Guide to Coaching and Feedback

Northwestern Performance Excellence Annual Plan

Learning can occur every day. Listening, coaching, and feedback are the ingredients that stimulate growth. The difference between average and top performance often lies not in strategies, technology, or process execution, but in how people engage in ongoing conversations. These conversations may be as routine as checking in on daily priorities, or as important as discussing a performance issue. Below are some tips to consider when engaging in performance conversations. For more information, see the Connect training videos, discussion guides and practice templates.

Check-in Conversation Guide

Check-in conversations may occur in a regularly scheduled one-on-one discussion or a team meeting. Or, they may be as an informal as a hallway conversation. The primary focus of these types of conversations is to review progress toward goals and roadblocks with a focus on learning and growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tempted to say</th>
<th>Say instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Let’s get this out of the way. Here is what I need from you. What are your challenges?</td>
<td>• Thank you for making time today. What would you like to discuss first? Let’s start out by focusing on your progress toward your goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why are you having these problems? Why didn’t you get this done?</td>
<td>• What are you worried about? What have you learned thus far that will be useful in moving forward? What solutions are you thinking about that will help you address your challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Here is what I need from you. Let’s touch base on this soon.</td>
<td>• What do you think your next steps are to help you move forward? What would help you be more successful? Let’s get together in (x) days. Does that work for you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unproductive

- Short; one-sided; one to two minutes
- Supervisor focuses on challenges; does all the talking
- Staff hesitant to communicate openly
- Staff just follows directions; nothing learned
- No definite time to follow-up

Productive

- Five to ten minutes; both parties engaged
- Frequent conversations support real-time work
- Focus on learning; honest dialog
- Challenges seem manageable
- Definite follow-up time

Continued…
Debrief Conversation Guide

Debriefs include discussions after completing a project, work milestone, event, or goal. The objective is to evaluate outcomes with a focus on learning and growth, or when the learning may benefit not only the supervisor and staff member, but also a wider group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tempted to say</th>
<th>Say instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• We’re supposed to do a formal debrief but we are both busy so this shouldn’t take too long. Tell me everything that happened.</td>
<td>• Let’s take some time to discuss the outcomes you achieved, your progress and your learnings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I’m sure you learned something. What challenged you? What went wrong and what could you have done better?</td>
<td>• Let’s not focus on details; I’d like to hear about what you learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You should focus on (x) now. I’m sure you will live up to your potential going forward. Let me know if you need anything.</td>
<td>• What new approaches or habits did you build on this project? What about this experience stretched you? What are you thinking about that will help you be more successful?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unproductive

- Supervisor focuses only on results; is directive; does all the talking
- Staff nervous and defensive; feels as though they've done something wrong
- Staff disheartened; unmotivated; nothing learned
- Supervisor offers no support

Productive

- Focus on progress; two-way dialog
- Supervisor asks questions; staff open
- Staff feels understood; supported; sees development path
- Staff motivated and empowered
- Supervisor and staff are aligned
- Staff has insights on specific actions

Continued…
Performance (refocus) Conversation Guide

Performance conversations address performance gaps in a way that enables staff to learn from their experience and move forward. Supervisors help staff gain insights, encourage specific actions plans and follow-up to support behavioral change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tempted to say</th>
<th>Say instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I need to see you in my office now. This project has gone sideways and I need a fix.</td>
<td>• I have some feedback I’d like to share with you and we need 10 minutes. Is now a good time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why are you having these problems? I don’t think you realize the negative effect this is having on the team, the project, the customer.</td>
<td>• This conversation might be challenging for both of us so let’s stay focused and find solutions to move forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Here is what I need you to do. You need to execute it by Friday.</td>
<td>• I get the sense you’ve been struggling with (x). How can I help you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I assume you know what to do to make sure this doesn’t happen again. I need to see progress in one week.</td>
<td>• I have a couple of suggestions. Tell me if they resonate with you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unproductive

• One to two minutes; one-sided
• Supervisor focuses on gaps; does all the talking
• Staff have to defend themselves; feel like they are being punished.
• No trust; no options for moving forward.
• Supervisor takes no responsibility.
• Vague non-actionable language; No definite time to follow-up.

Productive

• Five to ten minutes; both parties engaged.
• Supervisor checks to see if staff recognizes gaps; uses actionable language.
• Staff uncomfortable but receptive.
• Staff feels safe enough to be honestly self-critical.
• Staff motivated to produce results.
• Tangible action plan defined and follow-up time scheduled.