

Feedback is very valuable in the workplace, but how it's given or received can make a huge difference in how it affects an employee. There are several different types of feedback that you can provide, and they all produce different results.

When employees receive criticism, they'll want to know specific details on what they did wrong and how they can improve. And they're more likely to take that criticism to heart if it's given in a helpful, friendly way. This is called constructive criticism.

In the workplace, constructive criticism can be used to give an employee specific, actionable feedback on how they can improve their work. It's especially useful for addressing poor performance and managing conflict resolution. Indeed For Employers says that "Constructive criticism is constructive because it seeks to help the employee improve, not just to point out flaws or areas of low performance."

What makes constructive criticism effective is that it opens a dialogue and gives both you and your employee the opportunity to discuss how things can be improved. Constructive criticism isn't meant to hurt someone, unlike some other kinds of criticism. Like negative criticism, for example. That would just be telling someone what they did wrong, without offering any feedback for improvement. This is more likely to upset the employee than to help them see how they can improve their work moving forward.

Let's walk through a scenario to see how constructive criticism can work in action.

Imagine that you have an employee named Stacey, who's working on a new ad campaign. You see that she has a firm understanding on her task, and that her project has potential. But her work on it isn't up to standard.

You can use constructive criticism to guide her towards improving her project. Tell Stacey what's wrong and discuss some specific steps on how she can make improvements. You could say something like, "You were going in the right direction with your presentation, but I think you should focus more on the consumer side of things. Maybe you could talk more about the

numbers for customer demand? How have they changed in the last five years?”

Delivering criticism this way—and in a positive tone—can help highlight specific areas that you think the employee can improve on.

If you were to give Stacey destructive or negative criticism instead, it would sound something like, “Your presentation was bad. You’ve got a lot of work to do. I don’t want to hear it again until you’ve got it right.” This form of criticism doesn’t offer any specific feedback, and is more likely to discourage Stacey than help her improve. You’d be better off focusing on creating a discussion to help employees address issues, even if they’re not aware that they have one. It can give you an opportunity to help direct their work and educate them.

Since you’re likely in a managerial role, constructive criticism is essential for your toolkit. It can resolve conflicts by identifying issues between employees and helping them move toward more positive actions. You can also use constructive criticism to address low productivity or subpar work. By identifying your employee’s shortcomings, you can help eliminate actions or behavior that might contribute to their poor work.

If you want to be a more effective manager, give your employees constructive criticism on a regular, purposeful basis. Identify the negatives in their work, move toward positive outcomes, and start discussions on improvement.