

May 2002 - Volume 3



Personal need for feedback varies

The amount of feedback employees require differs according to a number of factors such as age, experience on the job and behavioural style. Skilled managers take these factors into consideration and adapt to individual differences when they provide feedback.

- Younger employees often need regular feedback to build their confidence that they are performing up to your standards.
- Any employee, regardless of age, often requires more regular feedback when they are performing new roles and responsibilities, or when reporting to a new manager.
- Some styles need more feedback than others – see “Style considerations when giving feedback”.

Give Them What They Want!

Your people want more feedback from you.

When I debrief assessment reports with people, I am surprised at how often they select “need feedback from my manager about how I’m doing” as something they want.

As managers, many of you would be surprised to hear that your people do not know what you think of their performance. Perhaps you think they should operate on the premise that “no news is good news” and that because you haven’t asked for changes, you’re satisfied with what they’re doing.

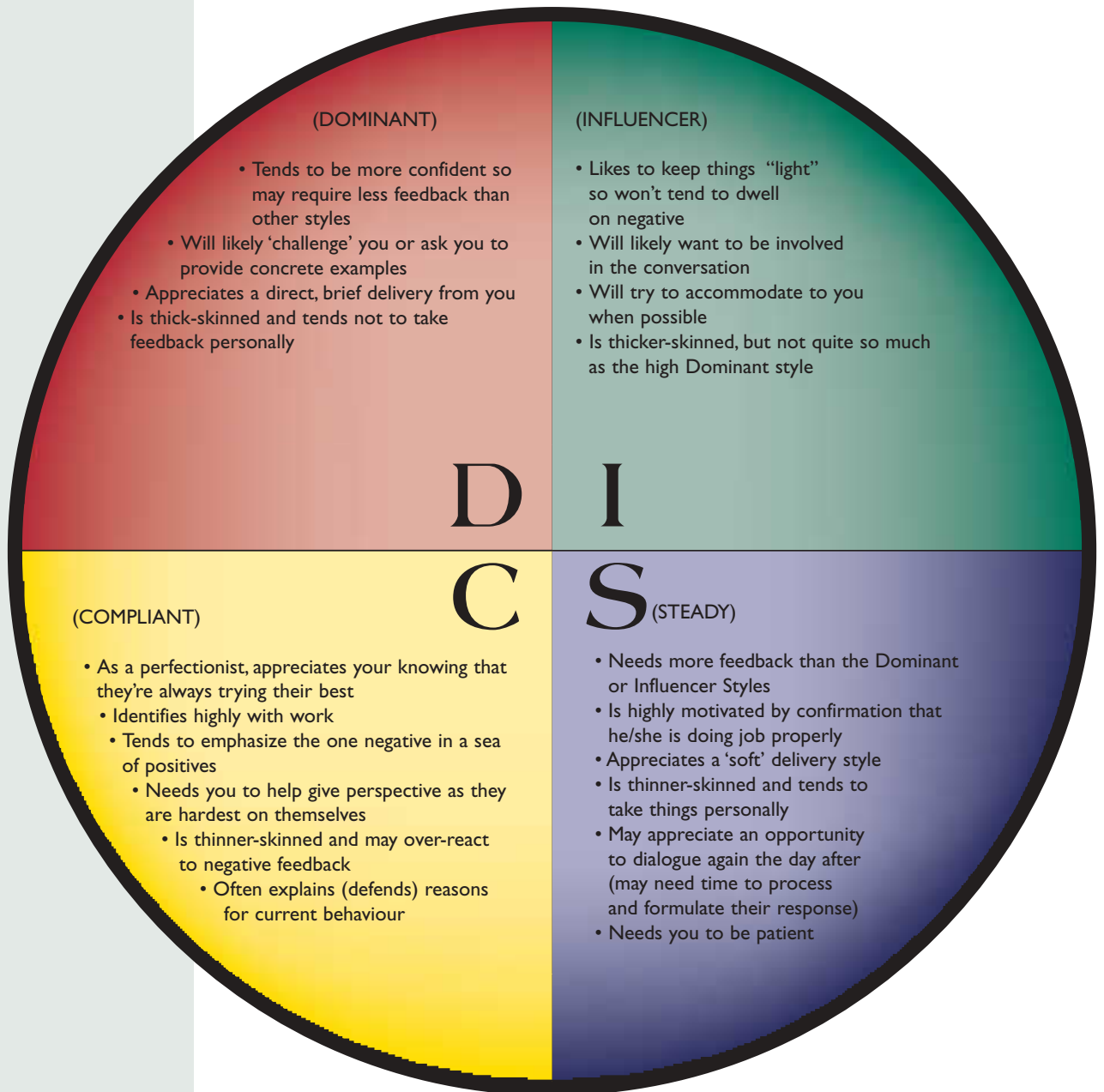
You are more likely to let people know when you’re not happy with their work than you are to let them know when you’re satisfied. Telling people where they’re on track is just as important to organizational success as telling them where they’re off track. If you don’t acknowledge what they’re doing right they may conclude that it doesn’t matter. And in the absence of clear performance criteria from you, they often invent their own.

You probably think you’re doing a better job at giving feedback than you really are.

Organizational surveys consistently reveal this misconception among managers. This is especially true for employees at the lowest levels in the organization who receive the least amount of feedback. Yet, we are increasingly aware that in order to compete successfully in business today, we require each employee to do the right things in the right way for the right reasons.

Providing regular, ongoing feedback is one of the most effective strategies for aligning your people’s daily work behaviours with your expectations and priorities. Feedback also reinforces behaviours you want to happen and lets people know what they need to adjust. It fills gaps in knowledge and shows that you respect your people’s need to know.

Style considerations when giving feedback:



Giving feedback doesn't have to be hard!

Put early-intervention feedback systems in place for you to communicate approval, criticism, observations, concerns, or disappointments.

- Set regular "How are we doing" conversations. Both you and the employee understand these meetings will be held weekly or monthly, depending on the job. They can be informal discussions over lunch, or more formal ones in your office. They don't need to be long, but they should be structured.
- Plan what you intend to say. Here are three simple questions to ask yourself:
 - What do I want this person to keep doing?
 - What do I want him/her to start doing?
 - What do I want him/her to stop doing?
- Be specific, not vague.

Four aspects of feedback affect its usefulness.

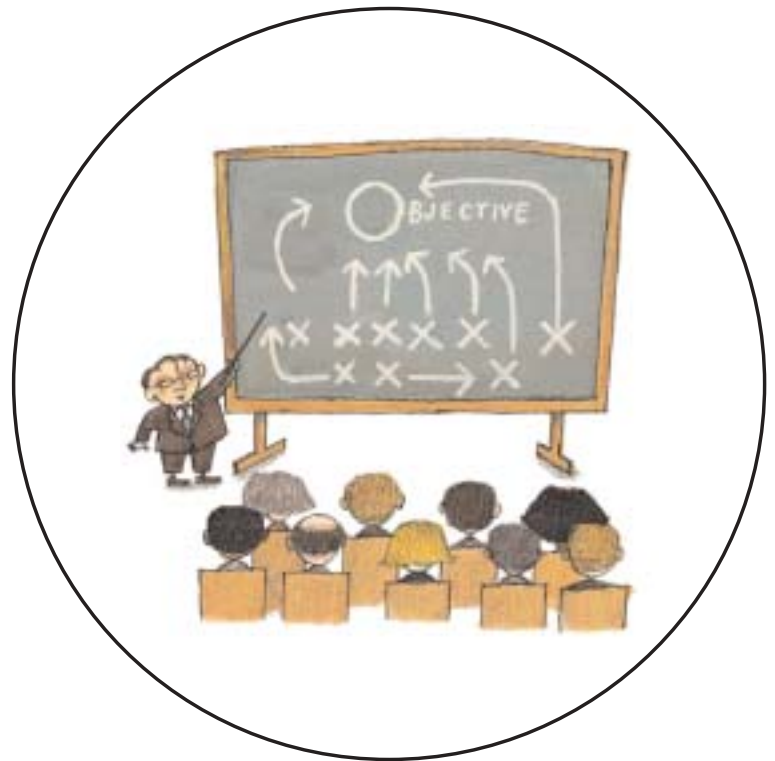
The information must be:

- valid
- specific
- consistent
- timely

Pointers for giving praise:

Positive feedback on performance gives the worker a sense of achievement, recognition and accomplishment. It's much better to say to an employee, "you did a good job," than to withhold your feedback. But generalized praise may be perceived as a rather hollow endorsement and it does not let the employee know exactly what you're taking into account in evaluating performance. If you go one step further and provide an explanation of the reasons behind your comment, the employee will then be able to use that information to maintain performance at a high level.

Most employees prefer to receive informal recognition in private.



Helpful Resources:

→ Maurer, Rick. [Feedback Toolkit](#), 1994. Productivity Press

A clearly written, practical reference with great techniques for bringing honest, helpful information to all types of relationships. It defines feedback and tells why effective feedback is important for high performance. A short, practical guide.

Would you like to recommend a book or resource?

Please just send a review and why you like it and we'll post your recommendation!