Manager Feedback Delivery Checklist

A practical, step-by-step guide for managers and team leads who want to deliver feedback that actually lands — driving growth, trust, and performance without the awkward aftermath.



INTRODUCTION

Why Feedback Delivery Is a Skill — Not Just a Conversation

Most managers know they should give feedback. Very few feel genuinely confident doing it well. Whether it is the fear of damaging a relationship, the uncertainty of how a team member will react, or simply not knowing where to start — feedback conversations are among the most avoided responsibilities in professional life. The cost of this avoidance is enormous: disengaged employees, stagnant performance, missed growth opportunities, and teams that never quite reach their potential.

This checklist exists because feedback is not a personality trait. It is a learnable, repeatable skill — one that becomes more natural with the right structure behind it. The best managers are not those who happened to be born direct or empathetic. They are the ones who built a reliable process and showed up prepared every single time.

The **Manager Feedback Delivery Checklist** gives you exactly that: a clear, modular framework organised around three phases — Before, During, and After the feedback conversation. Each phase contains specific action steps, reflection prompts, and practical language so you always know what to do next.

> **Who this is for:** Managers (0–15 years experience), team leads, consultants, and career professionals who give feedback regularly and want a structured, confidence-building approach they can use immediately.

What This Resource Solves

- Vague, wishy-washy feedback that confuses more than it clarifies
- Feedback that feels like an ambush rather than a conversation
- Inconsistent delivery that undermines trust over time
- Emotional reactions you didn't see coming
- No follow-through after the conversation ends

How to Use This Checklist

Use it as a **pre-flight check** before any feedback conversation. Work through it sequentially for high-stakes discussions, or scan the phase headers for quick refreshers. Return to the reflection sections to sharpen your skills over time.

It is designed to be dog-eared, shared with your team, and used again and again.

Pre-Conversation Checklist — Phase 1 Actions

Run through every item below before scheduling or entering a feedback conversation. This is your non-negotiable pre-flight check. A tick on every box means you are prepared to deliver feedback that is clear, fair, and actionable. Skipping this step increases the risk of miscommunication, bias, or unclear direction, so treat it as an essential discipline rather than an optional step.

✅ **Pre-Flight Check**	**Done?**	
I can state the specific behaviour or outcome I am addressing (not a personality trait)	☐ Yes	☐ No
I have at least 2 concrete, recent examples to reference	☐ Yes	☐ No
I know the impact this behaviour had — on the team, client, project, or culture	☐ Yes	☐ No
I have separated facts from my interpretations and assumptions	☐ Yes	☐ No
I have checked my own emotional state — I am calm and focused, not reactive	☐ Yes	☐ No
I have considered this person's current workload, stress level, and recent context	☐ Yes	☐ No
I have booked a private, uninterrupted slot with enough time (minimum 20 minutes)	☐ Yes	☐ No
I know what positive outcome or forward direction I want to co-create in this session	☐ Yes	☐ No
I am prepared to listen, not just deliver — I will ask questions and make space for their perspective	☐ Yes	☐ No

PHASE 2

During the Conversation — Deliver With Clarity and Care

The conversation itself is where most managers either over-correct into harshness or under-correct into vagueness. Both failure modes stem from the same source: discomfort. When we are uncomfortable, we either soften the message so much it disappears, or we push through so bluntly that the other person shuts down. The antidote is structure — a reliable sequence that keeps you grounded without making the conversation feel robotic.

Each step in this sequence serves a distinct purpose. The opening creates psychological safety. The observation grounds the conversation in fact. The impact makes it real and relevant. Their perspective prevents the conversation from becoming a lecture. The next steps turn the conversation into a commitment — not just an exchange of words.

Language That Works

- **Opening:** "I wanted to connect with you about something I've been observing. I care about your growth, so I want to be direct with you."
- **Observation:** "In last Tuesday's client presentation, I noticed you interrupted the client three times before they finished their question."
- **Impact:** "The client seemed to disengage after that, and it may have cost us trust in that moment."
- **Invite perspective:** "What was going on for you in that moment? I'd love to hear your take."
- **Next steps:** "How do you think we approach this differently next time? I'm happy to role-play it with you."

Language to Avoid

- "You always do this..."
- "Everyone has noticed that..."
- "I'm not trying to criticise but..."
- "As I said before..." (implies they never learn)
- "Honestly, I'm a bit disappointed..."
- "This isn't a big deal, but..." (if it weren't, why say it?)

During the Conversation — Live Checklist

🎯 Opening

- ☐ I opened with genuine connection, not a formulaic warm-up
- ☐ I stated my positive intent clearly ("I want to support your growth...")
- ☐ I did not start with small talk for so long that the feedback felt ambushed

🔍 Observation

- ☐ I described a specific, observable behaviour — not a character judgement
- ☐ I used first-person observation language ("I noticed..." "I observed...")
- ☐ I referenced at least one concrete, recent example

💥 Impact

- ☐ I connected the behaviour to a real, tangible consequence
- ☐ I avoided exaggerating the impact to make my point stronger
- ☐ I made the impact about the team, project, or outcome — not about me personally

👂 Their Perspective

- ☐ I asked open questions and genuinely listened to the answers
- ☐ I did not interrupt or dismiss their explanation
- ☐ I stayed curious even if their response surprised or frustrated me

🚀 Forward Focus

- ☐ I closed with a specific, agreed-upon next action — not just "let's do better"
- ☐ I offered support or resources where appropriate
- ☐ I ended on an encouraging, forward-looking note

PHASE 3

After the Conversation — Follow Through and Close the Loop

Most managers treat the feedback conversation as the end of the process. It is not. What happens in the days and weeks after the conversation determines whether the feedback actually produces change — or simply becomes another forgotten exchange that erodes trust a little more each time it goes nowhere.

Following through is where the best managers separate themselves from the rest. It signals to your team members that you meant what you said, that you are invested in their development, and that feedback is part of an ongoing dialogue — not a one-way performance evaluation. It also gives you the information you need to assess whether your delivery worked or whether you need to approach things differently next time.



Critically, following through does not require a formal second meeting. It can be as simple as a brief check-in during a 1:1, a quick acknowledgement when you see the new behaviour in action, or a note to yourself about what to revisit in 30 days. The key is intentionality — you are closing a loop that you opened when you started the feedback conversation.

1

Within 24 Hours

Send a brief written note summarising the key points and the agreed next step. Keep it warm, concise, and forward-facing.

2

Within 1 Week

Check in informally — not to evaluate, but to offer support. Ask: "How are you feeling about our conversation? Anything you need from me?"

3

Within 2–3 Weeks

Observe specifically for the behaviour discussed. If you see progress — name it explicitly. Recognition after feedback is as powerful as the feedback itself.

4

At 30 Days

Formally revisit during a 1:1. Has the agreed next step been completed? What has shifted? What support is still needed? Document your observations.

🔁 **The Recognition Rule:** When you see someone acting on your feedback, say so — specifically and promptly. "I noticed you let the client finish their full question in today's call. That was a real shift. Well done." This closes the loop and reinforces the behaviour more powerfully than any future feedback conversation.

Post-Conversation Checklist — Phase 3 Actions

Complete this checklist within 48 hours of a feedback conversation. Use it to hold yourself accountable to the commitments you made, and to reflect on your delivery so you improve with every cycle.

✅ Follow-Through Action	Timeline	Done?
I sent a written summary of key discussion points and agreed next steps	Within 24 hrs	☐
I have noted the agreed behaviour change or action in my own tracking system	Within 24 hrs	☐
I scheduled a follow-up check-in (informal) in my calendar	Within 3 days	☐
I am actively observing for the specific behaviour we discussed	Ongoing	☐
I acknowledged progress when I observed it (publicly or privately, as appropriate)	As it happens	☐
I revisited the feedback in a formal 1:1 at the 30-day mark	30 days	☐
I reflected on my own delivery — what worked, what I'd change next time	Within 48 hrs	☐

Self-Reflection Prompt (complete after every feedback conversation)

What Landed Well?

What specific moments felt clear, connected, or well-received? What would you replicate?

Your notes:

_____
_____

What Would I Change?

Where did you feel uncertain, reactive, or unclear? What would you say differently?

Your notes:

_____
_____

What Did I Learn About Them?

What did you discover about this person's perspective, drivers, or needs that will make you a better manager for them?

Your notes:

_____

Feedback Frameworks You Can Use Right Now

Structure is a manager's best friend when it comes to feedback delivery. Rather than improvising every conversation, lean on proven frameworks that have been battle-tested across industries, organisations, and management styles. Use these as scaffolding — fill them in with your specific observations and language, and they will carry you through even the most difficult conversations.

1

SBI Framework

Situation → Behaviour → Impact

State the Situation (when/where), describe the specific Behaviour you observed, then explain the Impact it had. Clean, fact-based, and difficult to argue with.

Best for: Corrective feedback, performance conversations

2

COIN Framework

Context → Observation → Impact → Next Steps

Adds a Context opener to SBI and explicitly ends with Next Steps, making it ideal for conversations where you want a clear commitment at the end.

Best for: Development conversations, goal-setting follow-ups

3

AID Framework

Action → Impact → Desired Behaviour

Focuses on describing the Action taken, the Impact it created, and explicitly names the Desired Behaviour you want to see instead. Very direct and solution-oriented.

Best for: Repeat issues, underperformance conversations

4

GROW Model (for coaching)

Goal → Reality → Options → Will

Shifts from telling to coaching. After delivering feedback, use GROW to help the person identify their own path to improvement. More empowering, more lasting.

Best for: High-potential employees, development-focused conversations

Common Feedback Mistakes — And How to Fix Them

Even well-intentioned managers make the same mistakes repeatedly. The good news is that every one of these is fixable once you recognise the pattern. Use this section as a diagnostic tool: if a feedback conversation did not go the way you hoped, check whether one of these patterns was at play.

Mistake: The Feedback Sandwich

What it looks like: Praise → Critical feedback → Praise. Feels kind, but it dilutes the message. The recipient walks away remembering the praise and missing the point entirely.

Fix: Deliver the key message directly. You can be warm *and* clear at the same time. Save genuine recognition for a separate conversation so it does not get lost as a cushion.

Mistake: Feedback by Ambush

What it looks like: Bringing up serious performance issues in a casual hallway chat or at the end of an already-long meeting. The person has no time to process and you have no time to follow through.

Fix: Book a dedicated, private slot. Even 20 minutes of intentional time outperforms an hour of rushed conversation in a bad setting.

Mistake: Hearsay as Evidence

What it looks like: "A few people on the team have mentioned..." or "I've been hearing that..." This immediately puts the recipient on the defensive and shifts focus to who said what rather than what needs to change.

Fix: Only deliver feedback based on what *you personally* observed. If you are acting on secondhand information, acknowledge that clearly and invite their perspective first.

Mistake: No Forward Path

What it looks like: The conversation identifies everything that went wrong but ends without a clear, actionable next step. The person leaves feeling judged but not supported.

Fix: Never close a feedback conversation without a specific, agreed-upon action. Even one small next step transforms the conversation from a verdict into a development plan.

Mistake: Waiting Too Long

What it looks like: Saving up six months of observations for a performance review conversation. By then, the feedback feels like a list of charges rather than timely guidance.

Fix: Deliver feedback as close to the event as possible — ideally within 24–48 hours. Timely feedback is actionable feedback.

Feedback Styles — Adapting to the Individual

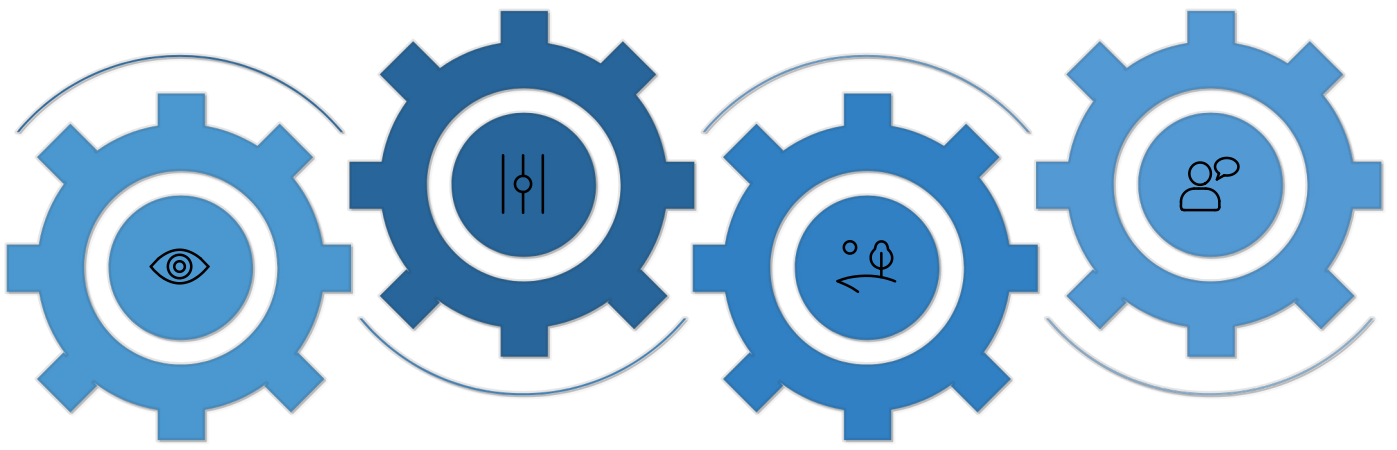
There is no single feedback style that works for every person. The most effective managers develop the ability to read their team members and flex their approach without compromising on clarity or honesty. This is not about being soft with some people and tough with others — it is about understanding that the same message can land very differently depending on how it is delivered and who is receiving it.

Flex Your Approach

Adapt your communication style based on the recipient's needs.

Be Honest and Respectful

Communicate with integrity and consideration for the other person.



Read the Recipient

Understand the audience to tailor your communication effectively.

Maintain Clarity

Ensure your message is simple, direct, and easy to understand.

Consider the four common recipient profiles below. You likely have all of them on your team. The feedback message itself should be consistent — what changes is the framing, pace, and level of directive versus open-ended language you use.



Recognising these profiles does not mean you lower your standards for some and raise them for others. It means you are a skilled communicator who knows that delivery is as important as content. The goal is for every person on your team to receive feedback they can actually hear, process, and act on — not just feedback that makes you feel like you did your job.

Key Takeaways — What Great Feedback Managers Do Differently

Everything in this checklist comes down to one commitment: treating feedback as a discipline, not a personality trait. The managers who consistently develop high-performing teams are not the ones who happen to be naturally direct or empathetic. They are the ones who showed up prepared, stayed grounded in specifics, listened genuinely, and followed through every single time.

1 Prepare before every conversation

Specific observations beat general impressions. If you cannot state the behaviour, the impact, and the desired outcome in three sentences, you are not ready yet.

2 Describe behaviour, not character

"You interrupted the client three times" is feedback. "You're not a good listener" is a judgement. One opens a conversation; the other closes it.

3 Make impact real and relevant

Connect the behaviour to a consequence the person cares about — team trust, client relationships, project outcomes. Impact turns feedback from critique into coaching.

4 Listen as much as you speak

Great feedback conversations are not monologues. Ask questions, stay curious, and genuinely consider their perspective — even when it surprises you.

5 Always close with a next step

A feedback conversation without a concrete forward commitment is just a difficult conversation. Close every session with a specific, agreed action — however small.

6 Follow through consistently

Check in. Observe. Recognise progress out loud. Follow-through is where trust is built and where behaviour actually changes.

7 Reflect and iterate

Every conversation is a data point. The managers who grow fastest are the ones who review their own delivery with the same rigour they bring to their team's performance.

> 🌟 **Your next step:** Pick one person on your team right now who would benefit from a feedback conversation you have been putting off. Open your calendar. Book a 30-minute slot this week. Use this checklist to prepare. That one conversation, done well, could change their trajectory — and yours as a manager.