3 **POLISH AREA and ACTION STEP** 3-5 minutes	**Polish Area and Action Step – Bite-sized Action Step and highest level (add scaffolding as needed)**
	What to say: **Level 1 (Teacher-driven)—Teacher self-identifies the polish area/problem:** Yes. What, then, would be the best action step to address that problem? **Level 2 (More support)—Ask scaffolded questions:** How did your actions attempt to _____ [choose purpose of focus area, Questioning, Feedback]? **Level 3 (More leader guidance)—Present classroom data:** Do you remember what happened in class when ___? [Teacher then IDs what happened] What did that do to the class/learning? [Show a video of the moment in class that is the issue, if possible]. What happened in this moment? [or the appropriate question to accompany the video] **Level 4 (Leader-driven; only when other levels fail)—State the polish area/problem directly:** [State what you observed and what action step will be needed to solve the problem.] [If you modeled in class] When I intervened, what did I do? [Show video of effective practice] What do you notice? How is this different than what you do in class?
Step 4 **PRACTICE** 5-8 minutes	**Practice – Role play/simulate how to improve current or future lesson/instructional delivery**
	What to say: **Level 1:** Let's practice together. Do you want me to be the teacher or the student? **Levels 2-4:** Let's try that. [Jump into role-play.] Let's re-play your lesson and try to apply this. I'm your student. I say/do _____. How do you respond? [**Level 4:** Model for the teacher, and then have them practice it.]
Step 5 **PLAN AHEAD** 3-5 minutes	**Plan Ahead – Design/revise upcoming lesson plans to implement this action**
	What to say: Where would be a good place to implement this in your upcoming lessons? Let's write out the steps into your [lesson plan, worksheet/activity, signage, etc.]
Step 6 **PREPARE FOR REVIEW** 1-2 minutes	**Prepare for Review – Set a timeline for follow-up to review implementation**
	What to say: When would be best to observe your implementation of this? **Levels 3-4:** I'll come in tomorrow and look for this technique. **What to Do—Set Timeline for:** • **Completed Materials:** when teacher will complete revised lesson plan/materials • **Leader Observation:** when you'll observe the teacher • **(When valuable) Teacher Observes Master Teacher (Following *Collegial Walk/Talk Protocol*):** when they'll observe a teacher strongly implementing the action step • **(When valuable) Video:** when you'll tape teacher to debrief in upcoming meeting

**Coaching Conversation should take between 15-25 minutes, depending upon time allotted
Track applicable responses and action steps into the **Coaching Tracker during and immediately following conversation

Giving Negative or Growth Feedback That is Heard

1. *Pick the time and place carefully*- a good feedback session should not be spur-of-the-moment; it requires privacy and enough time to do just ice to what's being said.

2. *Don't email criticism*- This is not an appropriate forum for difficult conversations, which require face-to-ace contact and an opportunity for clarification and interaction

3. *Be timely*- Don't wait a long time after you identify the problem. On the other hand, if you're still emotional yourself, wait until you're calm and collected.

4. *Be specific*- Vague generalities will not help the teacher. The more specific you are, the more push-back there may be, but also the more chance there is for real learning and change on the teacher's part. For example "The lesson didn't make good use of time," is too vague. A more specific wording might be, "Time could have been better used if the materials had been distributed as the students entered the class, and homework placed in a central location, rather than using potential instructional time to distribute and collect papers."

5. *Watch your body language*- Non-verbal cues can communicate as much as words. You need to be sure that your eyes, face, and body are giving the same message as your words." For a particularly difficult conversation, it may help to role play with a trusted assistant.

6. *Provide a rationale*- The teacher needs to understand why this incident or behavior is important to you- the implications and the context of your thinking.

7. *Allow for a response*- No drive-by feedback! If you want to change behavior, you need to two-way conversation. The teacher must have time to absorb what you have said and respond to it, "making meaning" of your criticism.

8. *Clarify what you said*- Rephrasing the message at the end can help: "Let me be sure that I was clear in what I said…", or asking the teacher to rephrase what you expect of them. Alternatively, you might want to follow up with a memo outlining your key points so there will be no misunderstanding.

9. *Praise more than you criticize*- Positive "deposits" in the "interpersonal bank account" make criticism easier to accept. These, however, should be real and specific and should not be a system of counting such as 3 positive for every 1 negative.

10. *Separate the good from the not-so-good"*- Try not to list positives and then add a "but." This is a pattern that people are used to and they will see the positives as just an attempt to soften the blow. Create a format that honestly lists areas of strength and the specific area to grow. For example:

Positive **+**	Area of Concern ▲
You have been contacting parents	It is important to contact parents with information that is positive, not just negative
You are providing feedback to parents on students academic performance	For some parents, it is also important to talk to them personally
You are sending information to parents about what is happening in the classroom	Information to parents needs to contain specific recommendations and information about the parent can help the student at home

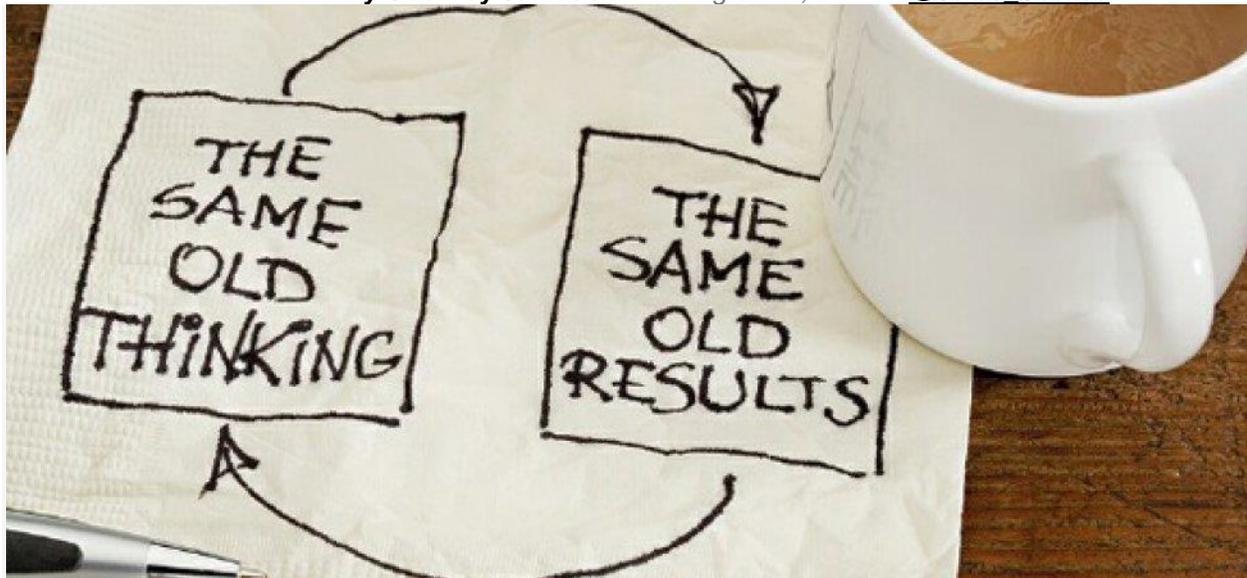10 Smart Rules for Giving Negative Feedback

LEAD

10 Smart Rules for Giving Negative Feedback

Here's how to handle employees when a kick in the rear is more appropriate than a pat on the back.

By Geoffrey James *Contributing editor, Inc.com* **@Sales_Source**

Praising good performance is easy, but what about those times when someone on your team needs a kick in the butt more than a pat on the back?

In that case, you'll need to give some negative feedback--and do it without demotivating or demoralizing the other person. This post explains exactly how to do this.

Before we get started, though, it's important to remember that the goal of feedback is *not* to tell people what to do or how to do it. That's mistaking the process for the goal.

The actual goal of feedback--even negative feedback--is to improve the behavior of the other person to bring out the best in your entire organization.

With that in mind, here are the 10 rules:

1. Make negative feedback unusual.

When a work environment becomes filled with criticism and complaint, people stop caring, because they know that--whatever they do--they'll get raked over the coals. "I try to give seven positive reinforcements for every negative comment," says Dan Cerutti, a general manager at IBM.

2. Don't stockpile negative feedback.

Changes in behavior are more easily achieved when negative feedback is administered in small doses. When managers stockpile problems, waiting for the "right moment," employees can easily become overwhelmed.

"Feedback is best given real time, or immediately after the fact," explains management coach [Kate Ludeman](#).

3. Never use feedback to vent.

Sure, your job is frustrating--but although it might make you feel better to get your own worries and insecurities off your chest, venting a string of criticisms seldom produces improved behavior. In fact, it usually creates resentment and passive resistance.

4. Don't email negative feedback.

People who avoid confrontation are often tempted use email as a vehicle for negative feedback. Don't.

"That's like lobbing hand grenades over a wall," says legendary electronic publishing guru Jonathan Seybold. "Email is more easily misconstrued, and when messages are copied, it brings other people into the fray."

5. Start with an honest compliment.

Compliments start a feedback session on the right footing, according to according to management consultant Sally Narodick and current board member at the supercomputer company Cray. "Effective feedback focuses on the positive while still identifying areas for further growth and better outcomes."

6. Uncover the root of the problem.

You can give better feedback if you understand how the other person perceives the original situation. Asking questions such as, "Why do you approach this situation in this way?" or "What was your thought process?" not only provides you perspective, but it can lead other people to discover their own solutions and their own insights.

7. Listen before you speak.

Most people can't learn unless they first feel that they've been heard out. Effective feedback "means paying attention and giving high-quality feedback from an empathic place, stepping into the other person's shoes, appreciating his or her experience, and helping to move that person into a learning mode," says Ludeman.

8. Ask questions that drive self-evaluation.

Much of the time, people know where they're having problems and may even have good ideas about how to improve. Asking questions such as "How could we have done better?" and "What do you think could use improvement?" involves the other person in building a shared plan.

9. Coach the behaviors you would like to see.

Negative feedback is useless without a model for how to do better. But simply telling the other person what to do or how to do it is usually a waste of time.

Instead, use this [tried-and-true coaching method](), which is based upon what top sports coaches do.

10. Be willing to accept feedback, too.

If you truly believe that negative feedback can improve performance, then you should be willing to accept it as well as provide it. In fact, few things are more valuable to managers than honest feedback from employees. It's to be treasured rather than discouraged or ignored.