Give feedback

Feedback is a key tool for the manager, to support, recognize and develop the members of his team. It is therefore necessary to prepare it and give attention, so that it reaches its objective and is perceived as a gift.

Negative feedback? positive? constructive?

One of the main functions of feedback is indeed to enable the employee to identify in which direction to develop their skills. It should not be negative and always constructive:
- in order to modify a behavior, we speak of development feedback
- with the aim of reinforcing or amplifying behavior. There is a tendency to focus on problematic issues, or to make very vague positive feedbacks that do not help the team member understanding what needs to be repeated or even amplified, and to identify what strengths he can build on to make progress. Positive feedback should therefore be as accurate as development feedback.

Create a secure framework

As with any learning moment, it is important to create a framework of trust, so that the team member is not feeling defensive and can expose their vulnerabilities. This goes through several elements:

- The intention of the manager
Your goal should be to help the employee grow and improve, not punish or blame him. If you are upset (which can happen!), It is better to wait until the emotion is down to be able to approach this situation in a serene way and to feel positive towards the employee.

- The moment
Not too early - if the emotions on both sides are alive, or the situation must first be solved (Corrective Action-Preventive Action concept, make sure that the problem is solved before seeing together how to avoid it in the future). It is also important that you can prepare it, even if it only takes a few moments. But not too late either, otherwise the team member may not remember clearly the situation.

- The place

Especially for development feedback, avoid giving it in public, in order not to embarrass your collaborator

- Put the incident in a global context
Some recommend the sandwich method (start with positive feedback, get to the problem, and then end on a positive note) - the danger is that the collaborator sees positive feedback only as an introduction to negative feedback. The intention of this method is in any case to remind the team member that the incident is only part of the relationship and that in general he is doing good work, so we are confident regarding their ability to progress. Up to you to see how to make sure this global context is there- to make constructive positive feedbacks regularly helps build this relationship of trust!

- Do not exceed the employee's absorption capacity)
One step at a time - if you have identified multiple elements to work on, it is better to approach them one by one, at different times, so that the collaborator does not feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the changes expected and feels he can progress at his own pace.

Structure feedback – SBI model

The more you have prepared and structured it, the clearer a feedback will be. There are several models for this, I propose below the model S-B-I:

Situation
Start by talking about the situation, to put the fact (positive or negative) in context and recall a common frame of reference
'Yesterday, during the meeting with the PC ...'

Behaviour

Describe then the facts as observed behaviors, objective facts. Avoid assumptions or judgments, especially judgments about the personality traits of your collaborator.
'... you shared a presentation where there were several errors, which the PC noted'
And not
'You presented a report full of errors, which you had prepared with little care
Or
'You were careless and offhand when presenting your report'

Impact

Then explain the impact this behavior has had on you, using 'I' sentences - behavior is not problematic as such, but the consequences it has or could have can be.
'I felt embarrassed because it affects the credibility of our team'

Listen to the other

It is important, especially in a developmental feedback, to give space to the other to express themselves, to understand its perspective and the reasons why this behavior took place. In this example, it could be related not to carelessness, but to a work overload that prevented him from re-reading the presentation, an overload that you were not aware of. It is therefore necessary to exchange to get to a common understanding of what has happened, to be able to draw the consequences together.

Plan next steps

Feedback ends with a plan. In a case of development feedback, this plan identifies what the team member needs to avoid repeating this problematic behavior (training, additional resources, reorganization, special support from the manager, etc.). In a positive feedback, if it is relevant, it could aim at identifying opportunities to repeat or even amplify this positive behavior.

If the behavior does not improve ...

The DESC structure can help give more directive feedback (see DESC sheet).