



# REFLECTIONS



## How to Give Negative Feedback in a Positive Way

Negative feedback – it's never something you look forward to giving as a leader or an employee.

However, that doesn't mean you shouldn't give it. Although it's difficult to say negative things about other's work, it's worth remembering that your team can only thrive if you give them direction.

**Negative feedback is a method of giving your team members the tools they need to improve and get better at their jobs.**

So, how do you give criticism in a way that's positive and beneficial?

### Be Direct

The best approach is to be direct. **The employee is more likely to listen to your comments if you're clear about what you want them to learn.**

Avoid the "feedback sandwich" common in many business environments, where you surround criticisms with compliments. Although it's nice to give some positive feedback to soften the blow, you want them to walk away with a clear vision of what they've done wrong and what they need to work on.

Be specific about exactly what the issue is and what you want to change. You can ask the employee if they have any questions to help ensure their understanding.

**Try this:** “I know you’ve been working longer hours lately, and we appreciate the effort, but the quality of your work is starting to slip. We need to find a way to get back on track.”

## **Encourage Self-Reflection**

Your feedback will likely be more effective if it doesn’t feel like an attack.

Rather than telling someone how disappointed you are in them, ask them to consider their own work and whether they would be happy in your shoes. **Encouraging self-reflection pushes your staff to think more carefully about their behavior.**

In some cases, the employee might even be aware of the issue and give you some ideas on how they can improve. Employees will generally be more invested in their growth if they feel like they have an input, so it’s important to listen to their ideas before you speak.

**Try this:** “I know you’ve missed your sales targets this quarter, and that just isn’t like you. Do you have any ideas on what went wrong?”

## **Don’t Make it Personal**

It’s important to avoid any “personal” statements when you’re giving criticism, because this is more likely to make your employees feel defensive. As tempting as it may be to say that you’re disappointed in a team member’s work, or that you were unhappy with something they did, try to focus on the job instead of yourself.

### **For instance, instead of saying:**

“I’m getting really sick of your bossy attitude, and it’s affecting the whole team’s morale,” you can try something more beneficial.

### **Try removing the personal nature by saying:**

“Some of your team members have mentioned that they’d like a bit of extra independence on their projects. Would you be comfortable with that?”

**The focus should always be on the wider company, the way that things are affecting the business, and the employee, rather than you.** Avoid making it sound like you're the only person who has an issue, or that the issue is specifically with the person, rather than their work.

## **Explain the Implications**

Just because you can see how serious a problem is doesn't mean your team members can.

That's why it's so important to explain the implications of the issue and why your staff needs to make a change.

For instance, if you have a team member that's constantly sending emails with typos to clients, you could tell them that this isn't good for the company image, but they may not realize how serious the issue is.

**Instead, try focusing on evidence of how it could make a difference to the company.**

For example, you could say, "Our clients have been complaining about the typos in your messages, and we're concerned they're not sending the right message about the company."

It helps for team members to see how their actions are affecting the business as a whole and even the other people in their team.

## **Help Them Improve**

**Finally, giving negative feedback is only a good idea when you can also provide your staff members with ways to improve and grow.**

The last thing you should do is simply tell someone that you're unhappy with their work and leave it at that. Employees should always be given the chance to evolve and grow with additional guidance.

For example, if you tell your team member, "We're not happy with the number of calls you took yesterday," this lets them know that they're in trouble, but not much else.

Alternatively, if you say, "Your calls weren't great yesterday. Do you think there's a way you could improve your numbers?" you're setting the foundation for improvement.

If your employee can't offer a suggestion themselves, ensure that you have ideas on how they can make a positive change.

*Keep these strategies in mind for the next time you need to deliver some negative feedback. Putting it into a positive light, while still getting your point across, will help keep your team loyal and motivated to produce outstanding results.*