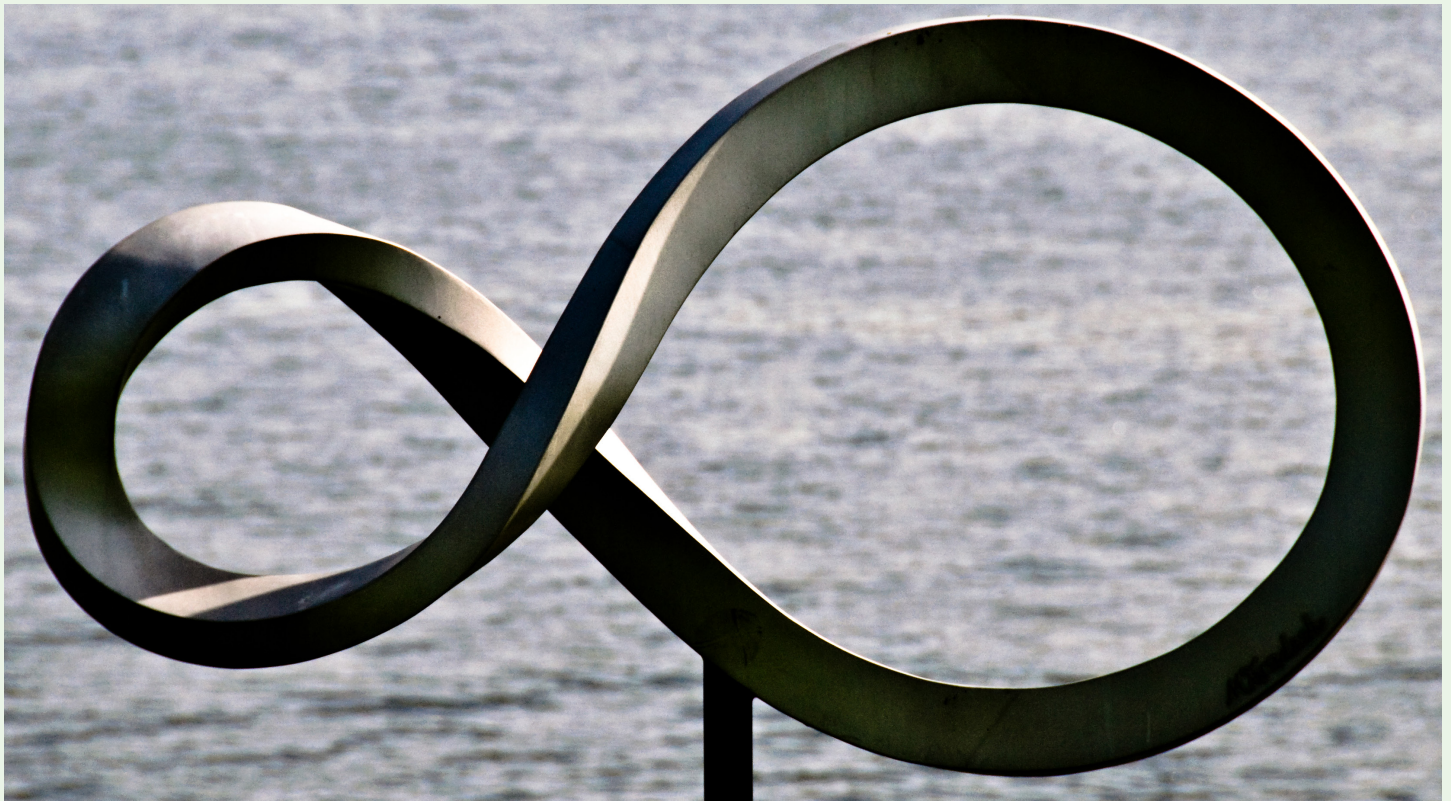


e-teaching

Management strategies for the classroom

Seeking feedback and feeding back



The words 'performance management' strike fear into the best of us. The concept of being reviewed, analysed or critiqued can lead a self-assured person to question themselves. There is no logic to this and it doesn't have to be this way. Employees in all industries are regularly stating they receive no feedback or recognition for the work they do, yet we steer ourselves away from opportunities where praise and discussion is possible. Obtaining feedback in open and positive forums is essential to personal growth, career development and self-esteem. It is critical that individuals allow themselves a moment of vulnerability to engage in discussion about themselves and their aims. Equally it is essential that leaders and managers understand the power of the opportunity to build confidence, capability and support longer term planning and so ensure a proactive and motivating experience for their staff.

A core role of educators is to 'performance manage' students to maximise their capability and bring out their potential in personal, academic, sporting and creative pursuits, to name a

few. As teachers, a daily task is to engage and provide feedback to students in addition to many others such as parents, colleagues, executives and the broader school community. When providing advice we can tend to approach these performance management interactions in a tactical and transactional manner, simply sharing the information required and not necessarily focusing on the interests of the recipient. As an alternative we can look to undertake a personal coaching session with an individual that assesses and responds to their personal level of comprehension, targets specific follow through and so commitment and understanding of the next stages of action.

Parent-teacher interviews mirror the emotions of a performance management meeting, often undertaken in a traditional and one-sided manner to convey as much content to parents in as little time as possible. In preparation for parent-teacher interviews, staff meetings, providing student feedback on tasks, exams and assessments there is value in reflecting on:

- Your personal style

e-teaching

- The intention of the **feedback**
- Potential **outcomes** of the discussion
- Methods in which to **approach** the discussion, such as location, tone or attendees
- Supporting **information**, data or research

Below are a few important tips to remember when providing or receiving feedback:

Preparation is key to success

While we are often time-poor, time is our most valuable asset. We have all been part of meetings where the first half of the meeting is trying to work out why we are there and what we want from it. Rarely do people think they need to prepare for an interaction where feedback will be given to them, yet this will frame the discussion in their view and allow for both parties to participate equally.

In allowing time for preparation we can obtain a deeper and more comprehensive discussion that will be both efficient and effective. In receiving or providing feedback:

- 1 **Block out time** to look at information, reflect on discussions and gather resources required
- 2 Have a **clear understanding** of the purpose and key messages of the meeting
- 3 List 2-3 **key questions** or statements you would like to share or discuss
- 4 Consider what will **support** the person hearing your feedback.

Actively listen, posing additional 'probing' questions

Parent-teacher interviews I have been involved with have often taken a very one sided approach where, due to limited time, the goal is to have a lot of specifics stated to the parent. As a parent or teacher, it is important to demonstrate listening through active response to comments made, offering questions to ensure understanding, deepen knowledge or clarify next steps and expectations.

Active listening involves:

- 1 **Reiteration** of the key message, words or phrases, *"I understand that you require ..."*
- 2 **Affirmation** of the observations made, *"I agree that when you ask for ..."*
- 3 **Eye contact**, nodding or comment of agreement or understanding, *"Yes"*
- 4 **Summary** of discussion and expecta-

tions as closure of the meeting.

Probing questions allow for detail, expansion, clarification or further conversation on a specific point. They will be from the listener and demonstrate interest, consideration and the desire for more details or explanation. They will sound like:

- 1 *"When you said work harder, could you explain how you think this can be achieved?"*
- 2 *"That is an interesting point, could you tell me more?"*
- 3 *"How will that look?"*
- 4 *"That was really helpful; how can that be attained?"*

Pose questions to support understanding

When uncomfortable or in a regimented environment we can feel the need to talk at people rather than to ask questions of people. The best performance management sessions I have been involved in have utilised various open and welcoming questions early on. Questions allow attendees to build common understandings, develop a sense of relationship, and ease any anxiety or nerves on either part. The earlier in a discussion we make clear the purpose, expectation or concerns attendees have, the sooner the discussion can be made more targeted, productive and advantageous.

To initiate discussion, opening questions may include:

- 1 **Understanding** of the meeting purpose, *"What is your understanding of our meeting today?"*
- 2 **Input** from the attendee, *"Before we start, how do you feel the year is progressing?"*
- 3 **Goals** or expectations, *"What would you like to achieve through our time together?"*
- 4 **Personal** connection, *"You have been really busy lately. How are you going?"*

Allow for discussion and collaboration

To truly engage with one another and create meaning through feedback, time must be available and the environment must be conducive to a productive interface. Back-to-back meetings, short meetings for larger conversations or passing on comments made between daily tasks, creates a rushed exchange lacking in empathy, engagement and objective. Collaboration with others in a private environment utilising positive body language, incorporating a genuinely

interested tone and comfortable eye contact, will lead to a more substantial review and more active participants. Collaboration requires involvement in the meeting and so contribution. Current leaders need to be able to regulate their behaviours and natural tendencies to ensure others lead and partake in discussions, feedback sessions and planning for development.

Establish expectations of next steps for best outcome

Positive and constructive feedback requires additional actions to continue advancement in career, study patterns, academic and personal results. As such conversations should flow from clarifying to collaboration and dialogue through to summarising and so formation of action steps. These may involve sharing skills, seeking out training or development, implementing strategies or seeking mentoring or additional input of others. Alternatively an additional meeting to extend on the discussion in a more suitable setting may be appropriate. Whatever the outcome, it should be set in a manner that prioritises it to support completion. This may include:

- 1 Establishing **timelines** for implementation and deadlines for completion
- 2 Identifying **people** to offer support, guidance or additional insight
- 3 Defining the anticipated **outcome** and the value of it to the individuals involved
- 4 Contact points for **reflection**, review and assessment prior to deadline.

Utilise specific positive praise on a regular basis

At all steps of the feedback process, in preparation, during interactions and following discussion, take time to offer others specific positive praise recognising their efforts, outcomes and achievements on a regular and unexpected basis. Building positivity in those around you benefits your wellbeing as well as theirs and creates an environment of understanding, trust and engagement for all. Praise should always come at an appropriate time in a manner that suits the recipient's style. This may be in private, via email, during a group meeting or presentation format. It should include:

- 1 Who was responsible
- 2 What they did
- 3 Why it was beneficial
- 4 Who else was appreciative.