Many business owners and sales leaders may not realize the importance of providing feedback to their employees to enhance organizational growth and development. When correctly given, feedback helps improve job performance while promoting professional and personal growth in employees. Often this is not something that many of us think about during our hectic daily business lives. Providing feedback offers many benefits, and when given at the right time with the right constructive and positive message, it can yield great results!

Providing feedback can improve employee morale and reduce confusion regarding expectations and current performance. Think of feedback as guidance that will enable your employee to learn as well as improve the quality of his or her work. You will also see a difference in how feedback enhances your interpersonal relationship with your employees.

There are two forms of feedback that you can provide: positive feedback and constructive feedback. Positive feedback is used to reinforce desired behavior. Constructive feedback addresses areas in need of improvement. It is important to provide employees with both forms of feedback in order to improve and maintain quality performance.

Providing positive feedback.

Let’s explore an example of giving positive feedback. What can you do to be more effective and to ensure your sales reps continue the positive behavior that you want from them?

**Situation:** After a successful sales call with your sales rep, you get in the car and say, “You did a great job! Way to go!” In your mind, you might think that you are encouraging them and giving them positive feedback, right?

Consider the following steps as a means to praise as well as reinforce excellent performance.

1. **Describe the positive behavior.**
   “I thought you did a great job on the sales call. You were asking the customer a lot of important, open-ended questions to understand what they needed, rather than just talking about price and telling them about our company.”

2. **Explain why the behavior is positive.**
   “This was important, because you were able to build rapport; they opened up and told us a lot of important information about their current situation that will enable us to come back with a
3. Help the individual accept credit.
“Do you understand why this was so great? You really applied some great selling skills.”

4. Thank and encourage the individual.
“I just wanted to thank you for your efforts. If you continue these types of selling skills, you will have a lot of success in getting new accounts and growing your business!”

Do you see and feel the difference? Which example of positive feedback will give you the best immediate and long-term results?

Providing constructive feedback.
At K.Coaching, we work with many clients that want to improve their leadership and management skills. Often we see managers avoiding crucial conversations or giving negative constructive feedback. Sometimes it may feel better to just ignore the situation, hoping that it will go away, instead of addressing the situation appropriately and constructively. Most likely, the manager will provide short, pointed, unflattering remarks to get a sales rep’s attention.

The next time an employee requires constructive feedback, consider the opportunity the situation offers you to make a positive impact on future behavior through direction and meaningful advice. If given properly, constructive feedback can make a difference between an employee’s success and failure, since its purpose is to improve their job performance.

Consider the following example and steps as an effective process for giving constructive feedback:

**Situation:** You have a sales rep that is not spending enough time in the field; you constantly see him at his desk, seemingly busy, but not meeting your expectations and certainly not visiting enough prospects or current clients.

What you might say: “What are you still doing in the office?” Or, worse, “Is your car broken?” Maybe you'll ask, “Don’t you have any sales calls today?” Or, like many people often do, you'll just ignore it, complain to someone else, or go back to your office and stew about it, letting your frustration build. Obviously, none of these responses are constructive, nor will they communicate your expectations or yield different results.
Try this:

1. **Identify the problem behavior.**
   “I’d like to talk with you a moment; please come into my office. I have noticed that you have been in the office, rather than in the face of the customer, and this is a problem. Your responsibility is to spend 50% of your time on face-to-face appointments with customers and prospects, and you are not doing that.”

2. **Explain how the behavior is wrong or detrimental.**
   “The reason this is so critical is that we are in a very competitive market and your current customers are being prospected by our competitors. You need to stay close with them and always be providing value. We have talked about having at least two prospect appointments a day to bring in the new business we are expecting of you.”

3. **Help the individual acknowledge the problem.**
   “Do you understand why this is a problem, and that it needs to be corrected?”

4. **Develop goals with the individual.**
   “Let’s agree on some goals to get you on more of a schedule for being in the field during certain times of the day, and develop a clearer understanding of the amount of time you should allocate to face-to-face customer meetings compared to time in the office. What hours or days, how many do you think is necessary and what can you commit to? What can I do to help you?”

5. **Monitor the individual’s performance.**
   “I’d like to meet with you every Friday at 4:00 to review your weekly activities and success in this area. I’m sure that if you keep up this new schedule, you will meet your sales goals and have a great year!”

**A Few Tips:**

- Managers should only give feedback to improve an employee’s job performance or work-related behavior. Feedback should not be given regarding an employee’s private life unless it affects their ability to work.

- Focus on the individual’s actions rather than their personality.

- Focus on the individual’s future instead of dwelling on past actions.

- For the greatest impact, don’t delay feedback. Provide it as soon as possible after you become
aware of problem behavior.

• Give accurate details to prevent the individual from misunderstanding your feedback.

• Learn the individual’s point of view to gain insight into his or her behavior.

• Make sure you give feedback in a private setting—especially the constructive feedback.

• Document your feedback, regardless of how insignificant it may seem.

Being an effective manager and sales leader is not easy, but taking the time to practice giving constructive and positive feedback is a better and more meaningful way that can get you on your way to great progress and success!