

Tips for Managers | Ideas from Human Resources

Soliciting Feedback from Others

To do your job well, you need regular feedback from colleagues, supervisors, and employees. But others may be reluctant to give you the feedback you need, especially negative feedback. Here are some suggestions for encouraging feedback and handling negative feedback.

MEETINGS

Make feedback an agenda item at meetings. Ask these questions regularly:

- What should I do more of?
- What should I do less of?
- What should I keep doing the same?

SURVEYS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

You may be able to get questionnaires from your institution. If not, you can create your own or ask colleagues to help you create one. Anonymous responses allow people to be more open with negative feedback.

GETTING PEOPLE TO BE UP-FRONT

Ask others how they would do some aspect of your job. Asking people for ideas helps you improve your own performance and makes them feel included in the process.

Ask open-ended questions that allow many possible answers: “What do you think of...?” rather than “Do you like...?”

Avoid “loaded” questions that may be difficult for someone to answer: “Do you think I do a good job?” Ask questions that invite constructive response: “Is there anything I could do differently that would help you do your job better?”

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

No one likes to be on the receiving end of negative feedback. On the other hand, you’ll want to know when people are dissatisfied with something you do. Consider the following:

- Accept feedback without debate or defensiveness.
 - Avoid punishing the messengers. In fact, make it clear that you value them for sharing their concerns.
 - Ask for specifics. Get enough information to make sure you understand exactly what the problem is.
 - Verify the information with others. Not all negative feedback is valid.
 - Decide what to do and develop a plan of action.
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