

How to Create a Feedback Culture with US-American Teams?

Jacquelyn Reeves, M.S.

Key words: feedback culture, creating a feedback culture, American communication, USA communication, building a high performance team

Giving feedback is one of the most critical pieces of working with your US team. A positive atmosphere, giving frequent praise for work you may regard as routine or unimportant is the key to keeping a team spirit in place. It is not about praising them for “babyish” tasks but giving motivation and support to work hard and pull together. These regular praise phrases are a sign that communication is normal (and only normal!) in the team, not that they are amazing team players. However, without these verbal and non-verbal cues (smiling, friendly) it is a warning to your team that something is not moving in the right direction.

Here are directions for a specific feedback situation in which you need to point to need for improvement. These conversations should be in a private office with the door closed. Make an appointment for best results with your team members, so they have time to prepare and bring their best self to this exchange. Remember, the goal is to grow the team spirit, openness, acceptance of change and new things and hopefully foster taking initiative, all part of building a high performance team in the workplace.

Keep it positive:

Use the sandwich method: always start with a positive piece of praise or recognition where you tell the person something good they have done for the team, the organization or for you personally in your role as a leader. You should mean it sincerely and be able to explain why if they ask. Thank them for their contribution in this effort.

Targeted information: Tell the person you have a concern, a goal or a question about your topic. What is it? What is your vision for this topic? Where would you like to see it develop? Give criticism but criticism that gives your staff a place to grow, learn or develop. Offer to provide skills or opportunity to grow as well as support, if you think it's needed and reasonable.

Don'ts: don't “scold” or place blame or guilt. Look for underlying reasons and solutions. (Look at “*solutions-focus working*” for more on this)

Close with a positive. “I look forward to hearing about this”. Make a new firm date to talk again. Let them know they can ask questions at any time if something is not clear or they would like further support or coaching.

Tip: use this document with the “language usage” document for specific phrases to use for your conversation.