

5 Tips For Delivering Performance Feedback To Remote Employees



Picture this. You've recently transitioned your team to 100% remote work and now you're trying to figure out how to deliver performance feedback or performance evaluations virtually. Delivering performance feedback is already a challenging task and now that your employees are remote, you're wondering where to start or if you should scrap it altogether until you are all back in the office. Sound familiar? Virtual performance feedback discussions can still be productive with your remote employees. Here are 5 best practices for giving performance feedback to your remote employees.

#1 - Embrace the challenge and do it anyway.

Maybe it's your quarterly "check-in" discussion or you need to deliver corrective action, or it's time for annual performance evaluations, don't wait. Deliver the feedback via videoconference as you normally would in-person. Working remotely can feel isolating. Employees are motivated by consistent communication, and now with working remotely, they value connection more than ever.

#2 - Always use video.

Nothing will ever replace in-person connection and communication, but video is truly the next best thing. When it comes to performance discussions, make sure you connect face-to-face with your employee via video. 80% of communication is non-verbal. To make sure your conversation is a success, you will need to "see" each other.

#3 - Give employees a heads-up.

Make sure employees know the new, virtual performance feedback process ahead of time. Giving employees a heads-up that you still plan to deliver performance feedback and performance evaluations virtually is a great topic for a team meeting. Set the expectation that videos are a-must for feedback discussions and why seeing each other during feedback meetings is important.

For virtual performance reviews, I suggest reviewing the new, virtual process with employees and ask for their thoughts on the process, i.e. "What do you think? Is there anything you think I need to change to make the virtual performance feedback process better?"

Here's a sample process for delivering *performance evaluations* virtually:

1. Employees will receive the written performance evaluation prior to the scheduled performance evaluation meeting. (Always recommended so employees have time to digest the feedback ahead of time. This typically leads to a more productive, and less reactionary conversation.)
2. During the performance feedback meeting, videos must be on because so much of communication is non-verbal. Being able to see each other via video is the next best thing to meeting in-person.
3. After the meeting, the employee adds their input to the written performance evaluation (per your process), signs, scans, and emails the form back to the manager. (ProTip: Set a deadline for when they must send it back to you.)

Note- For delivering corrective action, I actually recommend a reverse process: Meet with the employee first and then deliver the written warning if appropriate afterward. Fully understanding what happened from the employee's perspective first will likely impact what you include in the written warning. Of course, this all depends on the severity of the performance issue.

#4 - Treat the meeting the same as you would if you were in the office.

Performance discussions can be stressful! Putting the employee at ease and showing them, you value their time is important to building trust. Try to minimize distractions as much as possible during the meeting, just as you would if you were in the office and always start and end the meeting on time.

Because performance feedback discussions can be stressful for you too, make sure to build in support for yourself, such as seeking peer support before and after particularly challenging performance discussions.

#5 - Ask for feedback for yourself!

After you have a few virtual performance feedback discussions or virtual performance evaluations under your belt, ask your employees how they think it went. Is there anything you can do to improve the impact of providing feedback remotely? Feedback is a two-way street and asking your employees their opinion is a great way to build trust and improve leadership skills.

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