FREE PACK · INSIGHTS

The feedback card

Front: praise on the spot, advice in its own time, with checks for giving, receiving and feeding back upwards. Back: five reactions to hard feedback and what helps at each.

Praise on the spot, advice in its own time

Praise

When: straight away, while it is fresh.
What: the specific thing they did, and why it mattered.
Then: stop. No “but”, no “one small thing”.

Advice

When: in its own conversation, when they can use it.
What: one or two things to do differently next time.
Then: ask what they think, and agree what happens next.

Before you give feedback, check

- Can I name one recent, specific example I saw or heard myself?
- Is it about something they did, not who they are?
- Is this the right moment and place for them, not just for me?
- Am I saying it for their benefit or to relieve my own frustration?
- Do I know what I would like them to try instead?

When you are on the receiving end

- Breathe before you answer. The first reply is often a defence.
- Ask for an example if there isn’t one.
- Say back what you heard, to check you heard it right.
- Thank them, even if you disagree. It took effort.
- Decide later, not in the room, what you will do with it.

Feedback to someone more senior

1. Ask first: “Can I give you a view on the Monday meetings?”
2. Link it to something they want: their goal, not your grievance.
3. Offer it as information from where you sit, which they may not see.
4. Ask what is going on for them; there may be a pressure you can’t see.
5. Leave the decision with them, and notice if anything changes.

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When feedback is hard to hear

Reactions to difficult feedback often follow a short version of the change curve. Not everyone shows every stage, the order can vary, and people can slip back. Your job is to recognise where they are and not to rush them.

Reaction	What you might notice	What helps
Surprise	They go quiet, ask you to repeat it, or answer something you didn't say.	Stop adding points and let the silence sit. If they need longer, offer to pick it up again later the same day.
Push-back	Raised voice, "that's not fair", or questions about who else said it.	Let it run for a minute. Ask what feels unfair. You can respect the feeling without withdrawing the message.
Explaining it away	Reasons, context, other people's part in it. Some of it may be true.	Agree with the parts that are true, then return to the one example: "Even allowing for that, what happened on Tuesday?"
Taking it in	Questions about the detail, "so what you're saying is...", a change in tone.	Let them lead. Ask what they would do differently next time, and offer your own idea only if theirs run out.
Moving to action	They start planning, or ask for help with a specific part.	Agree a first step and a date to look at it together. Acknowledge that it was not easy to hear.

The conversation I need to have, and the one example I will use

What I will praise first, separately, and when

The stages are a short-form version of the change-curve pattern that descends from Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's work with dying patients (*On Death and Dying*, 1969), applied here to a single conversation.

Does any of this sound familiar?

The organisations we work with rarely come to us asking for a survey. They come with something that is costing them money, time or people. These are the ones we hear most often.

MAKING MONEY

"We hire well on paper and still get it wrong in the role."
Personality, leadership and competency assessment matched to the job, so interviews test what matters and offers go to people who will perform. (FindingPotential)

"Our best people leave and we only find out why afterwards."
Exit intelligence in the leaver's final weeks: what was avoidable, who would come back, and what to change first. (LastOpinion)

"Leaders get feedback once a year and nothing changes."
Forward-looking 360 feedback that lands as development rather than judgement, with the actions built in. (FeedForward)

SAVING MONEY

"Too many new starters are gone inside a year."
New-starter surveys at the points the first-year leak opens, so you act at three months instead of reading about it at exit. (OnBoarder)

"References take weeks and tell us nothing."
Automated referencing with questions that predict, most returned within 48 hours. (ReferenceExpert)

"We run an engagement survey and the results sit in a drawer."
Engagement reporting down to team level in plain English, with the three moves each team's own people chose. (WinningFormula)

SOLVING PROBLEMS

"The board wants evidence on culture, conduct and speaking up."
A confidential always-on channel and a harassment-prevention audit that give you the evidence before a regulator asks for it. (SafeSpace)

"We publish an inclusion statement and cannot show whether it is true."
Inclusion measured at every stage from hire to exit, so you can see where the experience differs and act on it. (ED&I)

"We have the data and cannot turn it into a decision."
Twenty years of UK benchmark data and analysts who turn results into a board paper, not a dashboard. (Workforce intelligence)

Who we are

great{with}talent is a UK workforce-intelligence consultancy, founded in 2003. We help organisations hire better, keep people longer, improve leadership, strengthen inclusion and reduce workplace risk, with a connected set of tools that turn employee data into clear, fast action across the whole employee lifecycle. Independent, GDPR-compliant and Cyber Essentials certified, hosted on Microsoft Azure.

Not on the list? It will not always be. If you are working on something you think we might be able to help with, drop us a note describing what you are trying to do and we will come back to you.

On the list or not, let's talk.

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