

The Importance of Performance Conversations

Performance conversations with a focus on the right type of feedback can significantly increase associate performance. As part of our Leadership Commitments, leaders should provide timely and accurate feedback throughout the year. This feedback should Go Positive by emphasizing strengths and accomplishments with balanced suggestions for improvement.

Ensure the Right Setting

To conduct an effective performance conversation, choose a quiet, private conference room. For each of the associate's objective, allow enough time to discuss:

- What went well?
- What could have gone better?
- What should we focus on for the next quarter's priorities?
- What can I do for you?

Give the associate time to understand and respond to each discussion point and openly share concerns with you.

Rehearse the Conversation Prior to the Review Discussion

Prior to delivering formal feedback to your direct report, managers should prepare for the discussion and run through the conversation.

Ask the associate to review their objectives. Associate can use Associate Central to provide feedback on each objective and update its status.

Rehearse the Flow of the Discussion. Rehearse conversations and key messages before the meeting takes place. Rehearsing the conversation is important, particularly for the section where managers are providing suggestions for improvement.

Decide the Performance Strengths. Going positive in the performance reviews can have a substantial impact on associate performance; an emphasis on strengths has the maximum impact on associate engagement and performance. Begin with **what went well?** and provide specific examples to reinforce important behaviors.

Provide Suggestions to Improve Development Areas. When discussing development areas, frame feedback as ways to overcome barriers to higher performance, not personal weaknesses.



Use G.U.I.D.E. to Deliver Feedback

- G** Gather verifiable performance examples
- U** Understand results/goals and actions to achieve the results
- I** Identify strengths and weaknesses to discuss
- D** Develop suggestions to improve weaknesses
- E** Expect negative reactions and clarifications/questions

PERFORMANCE CONVERSATION CHECKLIST

- Establish the proper climate**
 - Schedule the meeting in advance and stick to it
 - Allow enough time to discuss everything
 - Locate a private space and guard against interruptions
- Make it clear that this is a joint discussion**
 - Listen and ask for the associate's opinion
 - Avoid words or body language that criticize the associate's view
 - Be willing to modify objectives and measures of success to reflect what is discussed in your conversations
- Discuss performance for the given period**
 - Review the status of each objective
 - Discuss performance strengths and suggestions for improvement citing examples. Make sure that weaknesses are not the emphasis of the discussion.
 - Discuss obstacles and roadblocks that affecting the associate's ability to achieve the objective.
- Discuss opportunities for growth and development**
 - Discuss the associate's developmental and career goals
 - Provide solutions for areas of improvement

Performance Feedback Language – Do’s and Don’ts

Instructions: Managers must focus on delivering valuable feedback in a way that associates understand and willingly accept. To minimize negative reactions, it is essential that managers are mindful of the language they use while delivering feedback. Use the lists of Do’s and Don’ts to guide your language.

DO’S

- ✓ **Go positive by emphasizing words of encouragement**, for instance, “Overall, your analytical skills are improving steadily; moving forward I will provide you with more opportunities to develop this skill further.”
- ✓ **Be descriptive**, for example, “Carrie, I thought the way you managed this was innovative and professional. I particularly liked the way you....”
- ✓ **Use the term ‘development areas’ when providing negative feedback.**
- ✓ **Use positive, empathetic sentences**, such as, “You are professional and diligent with project management, but your communication style is a bit formal and leads to fragmented teamwork.”

DON’TS

- X Employ extreme words, such as ‘always’ and ‘never’.
- X Use the words ‘weakness’ or ‘poor performance.’
- X Include labels, such as ‘irresponsible,’ ‘careless,’ and ‘awful.’
- X Make value judgments, such as ‘best,’ ‘bad,’ ‘incompetent.’
- X Compare peers, for example, “You are better than John at process management.”
- X Apologize after discussing development areas.

Dealing with Negative Associate Reactions

Showing respect for an associate is critical when a manager must deliver bad news or constructive criticism. The associate should be treated with honesty and integrity. Individuals respond to bad news in different ways; you should listen to the associate express his or her feelings of hurt or disappointment and provide pertinent information in response. Examples of these reactions and the most appropriate manager responses are indicated below:



ASSOCIATE’S RESPONSE	ANGER	DENIAL	SHOCK
MANAGER’S RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the associate’s reaction • Allow the associate to vent feelings • Do not get defensive or argumentative • Remain calm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen actively to make sure the associate understands the message • Repeat or restate comments if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the associate time to internalize the message • Suggest possible next steps • Use silence and open-ended questions to prompt associate response