



2026 Guide to Performance Feedback

Avoiding the conversation that you know you need to have is not an effective strategy.

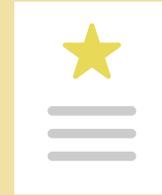
If you're in a leadership role, performance conversations aren't only essential to your team's success – they are a fundamental responsibility of your role. However, they can feel stressful, awkward, and, if mishandled, even damaging to morale.

The cost of leaving things unsaid is high. Avoiding feedback can lead to:

-  Lower employee engagement
-  Missed opportunities for growth
-  Losing top talent and increased turnover
-  Declines in quality of service or care, which impacts your bottom line
-  A weakened workplace culture

In other words, silence doesn't protect your team – it holds them back.

The good news? When you know how to give effective feedback (both positive reinforcement and constructive redirection), you'll unlock higher engagement, stronger trust, and a culture of continuous growth.



96% of employees appreciate regular feedback



Want to build confidence in your leadership skills?

ACHIEVE's leadership workshops helps leaders strengthen communication, accountability and trust across their teams.

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Effective performance management is about more than just fixing problems.

Performance conversations are about building confidence in both the employee and the leader.

When you affirm positive behaviours, clarify expectations, and support growth, you're not just addressing gaps – you're reinforcing what's working and creating momentum for the future.

In other words, the best leaders don't wait for something to go wrong before talking about performance, they build confidence every step of the way.

So how do you shift from a problem-fixing mindset to one that consistently builds confidence?

It starts with having a clear way to evaluate performance in real time. That's where the Confidence Lens comes in. It's a simple framework that helps you assess where your trust in an employee currently sits, and what kinds of conversations will move them (and you) forward.



Organizations that provide regular feedback have a **14.9% lower turnover rate**



Less than 30% of staff actually receive feedback

The Confidence Lens

Every leader's confidence in their team members naturally rises and falls over time. There may be days when you are singing their praises and feel assured you would rehire an employee; other times, doubts creep in.

The Confidence Lens gives you a clear way to name where your confidence stands, and why. By recognizing when confidence dips, you can determine what triggered this change and work towards resolving uncertainty quickly and effectively.

The model is simple. Each level reflects how confident you feel in an employee's performance, and what you can do to address each one.

The three levels of confidence are broken down as follows:



SOLID

You would rehire this person for the role.

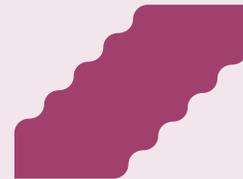
At this level, focus on reinforcing strengths, celebrating wins, and finding ways to stretch their growth.



SHIFTING

They meet your minimum expectations, but you'd hesitate to say you'd rehire them.

This is an opportunity for coaching with clarity and targeted support. Help them step up and regain stronger footing.



SKEPTICAL

There are significant performance concerns and they undermine your trust.

This is a challenging spot to be in, but it can also be a turning point. Address concerns directly, clarify expectations, and create a plan for improvement. Work together so that they have a fair chance to succeed.

Quick self-check: Ask yourself, *Based on how I feel about their performance today, would I rehire them for this position?* Let your answer place you on the confidence scale.



Tips



Assess your confidence level often and be curious when concerns arise.



Maintain a positive mindset and remember that employees don't show up to perform poorly.



Stay focused on helping the employee grow, even in the face of challenges.

Move from awareness to action.

Once you've determined your confidence level, ask:

What specific behaviours are contributing to my current confidence level?

A behaviour is objective and observable, such as an action or an inaction. Avoid interpreting or judging; simply identify the behaviour(s) that are affecting your confidence in their current performance.

Once you've identified the behaviours and acknowledged potential biases, you need a framework to deliver feedback effectively and support behaviour change.

Enter the **FORGE Framework**.

The FORGE Framework

When you notice a gap between your expectations and someone else's behaviours, use **FORGE** to plan what you'll say.

F Facts

Focus on tangible behaviours rather than motives or character. Start with your observations rather than your interpretations or judgements.

Example: "In the last three team meetings, I noticed the notes and action items weren't sent out until two or three days later."

G Goals

Find common ground and tie the desired behaviour back to shared goals. Emphasize where you align rather than where you differ.

Example: "I think we both want the same thing: to make sure that our meetings aren't a waste of time and that the team stays aligned and keeps moving forward together. Let's think about how we can do this without adding unnecessary stress for you."

O Outcomes

Identify the impacts of their actions on you or others. Those impacts may be practical, but don't be afraid to also talk about the emotional impact they may have had on you.

Example: "When the notes are delayed, the rest of the team stalls on their follow-ups, and it creates confusion about who is doing what. It also means I get a lot of messages from people trying to clarify their next steps."

E Efforts

Identify and agree on what alternative behaviours will be tried moving forward. Be clear on expectations, but make sure you come to a solution collaboratively.

Example: "What would help you get the notes out more quickly? Maybe blocking time right after the meeting or delegating the task if you're pulled into client work? I'd like us to agree on one or two changes to try out starting next week."

R Response

Take time to listen and hear their perspective. It is likely that your team member is well-intentioned, and their behaviour makes sense from where they stand. Stay curious and seek to understand.

Example: "I'd like to understand how this is going from your vantage point. Is there something getting in the way of sending out the notes on time?"

TIPS

- Have this conversation in private. A public setting can easily trigger embarrassment and defensiveness.
- Deliver feedback when you're calm. If you feel emotionally escalated, wait until you've cooled down.
- Reflect on what's going on inside of you beforehand. Are you making assumptions? Is this behaviour truly problematic, or has it simply triggered an emotional response in you due to something in your past? Understanding your own thoughts and emotions will lead to a more productive conversation.
- Follow up afterwards. If they've changed their behaviour, celebrate! If not, remind them of the commitment they made and discuss alternative solutions if necessary.

FORGE Printable Script

The FORGE Feedback Script

Use this template to plan and deliver clear, constructive feedback.

F – Facts (What did you observe?)

“In [situation/timeframe], I noticed that _____.”

O – Outcomes (What was the impact?)

“This impacted _____ by _____.”
(You can also include how it made you feel: “I felt _____ because _____.”)

R – Response (Invite their perspective.)

“I’d like to hear your take on this. From your perspective, what’s happening?”

Notes: _____

G – Goals (Find common ground or a desired outcome.)

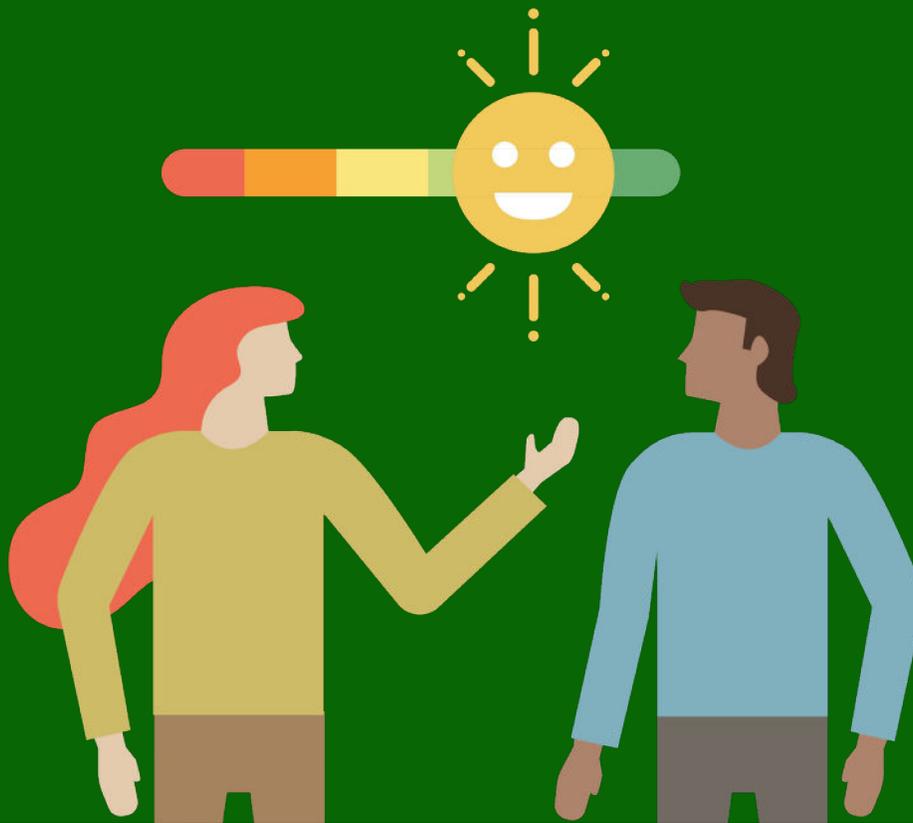
“I think we both want _____. What would success look like for you?”

Notes: _____

E – Efforts (Agree on next steps.)

“To move forward, let’s agree on _____ starting _____.”

Follow-up date: _____



Turn conversations into confidence.

Performance management doesn't have to be a dreaded task. With the Confidence Lens, you can quickly assess where your trust in an employee stands, and with the FORGE framework, you have a roadmap for turning observations into constructive, supportive conversations.

Every conversation, whether celebrating success or addressing concerns, is an opportunity to strengthen trust, foster growth, and shape a healthier workplace culture.

Your next step? Don't wait for the "perfect" moment. Choose one conversation you've been putting off and use the FORGE script on the previous page to guide you. Small steps build momentum, and momentum builds confident, thriving teams.



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