

# Giving and receiving the gift of feedback



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I am fortunate that I grew up in marketing when I did. When I started my career at Johnson & Johnson in 1988 I was surrounded by mentors and supported by people who taught me the craft of marketing, of team collaboration and of conflict resolution. I learned by example and by trial and error, with lots and lots of feedback along the way.

I learned back then that feedback is a gift. I received a lot of gifts back in the day.

It's not easy to be honest with people, especially when the message isn't necessarily positive. It's not easy looking at someone in the eye and telling that they need to improve. Sure, it's a lot easier when it's positive feedback but even then you have to remember to deliver it. I've received feedback like that many times in my life and I've appreciated it every single time.

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Feedback is difficult, which is why it often goes un-given. Let's face it: we don't have the staffing, training programs, or time we once had. We are all collectively slammed with work, all day long. So to take an extra few minutes to give someone feedback can't always happen. It should, but it doesn't. It used to, but it just doesn't anymore. Which is why feedback is now an even more precious gift.

Feedback is a gift of time and energy. It's a gift of oneself, departing the wisdom you've gained in a given area and helping someone else to try to master it as well. Feedback is using your experience to help someone else gain some valuable experience too. Feedback is having someone's back so that they repeat the positive and change the negative.

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But in order for feedback to happen, the time and energy you exert has to been conscious. You can't just give feedback when you think of it, you have to make it a way of life.

Here are a few tips:

### **1. Make it a habit.**

Like anything in life, the more you do something then the more likely you are to keep on doing it. So weave feedback into every interaction you have with your team. Make it a normal course of how you operate. Save the special occasions for the holidays and make feedback a daily dose of inspiration for your team.

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### **2. Make it a positive experience.**

Weave positive comments in with the negative ones to present a balanced picture to your team. It's much easier to say good things than it is to say bad ones so make it s 50/50 split. You're more likely to want to give feedback when half of it is always positive. I find you can even give negative feedback in a positive light, especially when it's a regular occurrence. People will accept -- and perhaps even embrace -- your feedback when it's done in a positive manner.

### **3. Make it in the moment.**

Giving feedback at the moment a behavior or activity is happening can be the most effective for retention. It's specific, it's relevant, and it's more

memorable. And when you do it continually as a matter of course, it becomes even more actionable.

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Feedback is a gift and when done regularly, positively and in the moment, it can do wonders for team development and productivity. And that's when it becomes a gift that keeps on giving.