



The Context Group

For Clients Who Value Results... More Than Advice

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**"Plans are nothing,
planning is
everything."**

Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Context Group

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Making Performance Feedback Stick

This is the time of the year when many [performance reviews](#) have recently been completed. They are done for multiple reasons. One is, well, because they've always done them. Others include the need to document performance and to have report cards. In the best instances, they are used as a marker of progress and a jumping off point for improvement. How can we give feedback in a way that leads to improved performance?

The goal of giving performance feedback, whether it's part of a [performance review](#), [assessment center](#) or [360](#) is to encourage people to improve. However, they won't act on the information unless they accept the feedback and know how they can improve (insight alone is not nearly enough). So, what are the factors in accepting, and acting upon, performance feedback?

- Information is seen as coming from an expert, or at least knows the person and his/her job. New managers are unlikely to effectively give performance feedback because the person getting the feedback may not think that the person "knows" them. Providing specific examples of behavior let's the person know that you know what you are talking about.
- Those who are generally receiving good feedback are more likely to accept performance improvement suggestions. Yes, that means that the rich get richer. For those with poorer performance, begin by focusing on the positive to build confidence. Also, limit the number of performance suggestions so that the expectations don't seem too overwhelming.

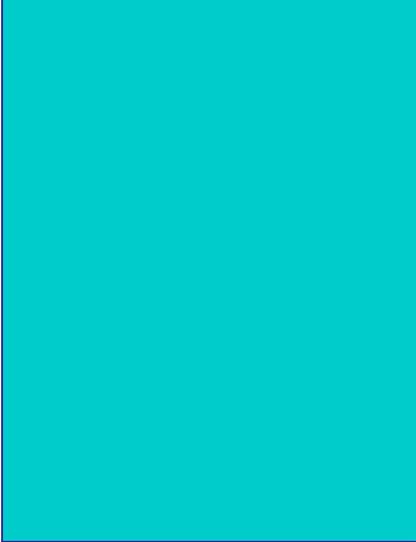
If you know someone who would want to receive this newsletter, have him/her send an e-mail to: hsub@contextgroup.com

- Explicitly link the feedback to that person's (not your) goals with your organization. *What's in it for me?* is a very powerful motivator.
- Make a plan. Asking what they can be doing better is insulting--they are probably doing the best they know how. Determining what training/tools/systems a person needs will lay the groundwork for taking positive steps towards improvement. Set concrete goals so both of you will know if improvements have been made.
- End the meeting with commitments. These commitments should include the actions both of you are going to take and deadlines for completion. You should also set up the next specific time and date when you will review progress.

If you would like to learn more about making performance feedback work, please contact [Warren Bobrow](#).

Don't Forget the Appreciation

As consultants we are most often called in to solve problems. Even when asked to perform an organizational audit or [employee survey](#), there is often an underlying assumption that management wants to pinpoint areas for improvement. These are noble and worthy actions in today's competitive work environment. However, what gets lost in the shuffle (and acknowledged with little more than a cursory nod) are the dozens or hundreds of things that are going right. Whether it's efficient processes, effective systems, managers that are making smart decisions, or employees that are providing excellent customer service, you don't want to lose sight of what is keeping the doors open and the cash flowing.



So rather than focusing on what needs to be bigger, better, or faster, take some time to appreciate your boss, peers, staff, customers, and vendors. Start the new year on a positive note and build on it. Take five minutes to draft a memo or e-mail message thanking them for their efforts and predicting success in the coming months. It's a great morale boost for them and a good reminder for you to look for the rose among the thorns.

If you would like to learn more about [team building](#) and [organization development](#), please contact [Kammy Haynes](#).