

**Give and Take of
Constructive Criticism
Participant Guide**

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Introduction

Constructive criticism can be a helpful tool when used with the intent of helping or improving a situation in the workplace. However, it can be one of the most challenging things not only to receive, but also to give. It can often involve various emotions and feelings, which can make matters delicate. But when management learns effective ways to handle and deliver constructive criticism, employees can not only learn from their mistakes, but even benefit from them. We need to recognize that we can be a part of the problem if we are not addressing the problems or are not addressing them effectively. This workshop will guide you in positive ways to criticize your employees and help them improve their behaviors.

Workshop Objectives

To effectively deliver constructive criticism, you must understand what it is, how it is used, and its purpose. The following objectives of this workshop are designed to help you do just that.

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Explain when feedback should take place
- Prepare and plan to deliver constructive criticism
- Determine the appropriate atmosphere in which criticism should take place
- Identify the proper steps to be taken during the session
- Describe how emotions and certain actions can negatively impact the effects of the session
- Set goals and explain the method used to set them
- Follow up with the employee after the session

“Handling Repeated Events and Behaviors”

Review each scenario individually. Identify the positive aspect of each situation. Then identify the negative behavior or event that should be addressed. Finally, come up with a solution that can be used to stop it.

- An employee works hard during the day and stays late to finish projects and assignments. However, she is always tardy in the morning when reporting to work.

Positive: _____

Negative: _____

Solution: _____

- An employee is on several committees and continues to volunteer to work on others. In return, her quality of work has started to drop.

Positive: _____

Negative: _____

Solution: _____

Additional Notes: _____

“Breaches in Company Policy”

For the following situations, identify the policy that addresses each problem situation and identify how you would review these policies with the employee.

Problem #1 – Unsatisfactory job performance

Problem #2 – Discriminatory behavior among co-workers

Problem #3 – Excessive absences and/or tardiness

Do more topics need to be included? What additional information would you provide at this stage?

“When Informal Feedback Isn’t Working”

Sometimes informal feedback doesn’t get the message to the employee. Review both situations and identify the informal feedback that was taken to resolve it. Assuming the informal feedback did not work; decide what actions should be taken next.

- An employee does not turn in reports on time and does not spell check/edit them. The manager spoke with him at his desk and reminded him to finish work on time and turn in reports after he has reviewed them for errors. However, the behavior continues.

Informal feedback given: _____

Possible action: _____

- An employee continues to wear tops that are too revealing or inappropriate. Her supervisor sent her an email reminding her it was against company policy to wear these types of clothes to work. The employee continues to wear them to work.

Informal feedback given: _____

Possible action: _____

“Recognizing When to Deliver Feedback”

Review the following situations and determine if feedback should be given immediately after the incident or if it should wait until a later time based on the possible effects of employees and coworkers.

Situation 1: *An employee turns in a report that has numerous spelling errors.*

Immediate or Delayed? _____

Why? _____

Situation 2: *An employee’s job performance stats are lower than normal. The reports are set to be reviewed again in one week.*

Immediate or Delayed? _____

Why? _____

Situation 3: *An employee comes to work wearing flip-flop sandals, which is against company policy.*

Immediate or Delayed? _____

Why? _____

Case Study

Joseph has been monitoring his employee, Susan, and notices that she has continued to be late to their weekly meetings. He also notices that even though she is late, she does contribute to the meeting and has her materials ready. However, her tardiness usually upsets the other employees and disrupts the presentation of reports that they have prepared.

Joseph sent Susan an email a few days before the meeting and reminded her that she is supposed to arrive on time and be ready for her coworkers' reports. That week Susan was late for the meeting again. Afterwards, Joseph called Susan into his office and spoke with her about the problem. She had excuses, such as car trouble or broken alarms. Joseph reminded Susan where it is against company policy to constantly be tardy and reviewed the policy page with her, including possible consequences for continued behavior. At the following week's meeting, Susan arrived on time.

“Practicing Your Tone”

In the following exercise, role-play each situation with a partner. Turn your back to each other and practice the following statements and notice the tone that can come with each sentence. Try to identify the tone you and your partner make on each statement.

Phrase #1 – *Your job performance has declined 50% this week.*

Notes: _____

Phrase #2 – *I’d like to see you improve your typing speed by the end of the month.*

Notes: _____

“Checking Your Ego at the Door”

Below are some example situations of common office problems. With each situation, first identify how you feel about the situation and how it can affect your session with the employee. Then identify the real issue in the situation that really needs to be addressed.

Situation #1: *Cynthia is on time for every management meeting except yours. She continues to be late to yours.*

Your Emotions/Ego - _____

Real problem - _____

Situation #2: *Jacob does not print his reports in the correct template. He does not listen to coworkers on how to fix it.*

Your Emotions/Ego - _____

Real problem - _____

Situation #3: *Anna is having trouble learning the new accounting books. She is making mistakes every week.*

Your Emotions/Ego - _____

Real problem - _____

“Public vs. Private”

Different situations require a different settings and surroundings to discuss in. Using this handout, list different situations that you would discuss with an employee both in public and in private. Remember that the general rule is to provide praise in public and criticism in private.

Done in Public:

Done in Private:

What key elements are identified in each set of situations?

“Being Face to Face”

In the following exercise, role-play each situation with a partner. Turn your back to each other or simply look in another direction and practice the following statements. Then turn and look at each other face to face and discuss how different each experience felt. Which seems to be most effective?

Phrase #1 – *Your job performance has declined 50% this week.*

Not facing each other: _____

After facing each other: _____

Phrase #2 – *I need to see your data entry speed increase before the end of this quarter.*

Not facing each other: _____

After facing each other: _____

Additional Notes: _____

“Body Language Signals”

Review the following gestures. In the space provided, try to translate what the body language gesture is saying.

- 1.) An employee cannot sit still in her chair while you are speaking to her.

- 2.) A coworker is not making eye contact with you while you are making a presentation.

- 3.) An employee has her arms crossed while talking to another colleague.

- 4.) Your boss rolls his eyes every time the phone rings in his office.

Case Study

Edna called her employee, Judy into her office to go over her recent article she'd written about office personalities. She had pointed out that she liked and didn't like, so she started with a positive note.

"I enjoyed your recent article and found it pleasing and fun to read."

Then she eased into the trouble area before ending with another compliment, to let Judy know the article was still good, but needed improvements.

"In your next article, it's not a good idea to use names of actual colleagues you work with. Someone might feel offended or threatened by your remarks aimed at them. So I'm really looking forward to your next piece since they are always very informational."

Judy nodded and took several notes while Edna was talking. When Edna was finished, she asked Judy if she understood what she was trying to say and if she had any questions. She explained that the feedback was not to criticize Judy's article, but to improve it and benefit Judy in the future. Judy asked for some additional tips and said she would revise the article for the next publication.

“Emotions”

Review the following situations. In the space provided, identify what type of emotion(s) it makes you feel.

1.) Your boss congratulated you on a job well done. _____

2.) Your coworker forgot to bring the charts for your group presentation. _____

3.) An employee spills coffee all over your desk of papers. _____

4.) A colleague says she heard rumors that someone was going to be fired today. _____

“Attacking and Blaming Words”

In this part of the worksheet, check each box that is a phrase that tries to blame or attack someone.

- I thought you were smart enough to handle this project.
- These prints on your camera came out great.
- Why didn't you tell me the client files are in the shred box?
- You've shown me you're not ready to handle this kind of work load.
- Please don't forget to turn in your time card today.
- You always do this at the end of the sales quarter.

What are some negative effects that occur from using phrases that cast blame or try to attack someone's characteristics?

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

4.) _____

“The Feedback Sandwich”

The purpose of the feedback sandwich is to not only deliver the needed constructive criticism, but offer some sort of positive statement as well to encourage the employee. Review each scenario below individually. Identify the positive and negative of the situation and decide how you would deliver the information.

- *Susan recently published an article about local supermarkets. While it received good reviews, some of the stores were not happy that she openly published the names of their stores without their permission.*

Compliment: _____

Criticism: _____

Positive Statement: _____

- *Howard decided it was time to clean out the storage room that held many boxes of files. He accidentally threw away several client files that his team was working on.*

Compliment: _____

Criticism: _____

Positive Statement: _____

“Be More Specific”

Below are some examples of basic instructions. Review each one and change them to be more specific.

Example #1: *I'd like to see your work output increase.*

More specifically - _____

Example #2: *I need you show a better work ethic in the office.*

More specifically - _____

Example #3: *I need you to review the company dress code before coming back to work.*

More specifically - _____

“Eliminating ‘You’ Messages”

In the following exercise, role-play each situation with a partner. Take turns repeated the following phrases. Write how the ‘You’ message makes you feel and then note if the other phrase makes you feel differently

‘You’ Message – *You’ve been late every day this week.*

Revision – *I’m disappointed that you haven’t made it to work on time this week.*

Notes:

‘You’ Message – *You forgot to include your projection report again.*

Revision – *I’d appreciate it if you’d remember to include your projection report next time.*

Notes:

“Creating an Action Plan”

Use the worksheet below to outline the different parts of an employee action plan. Use a scenario from your personal or work experience. Identify key parts such as the source problem and steps toward a solution.

Situation: _____

Part One: Source of the problem _____

Part Two: Allow the employee to speak _____

Part Three: Select the corrective action(s) _____

Part Four: Set goals _____

Part Five: Follow up a plan _____

