

*Planning Commission - UNDP sponsored*  
*"Strengthening State Plans for Human Development"*

# Training of Trainers Workshop on Human Development

**Training Technique -1C**  
*Concept of Feedback*

**15<sup>th</sup> January 2007 - 19<sup>th</sup> January 2007**



*Administrative Training Institute*  
*Government of West Bengal*  
*FC Block, Sector – III, Salt Lake*  
*Kolkata – 700106*  
*[www.atiwb.gov.in](http://www.atiwb.gov.in)*

# *Feedback*

## **Learning Outcomes:-**

Knowledge acquired through this module will allow the participants to:-

- Explain the concept of Feedback
- State the value of Feedback
- Discuss the guidelines for Giving Feedback
- Discuss the guidelines for Receiving Feedback

Feedback is a very important concept. It is useful in your personal life, in our job and in the training environment. Feedback provides you valuable information about your performance.

## **WHAT IS FEEDBACK?**

The "Glossary of Training Terms" defines Feedback as:

*"The process by which information about the results of an action is communicated to the source of the action. It is argued for example, that learning takes place either through the informational characteristic or the reinforcing characteristic of the knowledge of results, or through a combination of both".*

You need feedback for improvement in your performance.

The source of feedback can be from your family members or other people as comments from other trainees, or from trainers as the case may be. However the performance of a task itself provides another source of feedback. You do not need a trainer to tell you that you have fallen off a bicycle, and you know from the taste whether you have put too much sugar in a cup of tea. The extent to which we received feedback is a significant factor in the standard of our performance.

Feedback helps us to learn about ourselves and the effect of our behaviour on others. However, feedback is only helpful when it is accepted and used by the recipient. It can take the form of either positive or negative feedback. Positive feedback confirms and praises acceptable performance. This builds confidence and motivates the receiver to repeat the performance. Negative feedback identifies areas where performance is inadequate. It can be of great value to the recipient if it creates an awareness of the need to change. The danger with negative feedback is that the recipient may reject it, as in many cases he may not be able to take in right spirit. So there are some golden rules of giving and receiving feedback.

## **VALUE OF FEEDBACK**

Providing feedback therefore needs to be a constructive activity that should be helping to learn. It should not be destructive and critical. Equally important, the recipient should not interpret it as destructive and critical.

To be effective, feedback needs to be skilfully given and the receiver must hear, understand, accept and act upon it. How accurate the feedback, if the trainees reject it, the result will be no improvement in performance. Therefore, always consider the human element during feedback.

<b>H</b>	-	Hear
<b>U</b>	-	Understand
<b>M</b>	-	Motivate
<b>A</b>	-	Acceptable
<b>N</b>	-	Negotiate

The giving and receiving of feedback are skills which require very careful handling. They require courage, tact, honesty, understanding and respect – both for yourself and for others. Like all other skills, they are developed only through practice. In providing feedback to others you will need to be sensitive to the feedback you will receive in response. The giving of feedback cannot be separated from receiving it in return.

## **GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK**

You are giving a feedback to some one in his/her performance. Your intention must be to improve performance through your feedback.

You are teaching mathematics to your children. If he/she makes any mistakes our normal feedback is as “you are an ass, you are useless”. But think for a minute. What has he/she done? He/She has made some mistake in one or two steps in a particular sum, on the other hand, your intention is to improve his/her performance in doing sum. But unfortunately, you are focusing on Personality instead of behaviour which is comprised of knowledge, skill and attitude.

### **Focus Feedback on behaviour rather than on personality**

Referring to what the person did is important so that feedback is descriptive rather than evaluative.

Changing behaviour is quite possible for an individual, but attempting to change personality is much more difficult, if not impossible. We create frustration if we give feedback on some shortcoming over which the trainee has no control – i.e. part of their personality.

**Feedback should focus on observations rather than inferences.**

Observations are what you can see and hear in a person's behaviour; inferences are the interpretation and conclusions you draw from the observations. Consequently they are open to dispute. The giver of feedback can accurately report what he or she observed as happened, but can only guess at the reason. To say, for example, 'You have interrupted three people during the last half-hour', is more acceptable than saying 'You are too fond of your own voice'. You can observe or measure the amount of talking someone does and give accurate feedback on it. Nevertheless, it is dangerous and may be untrue to imply that someone who talks a lot is too fond of one's own voice. There could be other reasons why they say a lot.

**Concentrate on change rather than make value judgements**

Having identified an area for change you may hope the trainee explore how to do things differently in the future. Make positive suggestions about how things could be done differently. However, avoid being manipulative. Remember to leave the choice to the trainee about whether to accept or reject the feedback.

**Feedback is most acceptable when it is describing specific rather than general patterns of behaviour.**

In providing feedback you are seeking to help the trainee to change and improve performance. You need the trainee's commitment to change, not agreement with your views. So you identify the specific problem. Suggest the solutions. Do not confuse him by describing general patterns of behaviour.

**Focus the feedback on the value it may have for the trainee**

You should try to be impersonal, and show empathy by asking yourself: 'Who is it I am trying to help?'. It is tempting to give feedback about things of interest to you that are not strictly about the trainee's performance. Concentrate on those things that will help achieve the desired performance.

**Focus feedback on the amount of information the trainee can use, rather than the amount you feel capable of giving.**

Effective feedback requires you to select the relevant points that the trainee can cope with at once. This means you must select priorities in the feedback you can give. Concentrate on the major determinants of the performance you are assessing. Make the feedback learner

centred.

### **Feedback should be well-timed**

Generally, feedback is best given as soon as possible after the learning event. If we delay feedback, it is much more difficult for a person to learn which actions led to a successful (or unsuccessful) outcome. Delay in feedback may make the feedback ineffective. You should give it timely.

### **Check the accuracy of the feedback**

Careful observation of the person's behaviour during his or her performance is essential. Some form of checklist would help. However, always remember that ticks in boxes are secondary to helping the trainee to learn. The checklist is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

In giving feedback you should be helping trainees explore the options open to them in deciding if and how to change. The trainees need to work out for themselves what they want to do rather than be given off-the-shelf solutions.

For successful learning to take place, by using feedback, there must be commitment to change, not compliance with the views expressed by the feedback giver. The feedback giver should be working to get that commitment. Compliance is unlikely to lead to action to improve performance.

Effective feedback resulting in commitment to change and the implementation of feedback requires skills in receiving feedback and also giving it. No matter how skilfully given, feedback that the trainee cannot be effective.

## **GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK**

### **Be positive towards the feedback giver**

Giving feedback on performance is a threatening activity, particularly for the less experienced. Recognising the benefit to you of the feedback you will receive, and signalling your appreciation, will encourage the person giving it. Eye contact, nods and other nonverbal signals will encourage the feedback. Negative response, or no response at all will reduce the feedback you get.

### **Listen to the feedback**

This is easy to say but difficult to do because of the temptation to deny, argue for and justify what you have said and done.

### **Clarify and check understanding**

Feedback givers may express themselves badly or you may not quite understand their points. Check out what feedback you are getting by paraphrasing back to them your

understanding of the main points.

### **Check the feedback with others**

Don't accept one individual's feedback as absolute. Check with others to see whether they agree on areas identified for change and the possible ways of implementing change.

### **Ask for feedback not volunteered**

If areas of your performance concern you and you receive no feedback on them, ask. In some situations you can ask the feedback giver to pay special attention to particular points before observing your performance. There may be one aspect of your performance that you are concerned about and seeking information on it is quite legitimate.

### **Describe how to use feedback.**

It is up to you to decide whether you accept or reject the feedback. Whether the feedback is positive or negative, you must decide if you need to change your performance and how you might implement any change.

### **Explore Options**

Having identified an area for change you should explore ways of bringing the change about. This may be done in consultation with the feedback giver, on your own or with someone else who can advise you. You must be committed to the decision you make for introducing change.

### **Thank the feedback giver**

Even when you judge the feedback you have been given was unhelpful you should thank the person. For feedback to continue to be given the trainee needs to signal its value. The next time feedback is given it may be very helpful. Punishing the feedback giver or signalling your discontent will just reduce or eliminate feedback being given.

### **SUMMARY**

Giving and receiving feedback is a demanding process that requires confidence and respect between the parties involved. The advice offered is necessarily broad and will vary between different individuals and activities. We cannot doubt the value of the feedback in learning. The provision of feedback is especially important for those process skills that occur during learning activities, particularly involving interpersonal skills.

### **GIVING FEEDBACK CHECKLIST**

1. Must be acceptable to the receiver.
2. Focus on behaviour rather than on the person
3. Base feedback on facts and not on opinions
4. Should include observations not inferences

5. Concentrate on change rather than make value judgements
6. Most acceptable when describing specific rather than general patterns of behaviour
7. Focus feedback on the value to the receiver
8. Limit feedback to what the receiver can cope with
9. Timing of feedback is important
10. Check the accuracy of the feedback

#### **RECEIVING FEEDBACK CHECKLIST**

1. Be positive towards the feedback giver
2. Listen to the feedback
3. Clarify and check understanding
4. Check the feedback with others
5. Ask for detail not volunteered
6. Decide how to use feedback received
7. Explore options
8. Thank the feedback giver