From the website: http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/feedback.html

Giving and Receiving Feedback

See also: Dealing with Criticism.

In life as much as in work, it's important to know how to provide feedback to others, effectively and constructively without causing offence.

There are many opportunities in life for providing others with feedback, from commenting on the way that your colleague has carried out a task, to discussing your children's behaviour with them.

'Feedback' is a frequently used term in communication theory. It is worth noting that this page is not about what might loosely be called 'encouragement feedback'—the 'yes I'm listening'-type nods and 'uh-huhs' which you use to tell someone that you are listening.

See our page **Interpersonal Communication Skills** for more on 'encouragement feedback'.

What is Effective Feedback?

For our purposes, we will define effective feedback as that which is clearly heard, understood and accepted. Those are the areas that are within your power. You have no control over whether the recipient chooses to act upon your feedback, so let's put that to one side.

So how can you make sure that your feedback is effective?

Develop your feedback skills by using these few rules, and you'll soon find that you're much more effective.

1. Feedback should be about behaviour not personality

The first, and probably the most important rule of feedback is to remember that you are making no comment on what type of person they are, or what they believe or value. You are only commenting on how they behaved. Do not be tempted to discuss aspects of personality, intelligence or anything else. Only behaviour.

2. Feedback should describe the effect of the person's behaviour on you

After all, you do not know the effect on anyone or anything else. You only know how it made **you** feel or what **you** thought. Presenting feedback as your opinion makes it much easier for the recipient to hear and accept it, even if you are giving negative feedback. After all, they have no control over how you felt, any more than you have any control over their intention. This approach is a blame-free one, which is therefore much more acceptable.

Choose your feedback language carefully.

Useful phrases for giving feedback include:

"When you did [x], I felt [y]."

"I noticed that when you said [x], it made me feel [y]."

"I really liked the way that you did [x] and particularly [y] about it."

"It made me feel really [x] to hear you say [y] in that way."

3. Feedback should be as specific as possible

Especially when things are not going well, we all know that it's tempting to start from the point of view of 'everything you do is rubbish', but don't. Think about specific occasions, and specific behaviour, and point to exactly what the person did, and exactly how it made you feel. The more specific the better, as it is much easier to hear about a specific occasion than about 'all the time'!

4. Feedback should be timely

It's no good telling someone about something that offended or pleased you six months later. Feedback needs to be timely, which means while everyone can still remember what happened. If you have feedback to give, then just get on and give it. That doesn't mean without thought. You still need to think about what you're going to say and how.

5. Pick your moment

There are times when people are feeling open to feedback and times when they aren't. Have a look at our page on **emotional awareness** and work on your social awareness, to help you develop your awareness of the emotions and feelings of others. This will help you to pick a suitable moment. For example, an angry person won't want to accept feedback, even given skilfully. Wait until they've calmed down a bit.

Feedback doesn't just happen in formal feedback meetings.

Every interaction is an opportunity for feedback, in both directions. Some of the most important feedback may happen casually in a quick interchange, for example, this one, overheard while two colleagues were making coffee:
Mary (laughing): "*You remind me of my mum.*"
Jane (her boss): "*Really, why?*"
Mary: "*She gets really snappy with me when she's stressed too.*"
Jane: "*Oh, I'm so sorry, have I been snapping at you? I am a bit stressed, but I'll try not to do it in future. Thank you for telling me, and I'm sorry you needed to.*"
Mary had, quite casually, raised a serious behavioural issue with Jane. Jane realised that she was fortunate that Mary had recognised the behavioural pattern from a familial situation, and drawn her own conclusions.
However, Jane also recognised that not everyone she would ever work with would do the same. Having been made aware of her behaviour, she chose to change it. Mary had also, casually or not, given feedback in line with all the rules: it was about Jane's recent behaviour, and so was specific and timely, and showed how Mary perceived it. It was also at a good moment, when Jane was relaxed and open to discussion.

Receiving Feedback

It's also important to think about what skills you need to receive feedback, especially when it is something you don't want to hear, and not least because not everyone is skilled at giving feedback.

Be Open To The Feedback

In order to hear feedback, you need to listen to it. Don't think about what you're going to say in reply, just listen. And notice the non-verbal communication as well, and listen to what your colleague is not saying, as well as what they are.

See our pages: **Active Listening** and **Non-Verbal Communication** for more information.

See our further pages: **Questioning**,**Reflecting** and **Clarification** to ensure that you have fully understood all the nuances of what the other person is saying and avoid misunderstandings. Use **different types of questions** to clarify the situation, and reflect back your understanding, including emotions.

For example, you might say:

"So when you said …, would it be fair to say that you meant … and felt …?"

"Have I understood correctly that when I did …, you felt …?"

Make sure that your reflection and questions focus on **behaviour**, and not personality. Even if the feedback has been given at another level, you can always return the conversation to the behavioural, and help the person giving feedback to focus on that level.

Emotional intelligence is essential. You need to be aware of your emotions (self-awareness) and also be able to manage them (self-control), so that even if the feedback causes an emotional response, you can control it.

And Finally…

Always thank the person who has given you the feedback. They have already seen that you have listened and understood, now accept it.

Acceptance in this way does not mean that you need to act on it. However, you do then need to consider the feedback, and decide how, if at all, you wish to act upon it. That is entirely up to you, but remember that the person giving the feedback felt strongly enough to bother mentioning it to you.

Do them the courtesy of at least giving the matter some consideration. If nothing else, with negative feedback, you want to know how not to generate that response again.

Find more at: http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/feedback.html#ixzz3kTJgyF5V

theguardian

Article from the website: http://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2012/jan/31/improve-audience-visitor-feedback-arts

12 ways to improve how you conduct audience and visitor feedback

We round up all the best comments, examples and insights from our live chat last week on audience feedback – what to ask, how to ask it and what to do with the results

Feedback is key to keeping audiences engaged with your venue and your brand, says Amanda Lewis. Photograph: image100 / Alamy/Alamy

By Matthew Caines

David Jubb, joint artistic director, Battersea Arts Centre

Ask open questions: Asking audiences to describe what they experienced is often far more useful than trying to pin down specific parts of their experience. I think feedback (like so many other things) works best when it's exercised as a conversation rather than a statement.

Jennifer Foley, museum educator, VMFA

Think of all the different ways your audience can engage with you: I'm personally not a fan of answering questions face to face, but I'll often fill out surveys emailed to me or sent through social media channels like Twitter. I often see much higher rates of return on emailed surveys, but at the same time I find there are certain people who really would rather talk about it in person.

I like the idea of having multiple collection methodologies working simultaneously. I think there's sometimes a focus on which method brings in the highest number of responses, but less discussion about how different methodologies are bringing in different responses because different people will respond or not respond to the process.

Amanda Lewis, business development and agency director, aka

Understand first why audience feedback is useful: As an overview (and generally) we believe feedback here is key to keeping audiences engaged with your venue and your brand. If you welcome feedback audiences feel appreciated and valued, whether its about the toilets or the artistic programme. Once you have a positive and direct communication with them you can benefit enormously, but the organisation needs to work out first what it want to know for it to be as beneficial as possible.

Offer exclusive content alongside feedback surveys: One success we've had in post-event surveying is by sharing exclusive content – for example an exclusive video – alongside it. It's encouraged people to feedback but also share content with their friends and family through social networks. It's ultimately helped us marketing types by getting the audience to feedback and promote an event, production or experience for us.

Jenni Fuchs, founder, Museum140

Think about the end at the beginning: Don't wait until your exhibition opens and then commission a survey – plan your feedback gathering in from the start.

Focus groups are a good use of time and resource: Unfortunately, a lack of both time and resources has often made us default to surveys at National Museums Scotland, but I always preferred working with focus groups, which we ended up using as a term for any kind of group feedback.

I used lots of different techniques to get people engaged – for example, creating mood boards as a way of gathering feedback was always very popular. Another was letting the group loose on a gallery with a pack of Post-it notes to annotate the displays. That was great fun.

Helen Mark, research manager, All About Audiences

Careful and thorough planning is key: Be clear about what you want to know and express it in unambiguous research aims. This will keep your research relevant and useful to your organisation. Also consider who the stakeholders are for your research project (funders, marketers, programmers etc) and make sure they are able to input to the planning process.

Arts venues need to be sharing their feedback data: Organisations are individually conducting fascinating research projects that are often not shared as widely as they could be. There are also some

barriers that still to be overcome with regards to meaningfully comparing data sets between organisations, for example by standardising wording of demographic questions or ratings scales etc.

There are some really interesting examples of clusters of organisations in the visual arts getting together to share key data, for example the Turning Point Visual Arts Network, but this approach is not as widely used as it could and should be.

It's about quality, not quantity: Everyone has different preferences on how to give feedback. Now, with the availability of lots of different kinds of platforms it opens up new possibilities. It's probably not right to think of which method brings in the highest amount of response – it's more about the quality of the responses in light of your research aims. A mixed methods approach (quantitative data from surveys analysed alongside qualitative responses from focus groups, vox pops etc) often works really well for gathering a rich set of information on audiences

Gerry Wall, business manager, Audiences UK

We must start thinking about social media: We should know that half of UK pensioners are on Facebook and that 50% of corporate sales will happen through social media by 2014. These stats change the perspective of our audiences and we need to think about how they might change the process of feedback itself – imagine how quickly a bad audience experience can travel and what damage it can do.

Jim Brewster, acting chief executive, Audiences South West

You own a lot of data already – use it: Our starting point is always the data that's available: how well do we know our community? Then we look at transactional data: what can ticketing information tell us? In short, heaps – more than enough to drive better business planning and certainly enough to begin to make sense of the potential value of different methods and different voices. Then things can really get interesting

Adrienne Pye, associate, Audiences London

Try consultation groups instead of focus groups: I agree that focus groups can be a useful part of the mix, but I personally prefer to use consultation groups – there are usually more people, with more varied opinions and they don't feel they are being researched. It's probably more representative of a community of interest and therefore gives a greater variety of responses. They do need careful facilitation though, to be properly useful (and to get everyone actually contributing).

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