

From McCrudden Training's critically acclaimed Productive Workplace training

# Feedback FRANK™:

*a step-by-step approach to giving  
great feedback*



by

**Nicky McCrudden**

AWARD-WINNING BUSINESSWOMAN, TRAINER &  
AUTHOR

**“Makes feedback  
accessible to all”**

-Nicki, West Sussex County Council

# Feedback FRANK:

*a step-by-step approach to giving  
great feedback*

---

*by*

**Nicky McCrudden**



## What are people saying about FRANK™?

*“I think it’s excellent and covers everything. It makes feedback accessible to all and it’s not filled with ‘corporate speak’. It’s the kind of guide that I could give to other members of my team to read through to encourage or open up conversations about the value of feedback. It’s a great booklet - well done!”*

**-N, West Sussex County Council**

*“The FRANK model flows well, and I’ve applied it easily when giving feedback! ‘K’ has helped me to keep focused when giving feedback, and I’ve changed my approach depending on who I’m giving feedback too. I’m now ‘keeping’ people to their commitments and making sure that I keep my side of the bargain.”*

**-K, Blind Veterans UK**

**First edition**

**Copyright 2013 © McCrudden Publishing**

Feedback FRANK™. Copyright 2013 by Nicky McCrudden. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in articles or reviews.

For information: McCrudden Publishing, Archer House, Britland Estate,  
Northbourne Road, Eastbourne, BN22 8PW. UK

## Foreword by the Author

If there's one thing that can take any organisation, regardless of size or industry, to the next level, it's productive and motivated people!

In my career, I've lost count of the times I've heard someone say '*our people are our greatest asset*', yet when you scratch the surface of the way they work, outputs and deadlines get all the attention.

Now, before you tell me that the whole point of your organisation is achieving quality outcomes - I agree. I'd just argue that a sparkly new car might be the pinnacle of modern mechanical engineering, but it doesn't go anywhere without fuel in the tank. To me, great feedback is the pump that provides that fuel.

Do you know what motivates and excites most trainers? Well, there are a few things (chocolate is up there for me), but I'm yet to meet any trainer who doesn't admit to even a fleeting moment of nervous excitement when they catch first sight of the feedback forms at the end of their training course. When the feedback is good it gives us a boost and even when those forms tell us things we've not done well, a good trainer will start looking for ways to improve. If you attended one of my courses 5, or even 2 years ago, I can pretty much guarantee it would be different to the course I'd deliver to you today. Why? Because the regular stream of feedback I receive helps to continually refine my work - and keeps me motivated.

Giving feedback, good and bad, is a skill that drops off the radar of many organisations. In training it's a well-established custom, but in most workplaces it's something that's overlooked (because you're busy focusing on the 'real work') until there's a crisis or someone needs pulling into line. And then we realise, that we're not quite sure how to go about giving feedback!

In my training career, I've lost count of the number of times organisations have called me with requests for coaching because a team member 'lacks certain skills'. With a little digging I often find it's not a skills gap. It's just that no-one's had the courage to tell them they are doing something wrong.

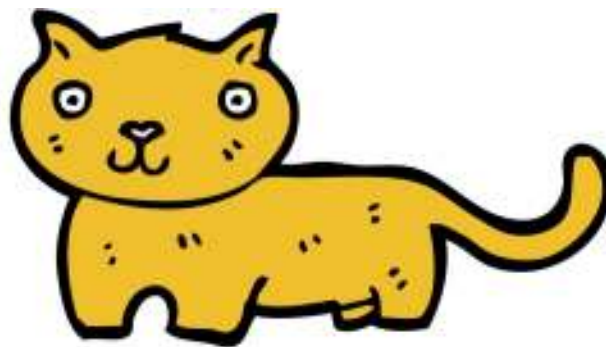
With that in mind, I've put together this little guide to giving excellent feedback, to help people get over their fear of providing it. Feedback FRANK is a model that we've use time and time again as part of our Productive Workplace™ training programme. I hope by reading it, you'll be able to play your part in making your workplace happy and productive.

*Nicky*

Creator of Feedback FRANK™ & all round lovely person (or so my feedback tells me!)

*P.S. I'd also love to hear from you if you have any tips or questions yourself - after all, I welcome feedback too!*

# Feedback FRANK



## Introduction

People are often surprised to learn that a good salary, a comfortable working environment and 'a good package' rarely motivate a workforce. Psychologist Frederick Herzberg referred to them as *hygiene factors*. They don't contribute to motivating people at work, but lead to dissatisfaction if they are absent.

If you want to achieve a motivated and productive team, recognition, achievement and opportunities for personal growth will have a much greater impact.

As human beings we all strive for recognition (good or bad). How often has your own sense of achievement after a hard week been deflated when your colleagues and managers seem not to have noticed (or cared)? For some people, a lack of positive recognition for their achievements or praise from their manager, can encourage less desirable behaviours in the workplace; if you get into trouble for always being late - at least you're getting noticed!

On a business-level, it's no good letting sub-par performances slide out of a fear of giving out negative feedback. If you don't say anything, nothing is going to change! The ultimate goal of feedback is improved performance.

If you avoid telling someone when they are doing something wrong, they'll never have the opportunity to change. Conversely, if you forget to tell people they are doing well, they might well change - jobs!



The great news is, effective feedback without scape-goating or gushing emotions is easier than you might think - just be Feedback FRANK™.

## Giving Feedback is everyone's job!

Much like the way champagne and caviar were once the preserve of the rich and famous, in the past we may have said that feedback was exclusively the responsibility of leaders and managers. We now all have access to gourmet foods in our local supermarkets, and feedback should be just as common in the workplace.

**Effective** feedback is a fertiliser to great teams. Giving feedback should be done by everyone in a workplace; peer-to-peer, manager-to-staff, staff-to-manager. If feedback is only coming from a limited number of sources, you'll have a biased view, and therefore a limited opportunity to grow and improve. In fact, when feedback is avoided by some team members it can be a symptom of a sick team.

## Great feedback improves productivity

We all know that being part of a team is about your ability to work together. That's true, but it's also about growing yourself as an individual. (Plus remember, opportunities for personal growth are a motivating factor in workplaces).



There might not be an 'I' in team, but there is a 'me' and great teams know that. They focus on both team AND individual development. Feedback is a great tool for personal development.

As human beings, there are some things we are well aware of, things we are self-aware about. There will be other things we just don't see, but other people may well see in us. When someone trusts us enough to give us feedback they are helping to increase our self-awareness. Trust me, that's a good thing for us and for our teams.

Whether the feedback is about a practical task that could be done better or the way someone's interacting within a team, it's better out than in! With one proviso - **feedback needs to be delivered well!**

# Giving effective feedback

There are essentially four-types of feedback in the workplace:

## Unplanned positive

A spare-of-the-moment bit of praise for someone's efforts. These can be incredibly powerful motivators as they are usually unexpected by the recipient.

## Planned positive

Praise that fits into a recognised structure or format - like a supervision meeting.

## Unplanned negative

When you are required to give in-the-moment feedback because the behaviour/actions of another person has had a far reaching, or serious impact on others. When this type of feedback is avoided, it can seem as though those around condone the situation.

## Planned negative

Delivered by someone who has had the time to consider what they need to say. Often a difficult form of feedback to give, because the giver has had time to go over and over the situation in their minds and build it up into a scarier situation than it is.

In the main, most people feel more comfortable giving positive feedback. (Although some people are put off from giving praise when the recipient gets embarrassed or discounts it; "*I was just doing my job*". Just remember, even if the recipient of your praise doesn't immediately accept your comments, somewhere deep inside them they will get that warm fuzzy feeling.)

All too often, I've heard "*well done today*" as people's idea of giving positive feedback, and it's pretty much the same comment every time. Sure, most people will get a buzz from

that, but its impact on improving performance and productivity is limited. Compare these two statements:

*“You did a good job today”*  
*“I’m really impressed by the way you prioritise your workload to meet your deadline”*

Which do you think is going to have the biggest impact?



For many people, it’s the idea of giving negative feedback that they struggle with the most. They worry it could be taken as a personal attack and lead to retaliation, or ultimately damage a working relationship.

But it’s important to do it because if you don’t allow people to hear your feedback, there is little they can do to change.

Well given negative feedback often doesn’t even feel like feedback to the recipient. Learning how to do that? Well that’s where FRANK comes in.

Feedback FRANK™ is a model I developed to help you while you’re learning to be great at giving negative feedback. It’s a model that blends academic theory, anecdotal evidence, and common sense. Initially, it will work well when you find yourself having to give planned negative feedback, but as you become more used to the approach you’ll find you need less planning

time and it can work just as well for unplanned (instant) feedback situations.

If you remember to be FRANK, you should have all the bases covered.

## Core principles of Feedback FRANK™

Feedback FRANK™ is founded on 2 principles. They are FRANK's front and back paws if you like:

1. **You can't give someone else's feedback.** Feedback that begins '*Sharon said that Dave said and Peter saw you....*' rarely goes down well. If the other person denies it, you have nowhere to go. You can't side with Sharon, Dave and Peter because it suggests bias.

Feedback must always be based on your own observations. If you do receive third party reports that you need to act upon, it is always best to find a way to observe the situation yourself.

2. **Feedback on specific actionable facts and observations, not interpretations.** Whenever someone giving feedback interprets behaviours they are on rocky ground.

If you witness someone raising their voice to a customer, your feedback should comment on just that. To give feedback that they were rude or aggressive is an interpretation, and could be denied. Giving feedback that the behaviour was 'rude to the customer' could simply be met with the response - 'the customer is hard of hearing,

that's why I was shouting at them'. Then you'll feel foolish.

And remember, it's pointless giving someone feedback on something that they can't change.

Once you've got your head around that, you're ready to meet

FRANK. Yes, FRANK™ is

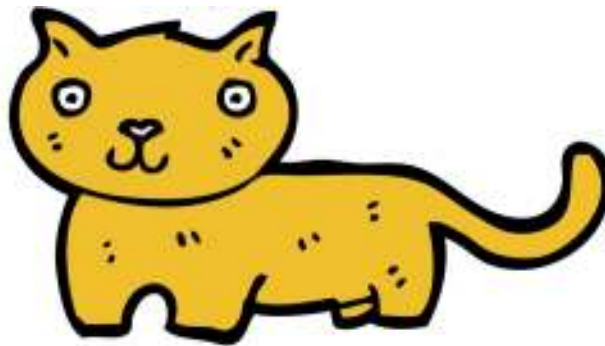
a cat. Why? Well, if

you've spent any

amount of time in the

company of cats, you'll

know that they are



experts in giving feedback. A cat will never shy away from telling you exactly how it feels about your behaviour (or lack of).

They are, however, not without compassion. A cat can give

feedback well balanced with affection. Just ask any cat owner

whose beloved companion has decided it's breakfast time!

**Find**                      The first two steps in FRANK are about *planning*  
**Recognise**              your feedback,

**Ask**                        we follow that with advice on how to *deliver*  
**Not**                        your feedback,

**Keep**                      and finally how to make sure that the feedback  
*leads to change.*



# FIND



The F in FRANK™ is about finding the right time and place to give feedback. Under some circumstances the right time, might be right now. Imagine a team meeting where one team member makes racist or other inappropriate remarks. If the manager doesn't address that immediately, the rest of the team could be offended, or worse infer their manager agrees with the remarks. So an immediate and public challenge is warranted.

Even if you need to give feedback in response to something less dramatic and have time to think about it first, the where and the when are still important.

Feedback given 10 minutes before the end of a shift rarely has the desired impact. When you have planned a time to give feedback it signals to the other person that this is something you have thought about, and therefore has value.

On the other hand, saving all your feedback up to give it all in one go is not a great idea either. You can image how that conversation might go: *“and another thing, 6 months ago...”*

Feedback needs to be given in a timely fashion and people need time and space to process what they are hearing. They may have a strong reaction to the feedback. Which, by the way, is just as likely to be related to their previous experiences as it is to what they may be hearing from you.

Whenever you're giving feedback you need to have the time to explain yourself and allow time for them to consider it in private.

Putting aside the type of scenario we began this chapter with, giving negative feedback in front of an audience is rarely a good idea. It can either provoke a 'peacock' reaction where the subject will react to your comments in an effort to demonstrate superiority, it could also be interpreted as bullying.

Even with positive feedback, some people thrive on very public feedback, others recoil in horror at the thought of it. Some people much prefer positive feedback to be given in private, because they use it principally to assess whether they are on course to achieve their objectives or not.

# RECOGNISE



To give truly purr-fect feedback there are a number of things you need to recognise:

- what *exactly* you are giving feedback on
- why the issue is important
- what might be behind the problem
- what change you expect to see
- what feelings this might bring up for you and the recipient
- that feedback is just information

## Recognise what exactly you are giving feedback on?

Some people have an instinctive response to negative feedback - deny it, or demand examples!

So in planning your feedback be prepared to describe OBJECTIVELY and without emotion or judgement the situation you have observed.

## Recognise why the issue is important?

When you start to plan your feedback, think about why the issue is important to give feedback on. What is the effect their

behaviour or actions are having (on you, them or the organisation)? What are you concerned might happen as a result? What would happen if nothing changed?

I've seen some people realise at this stage that actually, the reason for giving the feedback is so trivial that it's not worth bothering with.

If you decide the issue is important enough to proceed with giving the feedback, you're now prepared to explain to the recipient why it matters.

### Recognise what *might* be behind the problem?

In planning to give feedback it's usually helpful to take a moment or two to think about the possible root causes of the problem you're about to tackle. It can help you to build empathy with the other person, and if they struggle to find a solution, you might be able to help!

ACME is a good starting point for trying to understand what might be behind the problems. No, I don't mean the explosives company in the Road Runner cartoons (though FRANK does love birds!). I mean:

**A**bility, **C**onfidence, **M**otivation, **E**quipment

And since 'acme' comes from the Greek meaning peak or prime, it seems appropriate!

Remember, you can only speculate! You must keep an open mind when you talk to the recipient. They might have other ideas.

### **Recognise what change you expect to see**

Giving negative feedback at work should always be about supporting someone to make a positive change, to contribute to a more productive and effective workplace. Though you can't force someone to change, you should have an idea of what you expect them to do about the situation.

When you actually deliver the feedback its recipient might have other ideas about what changes can be made - so come up with a range of ideas, and have a think about what you're prepared to compromise on. And what you're not!

### **Recognise what feelings this might bring up**

If you're feeling uncomfortable about giving the feedback, recognising the emotions you have about the looming conversation can be helpful.

When we communicate with others we do so in 3 ways - through our words, our voice and our body language. All 3 must match for the person we are communicating with to be convinced we mean what we are saying.

If you're telling someone they've done a good job, but you feel awkward saying it, the right words might come out but the message might not be believed. The other person is sub-consciously reading your body language and tone of voice, and may not be convinced.

Similarly, if you are angry when you deliver feedback even a well crafted speech can come across as aggressive. You need to recognise your emotions first. You could try making a note of how you feel, then talking through with a friend about why you might feel like that.

### **Recognise that feedback is just information**

Lastly, we all need to recognise that feedback is information. I had a colleague who used to say that *'feedback's a gift and if it's not Christmas, I might not want it'*. In FRANK™, 'recognise' is also about understanding that the other person has a right not to accept your feedback.



If you have delivered it well and with compassion, hopefully they'll be equally kind and accept it, but they do have the right to not accept your comments.

Clearly, in the workplace there may be consequences of not accepting feedback (especially if it's coming from a senior colleague) - but we have free will and that includes disagreeing with other people's feedback.

# ASK



As we move into the ‘me-how’ (sorry, no more cat puns, I promise) of giving feedback, the A stands for Ask.

Asking questions is not only a nice way to introduce the feedback (especially if you’re unsure where to start), but also makes sure giving feedback becomes a two-way process.

In FRANK™ we use questions to guide us through the four stages of delivering feedback:

## 1. Ask questions to start a feedback conversation

The simplest way around some of our feedback blockages is to begin feedback with questions:

*How do you think things are going?  
What did you think about ....?  
Could you have done anything differently?*

I worked with one lady who’d built up to giving a colleague negative feedback all weekend. On Monday she asked her colleague how he thought things were going. Can you guess how he responded? He told her that he didn’t think he was really

doing a great job in his role and asked for her advice. She didn't even need to give her feedback - all that worry for nothing!

The thing is human beings are pre-programmed to try and find an answer when faced with a question. Since many people are self critical there's a good chance they will identify the issue you wanted to give feedback on, legitimising a discussion about change. Sneaky huh?

If they don't get to the issue straight away, you can follow your opening questions with a few leading questions until the issue is on the table.

Once it's clear what the focus of the conversation is about, use this opportunity to introduce your examples - describe what happen(s) and when. Now you've opened the topic up for discussion.

## **2. Ask them to explore the issue further**

Now you can encourage the other person to talk you through what's happening for them, with questions like:

*What do you think might be causing this?  
Can you tell me what has happened for you?*

And since you've already given some thought to the root causes in your preparation (see acme), you'll be ready with some prompts if necessary:



*Is there any training that might help you develop?  
How confident do you feel in handling X?  
How important do you feel this is?  
Did you have all the equipment you needed?*

### **3. Ask questions about their options**

Now, we already know what we want to happen, because we thought about that in our planning, but remember this might be a new thought process for the recipient. So, once you feel you've exhausted the root causes, move on to the third stage of questioning - getting to the change you want to see.

*Have you tried to address this before?  
What could you do differently?  
How could this be handled?*

Typically people are more motivated to change something if they feel that it was their idea. However, since the aim of giving feedback is to bring about a change, you might need to be a little more directive here. You should already have thought about what you'll compromise on, and what's not up for debate.

### **4. Asking for their commitment**

As we said the purpose of all this effort is securing a positive change. We've got the topic on the table, considered the issues and options, now we need to ask for the recipients commitment that they're willing to take on board our comments:

*Where do you see this going from here?  
What are you going to do now?*

*How do you see things playing out differently next time?*

If they resist, you have to remember - giving feedback can be a bit like herding cats. You can direct all you like, but cats (and colleagues) have free will - they have to want to follow-up on the actions. People won't always accept your feedback or agree to change. This is a fact of life we must learn to live with, but we do need to be clear with them the consequences of not changing (and follow-through on any actions we warn them about).

### **A few final thoughts about Ask**

Language is all important. When you ask questions in feedback, watch the language you use. Avoid questions prefaced with 'why'. 'Why' questions tend to bring out the teenager in most of us. Think about it: how would you react if I said "*Why haven't you finished that report?*" as opposed to "*Has something prevented you from finishing the report?*" The second sounds much kinder!

When you move on to asking questions to find solutions, you can change your language from "I" to "we". This sub-consciously tells the other person that we're in this together and shows them you want to work with them.

# NOT



While we're on the subject of the 'how', we need to remember that not everyone hears feedback in the same way. You shouldn't always use the same "formula" for giving feedback.

Feedback should always be clear and specific, but each time you give feedback think about what you're actually saying. The way it's framed should be changed to make it easier for the other person to receive it.

Some people take feedback better if it's sugar coated. The Mary Poppins school of feedback; a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down, sometimes known as a *criticism sandwich*. Tell them something they've done well, followed by your constructive criticism and close with something positive.

*"I was really impressed with the calm way you handled that complaint. I don't want to see you keeping customers waiting like that in future, but well done for*

Some people do need the positive reinforcement when they hear a negative feedback. However, there is some evidence to suggest that this approach can weaken the feedback, and I once met someone whose manager only ever used this approach. As a

consequence whenever he complemented staff they expected negative feedback afterwards!

The morale of that story - try giving feedback in different ways!

Some people would far rather you just 'got to the point'. If you build your feedback into a lengthy speech, they will get bored and not hear the essential message. Another group of people classically like 'evidence' to support the feedback. What's the data? How many times have they missed deadlines?

The magic element in giving great feedback is not to use the same approach all the time. Think about how the person you're talking to would like to hear it (that might not necessarily be how you'd like to be told). The great thing is the styles are often quite easy to spot:

- Analytical personalities are most likely to value data in feedback
- Straight talking people usually want you to get to the point
- Social people like to be protected before they hear they've done something wrong

# KEEP



The final part of FRANK™ is about making sure the message has impact after the conversation ends. That's about keeping the conversation focused when you're together and keeping the other person to their commitments afterwards!

Feedback conversations can easily drift off course. Either the other person tries to pull you off subject, or through discomfort you bury the feedback in a range of other discussions.

Keeping your own clear and focused message is just as important as keeping them focused on the issue at hand. The more messages you throw into a conversation the more diluted the overall message. Think about shops. A clothes shop sells clothing and clothing accessories. If it suddenly starts to sell decorating products it begins to dilute its brand, until its customers aren't really sure what they know it for. If you package your feedback discussion with too many other things, the other person is likely to miss the point.

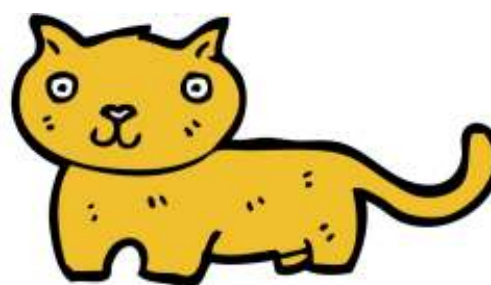
On the other hand, if someone is uncomfortable hearing what you're saying, they may try and pull you off track. They may even throw 'bait' at you to see if they can get a cat-fight started.

If you want to 'Keep' things focused, you either have to ignore any comments and be a broken record, or consider changing your approach (see Not always the same).

Even after you have given your feedback and you've gone your separate ways, if the other person agrees to take a different approach at work you may need to help them to 'Keep' to their promise. Even with the best of intentions, as the saying goes 'old habits die hard'.

If you give someone negative feedback for doing something, and the next time they do it you let it slide, you're sending mixed messages. If they do slip back into their old ways, gently remind them of their commitment and if they are doing well at changing - make sure you capitalise on that with positive feedback!

Next time you have to  
give feedback - just be  
Feedback FRANK™.



## What's next?

Hopefully FRANK™ will help you to improve productivity in your workplace by developing a culture of effective feedback!

If you'd like a hardcopy of this publication, please contact McCrudden Training on 0845 257 5871 or email [info@mccrudden-training.co.uk](mailto:info@mccrudden-training.co.uk)

And the next step? Making sure you have all the other workplace productivity skills to maximise your workplace success. We'd love to help you with that.

At McCrudden Training we've been providing our acclaimed Productive Workplace™ training since 2005. We specialise in working with finance-based businesses and health/fitness organisations, though a diverse range of organisations have benefited from our engaging, award-winning training.

We hope that the tips and lessons in this booklet have given you a sample of our enthusiasm and passion for what we do. If there's anything else you'd like to chat about, please call our Client Services Co-ordinator, Nick, on 0845 257 5871.

You can also find us online at [www.mccrudden-training.co.uk](http://www.mccrudden-training.co.uk). We hope to see you soon!

## About the author

Nicky McCrudden is a passionate advocate of workplace learning in all its forms; from reading books, online learning, face-to-face training and coaching.



An expert in training development, Managing Director of McCrudden Training Nicky, seeks to bring her own unique brand of innovation in learning to our all courses and resources.

Feedback FRANK is just one of Nicky's creations that help our learners connect with and apply new ideas for the benefit of themselves and their organisations.

To contact Nicky directly, email her on [director@mccrudden-training.co.uk](mailto:director@mccrudden-training.co.uk)