

PIVARO Spark – Communication & Conversation Skills

Feedback as a Leadership Tool

“My employees are asking for more direct feedback – what should I keep in mind?”

“I don’t know what I said until I have heard the response from the other person.” With this statement, Paul Watzlawick captures the very essence of feedback: it is not a one-way message, but a dialogue. When you give feedback, you also gain insight into yourself – into your perception, your impact and your blind spots.

Feedback is one of the most powerful instruments of leadership. Used effectively, it supports employees’ professional and personal growth – while giving you, as a leader, valuable insight into how others experience your leadership.

Feedback is a gift

Giving professional feedback requires thought and care. It needs to be framed in a way that is clear, constructive and acceptable to the other person – especially when it is intended to encourage change. Whether and how it is received ultimately remains with the recipient. Your responsibility is to deliver it in a way that gives it the best possible chance to land.

Ground rules that make all the difference

Prepare yourself well. Identify specific points – and ask which topics your employees would value feedback on. Choose a calm, appropriate setting. Feedback is not a casual exchange by the coffee machine.

Always anchor your feedback in specific situations and observable behaviours – promptly, precisely and clearly. Avoid generalisations such as “always”, “never” or “everyone”. Second-hand information has no place in a professional feedback conversation.

Speak from your own perception – not from a position of absolute truth. Phrases such as “My impression was ...” or “I noticed that ...” make feedback easier to receive because they describe rather than judge. This is particularly important when giving critical feedback.

Be clear and direct. Overly cautious wording weakens what is intended to create impact. Provide orientation by outlining alternative courses of action and possible consequences.

Leaders who only criticise leave half the potential untapped

Praise is not a nice-to-have. It helps employees recognise their strengths and potential – and counterbalances the tendency to focus primarily on weaknesses. We often associate feedback almost automatically with criticism. Yet honest, timely praise is equally important – and equally powerful. Make sure you actively acknowledge achievements, progress and positive change.

And one more point: being able to accept praise with confidence is also a skill – and one that is well worth developing within a team.

PIVARO Takeaway

Effective feedback requires preparation, the courage to be clear and genuine respect for the other person’s perspective. When feedback is understood as a gift – in both directions – it becomes one of the most powerful development tools leadership has to offer.