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Building Employer Confidence

Feedback and complaints - Handout

Feedback and Complaints

What is feedback?

Giving feedback involves telling someone how they are performing in their role. The goal of giving feedback is to ensure employees are doing the best job that they can.

Employers should give employees feedback across all stages of the employment life cycle. This means employees should also give their employers feedback, and that areas for improvement are recognised and acted upon.

Research from the Australian Disability Network (ADN)¹ revealed that fewer than a third of employers have a process for employees with disabilities to give feedback. The ADN recommended that organisations:

- track feedback received – particularly the number of requests for reasonable adjustments and the timeframe for approval and implementation
- ask employees about their level of satisfaction
- act on feedback data.

Giving and receiving feedback can feel awkward, particularly if the feedback is focused on areas for improvement. It may be more comfortable if giving feedback is frequent and normalised within your organisation.

In the Attraction and Recruitment stages, feedback can help organisations identify how they can attract more applicants who have communication access requirements.

During their employment with the organisation, it is vital that employees are encouraged to give feedback so that any concerns can be addressed as

¹ Australian Disability Network. (2024). *Getting workplace adjustments out of the 'too hard basket'*. Australian Disability Network.

soon as possible, this will support the retention of employees for longer periods.

Finally, it is important to get employee feedback during the offboarding stage so that the organisation can learn how they can improve their practices, and what is working well, to better support future employees with communication access requirements.

Giving feedback to employees with communication access requirements

Consider using the [SBI™ model](#). This model breaks feedback into 3 areas: Situation, Behaviour and Impact.

Situation

- Describe the situation you are giving feedback about.
- Be specific about when, where, and what happened, for example, 'This morning at the team meeting.'

Behaviour

- Describe what you saw or heard.
- Keep it simple.
- Don't judge – avoid assumptions about other people's thoughts or motivations.

Impact

- Describe how the situation impacted your thoughts and feelings?
- Discuss how the situation impacted the other people involved?
- Discuss how the situation impacted the team, project, or organisation?

This should be followed by a discussion around possible solutions or next steps. Ask the person how they feel about the feedback you have given and about factors that have led to the situation you have raised.

Work with the person to identify any issues that are affecting their work performance, and collaborate on ways to remove or reduce these barriers.

What could this look like?

Instead of	You could say
<p>Your reports are a bit confusing.</p> <p>Work on improving your writing.</p>	<p>Situation I reviewed the report you wrote for Client X last week.</p> <p>Behaviour Some of the sentences and paragraphs were very long.</p> <p>Impact It made it hard for me to understand what the key points were.</p> <p>Finding solutions: How do you feel about the reports you've been working on? Is there anything you think I can do to support you with building report writing skills?</p>
<p>You often look bored in our team meetings.</p> <p>Try to be more mindful of how that looks to other people.</p>	<p>Situation In the staff meeting today...</p> <p>Behaviour ...I noticed you spent a lot of time on your phone. I've noticed this in our previous 2 meetings as well.</p> <p>Impact It gives me the impression you're not listening to what the team is discussing.</p> <p>Finding solutions: Is there a reason you're using your phone during meetings? Do you feel the meetings are relevant to your work?</p>

Other tips:

- Consider your employee's communication preferences when you pick the time, place, and communication method for giving feedback.
- Stay calm when giving feedback.
- Wait for and listen to the response from the person you are giving feedback to - understand that they may need additional time for processing information and preparing a response.
- Ensure you include positive feedback and recognise what the employee is doing well.

Receiving feedback from employees with communication access requirements

- Provide feedback in a variety of ways - consider digital/online, hard copy, in-person, text message, and phone options.
- Allow feedback to be given in a way that works for employees - consider allowing employees to provide responses in writing or with images, emojis, etc.
- Be proactive – make sure employees are aware of feedback/complaints pathways and available supports before they are needed.
- Normalise giving feedback in your team by building it into everyday conversations.
- Reassure employees that feedback is valuable and welcomed as it enables the organisation to improve its services.
- Explain that there are no negative repercussions for giving feedback.
- Make sure feedback can be given anonymously.
- Collect feedback regularly.
- Give employees advance notice before collecting feedback, to allow time for considering and preparing responses.
- Show awareness of and empathy for what your employee may be experiencing.

What do I do after I have given or received feedback?

- Document all feedback.
- Use the opportunity to consider whether something needs to be changed - for example, organisational processes and procedures, KPIs/targets, reasonable adjustments.
- Talk with the employee about the changes that will be made.
- Set a timeline for when changes will be actioned by, and when you will check in with the employee again.
- If it is decided that changes are not possible, communicate this clearly to the employee.

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This information provides guidance on how to support communication in the workplace with people who have communication access requirements. It should not be relied upon in relation to employment law matters - independent advice should be sought.