

Feedback Is a Two-Way Conversation (For Employees)

Is Performance Management a conversation? For most people, no, but it should be.

Even if everything has been great, the check-in and evaluation can be painful. We aren't taught in school, how to sit down across the table from another person, and listen to our skills, strengths, and weaknesses pointed out. But that's exactly what it ends up being. How can you, the employee, change this? **The answer:** Believe that it's up to you to make performance management more than just something that happens to you once a year.

Here's how:

During your 1:1 meetings with your supervisor by asking the right questions.

It may be awkward at first to completely change the way you interact with your supervisor, but the results will be well worth it. The most important questions to ask during these meetings are:

- How do you think this (project) is tracking towards the intent of this (goal, stated expectation, etc.)?
- What feedback do you have or have you received about my participation in (project)?
- Did (enter project or result) meet your expectations?
- What things would you like to see improved for next time?

These are stated in end-of-project language, which I know doesn't happen twice a month. So adjust them to be phrased as mid-project updates, and check in. You want to be sure that:

1. Everything is "tracking" towards the expected result
2. Ask for feedback
3. Establish expectations – and agree on them
4. What can be done better next time

Document each and every conversation on this topic that you have.

I know it sounds cumbersome, but trust me – it's not. In fact, it will help you pull together that once a year document, even faster. Create a simple tracking system for yourself.

As long as you have a way to ensure that there was a conversation with and buy-in from your supervisor, you are already a step ahead of the “annual process.”

Address things early and often.

The entire point of performance management is to help you grow, learn and stay on track as an employee. It’s easy for these things to fall between the cracks – everyone is so busy trying to meet deadlines and put out fires, but it’s imperative to pay attention so you aren’t blindsided later.

When you are in a more relaxed environment of a regularly scheduled 1:1 meeting, your manager will feel more comfortable to have the difficult, but necessary, conversations. But you will have to address them – when you ask the four questions above, if the answers aren’t screaming awesome to you, ask for more.

Dig deeper. Ask for resources you need or guidance that is missing.

Address all of the little things as they come up, so they don’t surprise you later down the road. Try to keep your supervisor apprised of any delays that affect your work/projects. It’s best to bring up roadblocks as soon as they occur so your supervisor isn’t blindsided. When communicating, please be sure to offer solutions rather than waiting for your supervisor to step in and suggest different courses of actions.