Factors to Consider When Giving Feedback

Giving feedback is a complex process and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Considering these different factors will help you give effective feedback that increases employee performance, motivation and engagement.

FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
Clear Expectations	Before even considering to give feedback on a person's performance, be sure that the expectations were clear. If the person had no idea what was expected, it is not fair to provide feedback that expectations weren't met.
Ongoing	Feedback should be an ongoing part of the communication process and not just reserved for formal meetings and performance reviews. Giving feedback frequently, both positive and negative, helps people become more open and receptive to feedback.
Balanced	Don't limit feedback to poor performance only. It is just as important to offer feedback to recognize what people do well. By offering balanced feedback, you set the tone in your workplace that open communication about performance is expected and beneficial. Caution: A technique known as the "feedback" sandwich involves telling the person something they did well, then something they need to improve, and then one more thing they did well. While this might seem like it would make the receiver feel better because there is some positive mixed in with the negative, it usually backfires – the person only remembers the negative. This technique is only appropriate is when giving feedback to someone who is learning a new skill.
Specific	To be constructive, feedback must be very specific. It should include the details of what happened: who, what, where, when and how. Without the specifics, you only have praise or criticism. Generalized and vague feedback doesn't tell the person what they did right or what they should change. Specific feedback describes exactly what was good or bad.
Behavioral Observations	Address the behaviors, not the person. ("What you said sounded arrogant" vs. "You are arrogant") Observations about behavior are facts of what you see, hear or feel. Judgments are your opinion of what occurred. Always stick with the facts and leave your judgment out of the conversation. When people see your feedback as judgmental, they are likely to get defensive and shut down, making it difficult for your message to get through.
Personal	Feedback should be given in person, rather than over the phone, through email, or through a messenger. Feedback is a form of communication and it is important for both the feedback giver and the feedback receiver to be able to interpret the non-verbal communication aspects of feedback. In addition, most feedback, especially negative feedback, should be given in private as to not put anyone on the spot or embarrass them.
Clear & Direct	When delivering feedback, do not beat around the bush, send mixed messages or sugarcoat. These actions create misunderstanding and discomfort. Be clear and direct in your message so the feedback receiver can correctly interpret your message.
Caring	Your feedback message will be more openly received if it is delivered with a sense of caring. Feedback is for the benefit of the recipient – not the giver – so be sensitive to the impact of your message. When giving positive feedback, express your appreciation for the behavior. When giving negative feedback, express concern.
Timely	Ideally, feedback should occur as soon after the behavior as possible, while events are still fresh in everyone's mind. However, giving feedback too quickly might mean

	you don't have all of the necessary facts and/or people's feelings might still be turbulent. Therefore, it is best to tailor the timing of feedback to each unique situation and the circumstances involved to ensure that the person is ready to accept your feedback message.
Relevant	Only give feedback on things that matter – the things that make a difference to the business or an individual's ability to conduct business.