



# HR Guide to Designing a Feedback Program

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# Introduction



Many organizational leaders believe that feedback is a top-down initiative, driven by department heads and managers. However, companies are now recognizing that **feedback is most productive when driven by employees** instead. With employee-driven feedback, workers can better own their growth and development, and receive input from key partners right when they need it.

What's more, feedback has a direct impact on employee engagement. Per Reflektive's study of 1,000+ employees across the US, those who receive helpful feedback are over [3X more likely](#) to recommend their company as a great place to work. However, many companies lack the technology and programs to create a culture of continuous and employee-driven feedback.

In this guide, we'll cover the value of employee-driven feedback, and how you can effectively launch and drive a successful feedback program across your company.



# Why Feedback is Critical for Performance

Feedback - both positive and constructive - meaningfully impacts employee sentiment. When employees see that their managers, colleagues, and leadership care about their development, there are positive results:

## **Performance and Retention**

- People who receive meaningful recognition when they perform well are over 3X more likely to work harder than they have at past companies.<sup>1</sup>
- People who receive helpful feedback are 2.6X more likely to be at their company two years from now.<sup>1</sup>

## **Employee Sentiment**

When employees receive frequent, relevant feedback they're more likely to be happier: per [Forbes](#), "72% of millennials who consistently receive accurate feedback from their managers find satisfaction in the workplace."

Given the value of feedback, we've included best practices to successfully build and launch a program that your employees will love.

1. Based on a Reflektive survey of 1,000+ US workers

# 3.0



## Designing your Feedback Program

Many employees perceive feedback as one-directional: from manager to employee. However, we believe that feedback from multiple stakeholders is crucial to identifying strengths and weaknesses, and building skillsets. We recommend the following feedback flows:



**Manager to employee:** This traditional approach helps direct reports assess progress on their current projects, and how they can improve



**Employee to manager:** Upwards feedback helps managers boost their leadership skills, as they learn how they can better support employees



**Peer to peer:** Feedback from teammates and cross-functional colleagues helps employees collaborate better on projects

We recommend that corporate feedback programs accommodate all of the feedback flows above. But regardless of what your program looks like, we recommend the following best practices to drive your company's feedback culture forward.



### 3.1 Start with Trust

Prior to launching a new feedback program at your company, it's crucial to instill a **culture of safety and trust** at your organization. Employees will need to feel comfortable providing and receiving feedback in order to drive positive change. They need to feel confident that there will not be retribution for both mistakes as well as honest appraisal of a peer's performance.

While a culture of safety is not something that companies can develop overnight, there are ways to assess and improve it. Some Reflective recommendations are below:

- **Measure employee sentiment** with a full engagement survey or a pulse survey. Specifically, questions such as "I am confident that I won't get in trouble if I admit to making a mistake" and "I feel comfortable telling someone if I see an inappropriate interaction" provide insights into employees' sense of safety.
- Ensure that your **corporate values** reflect your desired company culture. We recommend values focused on addressing the needs of the employee, and listening to all voices within the company.
- Re-instill the message of safety with a dedicated employee-wide **training session** on this topic. Articulate that employees are protected against retribution at your company.
- **Increase transparency** by having the leadership team answer anonymously-submitted questions during company-wide meetings.



### **3.2 Develop Success Criteria**

In addition to assessing and building your firm's culture of trust, we also recommend that HR teams ask themselves: "How will we define success of our feedback program?" While qualitative information can help, quantitative data helps HR teams understand how feedback is trending, and if they should take additional steps to boost their feedback culture.

Here are some of the key feedback metrics that we recommend HR teams evaluate.

#### **1. Number of users receiving feedback**

See if there has been an increase or decrease in the number of employees that have received feedback in the past 90 days. You can also slice this data by location, department, or other demographic to see areas of strength and opportunity at your organization.

#### **2. Number of users giving feedback**

Similar to the aforementioned metric, see how this number trends over 90 days. This metric can also be helpful for measuring employee adoption of your feedback tool.

#### **3. Feedback giving:receiving ratios**

Take a look at the total number of employees that have received feedback, and those that have provided feedback. Are they similar, or is there a huge difference? This metric helps you identify if there are pockets of your workforce that are not receiving enough feedback, and also if there's a small cluster of employees driving the bulk of the feedback provided.



#### 4. Percentage of users that provide feedback when requested

Not only does this metric help in assessing employee adoption, but it also indicates the health of your company's feedback culture. If this data point is low at your company, we recommend sending a quick employee survey on the state of feedback and recognition and how it can be improved!

##### BRAD'S DEALS CASE STUDY

By using Reflektive to boost their feedback culture, Brad's Deals decreased turnover by 76%.

[Read the case study →](#)





### 3.3 Make Feedback Easy

To drive a culture of feedback, giving input should be easy -- and employees should be able to do it in their **daily workflows**. We recommend feedback tools that seamlessly integrate into employees' favorite workplace apps, such as Gmail and Slack. With feedback built into their favorite tools, employees are more likely to request input and develop core skills.

#### HOW REFLEKTIVE HELPS

Reflektive's integrations with Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Outlook, Gmail, and Slack empower employees to request feedback right when it comes to mind.

[Learn more about Reflektive Integrations](#) →

### 3.4 Provide Guidance on When and How to Give Feedback

After determining your success metrics, it's time to turn to the employee experience. We've found that employees need clarity on when to give feedback, and the best ways to provide it.

#### PRO TIP

##### **Use Feedback to Improve Other Performance Programs**

Continuous insights from managers, peers, and leaders shouldn't stay siloed. They should be incorporated into the employee's performance review and developmental goals too.



## The “When”

Based on the feedback initiator and recipient, we recommend the following cadence for gathering input.

**Team Feedback:** Members who work on a team can request feedback after their project is completed, or after a major milestone has been accomplished. Some events that should be followed by team feedback include:

- A new partnership is live
- A new product is launched
- Meaningful improvements have been made to internal technology or processes
- A deal is closed
- A customer renews or expands
- A new market is entered

**Managers Requesting Feedback from Employees:** Input from employees is not needed on a regular basis -- it is best suited for quarterly check-ins with employees.

**Employees Requesting Feedback from Managers:** Employee-driven feedback is just that -- workers should feel empowered to ask managers for feedback at any time. Some situations in which we encourage employees to ask for feedback include:

- During performance reviews
- During quarterly check-ins
- During 1:1s
- In the middle of a project
- At the end of a project
- When responsibilities change meaningfully

**HOW REFLEKTIVE HELPS**

Reflektive empowers employees to manage their own feedback cycles.

[Learn more about Reflektive feedback →](#)

**The “How”**

Once employees know when to request feedback, their next question is how to gather this input. We recommend that HR teams share the following feedback tips with their workforce.

**Driven by employees:** Employees should be able to request feedback at any time to drive their continuous learning and professional development

**Constructive:** To ensure that feedback is perceived as helpful and productive, we recommend that feedback givers:

- Are not angry or anxious when giving feedback. This will help them better empathize with the feedback recipient when they’re writing the feedback.
- Describe the employee’s behavior, rather than labeling or judging it
- Share the impact of the behavior
- Give concrete recommendations on how to improve
- Stay factual, rather than focusing on emotions

**Provided by multiple stakeholders:** Peers and cross-functional partners observe different employee behaviors, strengths, and opportunities. Feedback from colleagues and managers should be provided to the employee on a regular basis.



### **3.5 Include Recommended Questions to Help Employees get Started**

Similar to the “when” and “how”, employees benefit from more guidance on the actual feedback questions that they can use. To help employees get thorough, detailed feedback that helps them grow, we recommend that companies leverage the following questions for different feedback types:

#### **Team Feedback**

Feedback requests to team members should be lightweight and easy to complete. We recommend 3-5 structured, specific, and actionable questions, such as:

- What is one behavior I should start doing to benefit the team?
- What is one behavior I should stop doing to benefit the team?
- How am I performing on [specific work competency]?
- How am I demonstrating [company value] on this project?

#### **For Managers Requesting Feedback from Employees**

Similar to team feedback, employee feedback for managers can be gathered in a few meaningful questions. We recommend questions that help managers better enable employee performance. [Sample questions](#) include:

- What are you getting from me that you want more of?
- What are you getting from me that you want less of?
- What are you not getting from me that you want?



### **For Employees Requesting Feedback from Managers**

Employee-driven feedback is just that -- workers should feel empowered to ask managers for feedback at any time. While employees should modify their questions based on the situation and context, the below generic questions are a good starting point for workers:

- What's one thing I can do to help improve the performance of the team?
- What's the one thing preventing the team from operating at peak performance?
- How do you think X issue went? Could we have resolved it better?

Some other great ideas to foster productive feedback and conversations are available in our [blog post](#).

### **3.6 Partner with Key Stakeholders**

After you develop your success criteria and feedback best practices, start building relationships to drive a successful launch of your program. We recommend partnering with the following people:

**Leadership:** Department heads are your best allies in encouraging new employee behaviors. Tell leaders what you're looking to accomplish with your new feedback program, and why it is important in driving engagement and retention.

**Managers:** In addition to collaborating with department heads, managers will play a huge role in driving feedback across your company. Managers should share with direct reports that they can request feedback at any time!



### 3.7 Develop an Integrated Campaign Plan

Now that you have objectives and key partners in place, it's time for the fun part - building an internal campaign to drive excitement for your program.

Ideal places for **feedback-related content** are:

- Company-wide trainings
- New hire trainings
- All-hands meetings
- Your company's intranet
- Posters and printed collateral around the office to encourage feedback



# Launching a Feedback Program

A culture of feedback requires encouragement of new employee behaviors and an organized gameplan to get there. The following launch plan has practical recommendations to help your organization get started and achieve long-term success.



### **Step 1. Pick a launch day**

A good practice is to pick your launch date and work backwards to set key project milestones.



### **Step 2. Schedule your training sessions**

Schedule manager and department head training sessions, as well as a company-wide session. Prior to the company-wide training, ensure leaders are fully enabled and know the best practices for providing feedback.



### **Step 3. Develop your email communications**

Send a company-wide communication on your feedback program, and how employees can get the most out of it. Specifically, share:

- Why feedback is important
- How to provide feedback effectively
- How to use your technology tool to provide and view feedback

**Step 4. Track progress!**

Make sure you are leveraging a people analytics platform, such as Reflektive's People Intelligence solution, to keep track of your feedback KPIs.

[Learn more about People Intelligence](#)

**Step 5. Iterate, Iterate, Iterate**

Pay attention to what's working and what isn't, so you can iterate your program and ensure it drives a culture of feedback across your workforce.



**Continuous feedback is crucial in driving employee development, and ultimately, engagement and retention.** While feedback has traditionally been provided only in performance reviews, there are many reasons why ongoing feedback from direct reports, managers, and teams is extremely beneficial. With the right tools and programs, all organizations can foster a culture of feedback -- and create a workplace where employees want to stay and grow.

## Additional Resources

### HR Admins

Why Positive Psychology  
Belongs in Feedback

[Watch the Webinar](#)

What a Feedback Culture  
Really Looks Like

[See the Video](#)

6 Benefits of Empowering  
Employees with Agile Feedback

[Read the Blog Post](#)

### Employees and Managers

Thrive on Transparency: How to  
Increase Honest Performance Feedback

[Read the Blog Post](#)

How to Take Feedback Well as an  
Employee

[Read the Blog Post](#)

The Benefits of Asking for Performance  
Feedback More Frequently

[Read the Blog Post](#)