

# PROVIDING GOOD PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK **QUICK GUIDE**



## A QUICK GUIDE TO PROVIDING GOOD PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK

Within the ACTPS, we work on the principles of ‘no surprises’ and a ‘constructive approach’. ‘No surprises’ means that supervisors/managers should provide feedback as soon as they have concerns about an employees’ performance and a ‘constructive approach’ involves acknowledging what is going well and talking about solutions when there is a need for improvement.

This guide provides ACT Public Sector (ACTPS) managers and supervisors with general tips and guidance to help them provide day-to-day performance feedback. For consistent or serious underperformance or inappropriate behaviour/misconduct, managers and supervisors should refer to the resources in the ACTPS Manager’s Toolkit and relevant ACTPS Enterprise Agreements.

More detailed information on performance can be found at [www.act.gov.au/performance](http://www.act.gov.au/performance).

## WHY SHOULD SUPERVISORS/ MANAGERS GIVE FEEDBACK?

Feedback is an important part of any successful workplace and gives employees an accurate account of how they are going. Yet many of us find giving feedback challenging, especially when we need to tell an employee their work is not up to standard. However, good business relies on the ability of managers and supervisors to get the best out of the people they manage – and to do so, they need to be capable of providing useful feedback to their staff.

## HAVING GOOD QUALITY PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSIONS

Creating an environment for high quality performance discussions starts well before you decide to provide feedback. The following is a list of tips to create a productive environment and to foster high quality performance discussions:

- build positive, trusting working relationships by showing that you care about your staff member’s interests, development and wellbeing;
- communicate openly;
- encourage feedback and role model an openness to feedback;
- act on feedback; and
- work on the principle of ‘no surprises’.

Get to know the people you manage or supervise by observing how they work and ask questions. How you approach performance discussions should be different for different people. High quality performance discussions require the ability to tailor your approach and communication style in response to the situation. The best way to find out how to adapt your approach is to simply ask your employee: “what do you need from me as your manger?”

## TIPS FOR PROVIDING GOOD FEEDBACK

### POSITIVE FEEDBACK AND RECOGNITION

Getting the best from everyone at work involves understanding what motivates people, recognising successful performance and making the most of it when it happens. Recognising the contributions of individuals and teams helps to build a high performance culture. Such recognition can include:

- simply saying thank you and acknowledging everyone's contribution;
- recognising when people go over and above;
- ensuring good ways of working are promoted and shared;
- helping everyone understand what good performance looks like;
- recognition through more formal rewards/awards; and
- celebrating successes.

### CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Aside from providing positive feedback (which is often much easier to do!), supervisors and managers also need to feel confident providing constructive feedback to employees regarding areas for improvement and development. This sort of feedback can occur informally and in an off-hand, yet considerate manner in much the same way as you would provide positive feedback. Providing such feedback is a reasonable management action. If the feedback does not result in the desired change to performance or behaviour, supervisors/managers may need to utilise more formal procedures.

### BALANCE

When giving feedback, ensure that you are saying is balanced. Recognise positives as well as negatives but ensure that the important feedback messages are understood and acted on. It is especially important to provide balanced feedback during Performance and Development reviews and assessments because those discussions relate to a stretch of time and not an isolated incident.

## CONSISTENCY

Whilst difficult performance discussions can take place during formal performance reviews, feedback on issues of concern should not be delayed until then and should be discussed promptly as they occur.

### FOLLOW THE SIX STEPS

If you find giving feedback difficult, you may wish to use the following as a guide to help you keep the session structured and balanced:

1. Choose an appropriate time and place;
2. Before the discussion analyse the situation, identify your objectives and plan for the discussion;
3. Give feedback in person whenever you can;
4. Be prepared;
5. During the feedback discussion:
  - a) provide context for the discussion, outline the background and say what you'd like to get from the discussion;
  - b) encourage a two-way discussion by asking questions and listening; and
  - c) decide together what action you both will take after the meeting and check that the other person has understood what you have said.
6. Following the discussion:
  - a) make sure you follow through on any action you have committed to;
  - b) follow-up and provide feedback; and
  - c) if things don't change:
    - reiterate the previous discussions and what was agreed;
    - indicate that things haven't changed and ask for reasons;
    - indicate the impact/consequences of continued lack of change or improvement;
    - discuss possible solutions to the problem;
    - agree on action to be taken and follow up date;
    - indicate your confidence that the change or improvement will occur; and
    - seek support confidentially by discussing the situation with another manager, your HR team or the Employee Assistance Program.



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