



Performance Improvement Toolbox

This Performance Improvement Toolbox provides sample language to address a number of performance situations including both positive reinforcement and corrective messages. The samples below are not meant to replace HR consultation so please do continue to consult your HR rep whenever you face a non-routine performance situation and **ALWAYS** before delivering a performance plan. This will protect you, the employee and the company.

Below are examples for giving Positive Feedback, Constructive Feedback and Pre-performance Plan Feedback.

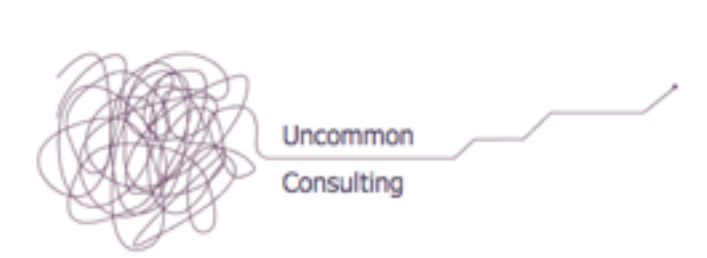
These are just guidelines for you to translate into your own style. The point always is to help our employees succeed in their jobs.

Positive Feedback

General Guidelines: Keep positive messages **Specific**, make sure they are given in a **Timely** manner, let the employee know the effort is **Appreciated**, and **Reinforce** the behavior by stating why it's important. Acronym: **STAR**.

Example: Bob, I noticed that while Cindy was out last week you pitched in to help Ralph out several times. Once to complete a project on time for a client and once to make sure he could leave early enough to pick up his daughter. You know it's important to me that we work together as a team and can count on each other to work toward a common goal. Your helping out is a great example of what I'm looking for and I appreciate you taking the time to lend a hand. Thank you.

Example: Stacy, I wanted to talk to you about your progress on your relationship with Ruth. When we talked last month, you and she had been having some trouble communicating and seeing eye to eye. What I've noticed lately is that you seem more relaxed and up beat when you are working with her and things seem to be going much more smoothly. Are you noticing the same thing? What seemed to make the difference? Is there anything I can do to help keep the relationship moving forward? I want you to know how much I appreciate the effort you've put into improving this relationship. It's



important to me that we work together as a team and that everyone is happy working in this department. Your work and effort toward that goal is not going unnoticed.

Example: Thanks, Sandy, for doing such a great job on the business unit consolidation project! Your attention to detail and your friendly style with the business unit contacts helped make this project a success! Keep up the good work toward keeping our department well respected as a quality resource.

Constructive Feedback

General Guidelines: Keep the message **Balanced** with both positive and negative aspects of performance and **Behavioral** by naming the behaviors themselves rather than critiquing personal characteristics.

Explain the impact of the behavior. Make sure to be **Specific** and give the message in a **Timely** manner. Be sure to **Plan** for improvement and make all suggestions and goals **Actionable**. Above all, **Listen** to the employee to find out their perspective.

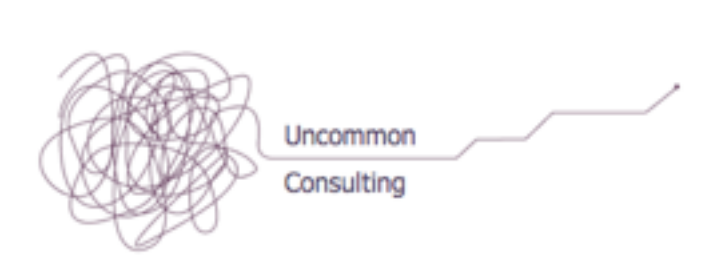
Acronym: **BEST PAL**. Yes, it's a bit corny but...often we avoid giving feedback because it's uncomfortable. Or, worse, we wait until we're fed up with someone before we tell them they are not doing a good job. **BEST PAL** helps us **remember that as managers we are coaches and one of the most important things we can do in our role is to help an employee succeed in their role**. Here's more detail followed by examples:

Balanced - Constructive feedback tends to land much harder than positive feedback. To avoid de-motivating employees, say what they do right as well as what they can work on.

Behavioral - Avoid using personal judgments. Instead, identify specific behaviors. Ex: Rather than: "You're not motivated", say: "I notice you roll your eyes each time I've approached you with a new project."

Explain - Illustrate the consequence or impact of the behavior on the team, the product, or the employee's image, etc. Ex: Your lack of preparation can cost you credibility.

Plan - Explicitly address how the employee intends to fix the problem and agree on a deadline for observing a change in behavior.



Actionable – Define what “success looks like. What does “more motivated look like? Avoid planning to be “more motivated” in 30 days but not knowing at the end of the month what “being motivated” looks like.

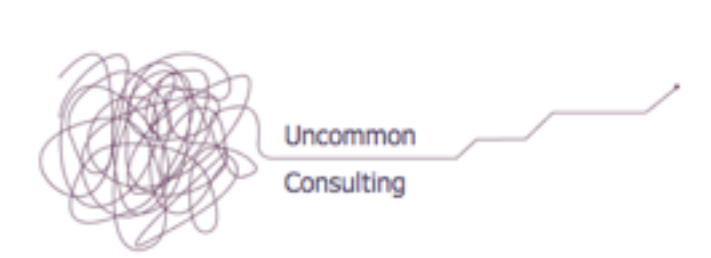
Listen – Very often we assume the employee recognizes the same problem we do AND that our own solution is the right one. Employees themselves will have a valid perspective and can help solve the problem with much less effort on your part. Ask for and listen to their input before you go to the lengthy trouble of trying to come up with solution to the problem yourself.

Example: John, your friendly style and willingness to pitch in has improved team spirit in this department. I appreciate what you are able to bring to the group in times of stress. There is one thing I’m concerned about. I’d like you to consider how you’ve been spending your time lately. Over the past month, you’ve missed two important deadlines yet I’ve noticed that you are still finding time to talk with co-workers and clients on more personal topics. I’d like to work with you to correct the situation. What ideas do you have?

Example: Betty, I’m glad to be able to give you an increase in compensation for your work with us this year. I’ve been happy with the way you’ve dug into a number of your projects assignments and how you are always willing to help out. Next steps are for you to increase your responsibilities and improve department efficiency. One area I’d like you to focus on is using your resources. I’ve noticed that each month you come to me with questions on the budget. For example, each month you’ve asked for help determining the account numbers to use. I’d like you to develop more independence on these – perhaps by developing an “FAQ” reference or other tool. I certainly don’t mind answering questions, but I’d like to see you handle them more independently. Let’s take a look at how you’re doing with that at the end of this next quarter.

Pre-Performance Plan (When things need serious attention)

General Guidelines: The following examples are to be used when you have a continuing performance problem that has been addressed unsuccessfully with the aforementioned constructive criticism techniques. We strongly recommend following the Performance



Continuum before you move to this level of communication. **These messages are meant to move your meaning to the strongest level possible before needing to put someone on a written plan or moving to termination.** At this point, an HR person should be consulted for direction to confirm that you have provided the necessary communication and documentation for the employee to be aware of the problem.

Example: Sara, I continue to be concerned about your attendance. We've talked about this problem three times over the past month and a half and I've not seen a sustained improvement. You have come in late by at least 20 minutes no less than three days this week. What can you tell me?

As your manager, I need to be sure you understand the implications of your being continually late. The team depends on each of us arriving to work at the agreed upon start time. There is work to be done and clients who depend on us starting at 8:30am. If you are not here, other team members need to cover for you. You do good work and your contribution is appreciated but this is simply not acceptable. At this point I need to have you understand that if this happens again we will need to move to a written performance plan. What will you do to avoid this happening again?

Performance Improvement Plan

General Guidelines: Formal plans require the involvement of an HR person. This protects the manager, the employee and the company.

Remember: You are in a position to coach your employees toward successful performance. You can do this only by providing them with the information they need to make good decisions about their professional behavior. This is not an adversarial exchange. In fact, it is one of the most supportive roles we play if communicated in a positive manner. Even the most sensitive or difficult feedback situation can be a positive one if an employee is treated with respect and dignity and is genuinely encouraged by his or her manager.

Good Luck!