EMPOWERING WOMEN
FOR DIGITAL & REMOTE HR CAREERS

MODULE 5 · REMOTE EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT · LESSON 5.3

Performance management and feedback

When you cannot see the work, you judge what it produces. Feedback then has to be specific, regular and written down fairly.



1.25 training hours · Integrated practice · RemoteHeR

WHAT THIS LESSON COVERS

From agreeing goals to recording feedback

- How to set goals and find evidence of contribution when you cannot see the work.
- What continuous feedback and the annual review are each for.
- How to structure feedback around the situation, the behaviour and its impact, and the alternatives.
- How to give corrective feedback online, and how to document it properly.
- How HR can support line managers who are managing at a distance for the first time.



Managers expected hybrid work to lower performance. It did not.

In a 2021–2022 trial with 1,612 employees of a Chinese technology company, staff who worked from home two days a week got the same performance reviews and promotions over two years as office staff. Managers had predicted a 2.6% loss.

GOALS AT A DISTANCE

A goal you can check without watching

The result

Say what will exist when the goal is met, such as a document or a solved problem, not the hours spent.

The measure

Say how both of you will know it is done, and done well: a number, a deadline met, or a check by another person.

The date

Give each goal a date, with a checkpoint in between. A goal with no date cannot be reviewed by anyone.

The evidence

Agree where the work will be visible, such as a shared folder or a board, so nobody has to prove they are busy.

AN EXAMPLE

One goal from Inês's day-60 checkpoint

Inês is the HR assistant who joined Larkspur Learning in lesson 5.1.

- Its result is a document others use.
- Someone else can check the measure.
- The team can see the evidence.

LARKSPUR LEARNING · 30-60-90 PLAN · INÊS, HR ASSISTANT

Day 60 · Goal 2

RESULT	The vacancy tracker is updated for every open role each Thursday by 12:00 (Lisbon).
MEASURE	Hiring managers find all roles up to date on Thursday afternoon. Daniel checks at the day-60 call.
DATE	From week 5. Reviewed on day 60.
EVIDENCE	The tracker in the shared People folder. Its version history shows when it was updated.

EVIDENCE OF CONTRIBUTION

Being online is not the same as contributing

Signs of activity

- Her status shows as available all day.
- He answers messages late in the evening.
- She sends many messages in the team chat.
- He keeps his camera on in every call.

Evidence of contribution

- The agreed result exists and meets the measure.
- Colleagues who rely on the work say it arrived on time.
- Problems were raised early and were solved.
- The work can be found where the team agreed.



Feedback does not always help. In over a third of cases, it made performance worse.

A 1996 review of 607 effects found that feedback improved performance on average. In more than a third of cases it lowered it, most often when it turned attention away from the task and towards the person.

CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK AND THE REVIEW

Two conversations with different jobs

Regular check-in

- It steers the work while it can still change.
- It happens every week or two, in a short call or in writing.
- It deals with one or two things, not everything.
- Nothing in it is saved up for later.

Periodic review

- It looks back over a whole period.
- It records decisions on development, pay or role.
- It checks whether the goals themselves still make sense.
- Nothing in it should come as a surprise.

WHAT HELPS FEEDBACK WORK

Four conditions from the research

About the task

Talk about the work and how it was done. Feedback about the person, such as their character or worth, tends to make things worse.

Specific

Name what happened and what should change. In field studies, detailed feedback helped more than general comments.

Regular, not constant

Leave time to act on it. In one field experiment, detailed monthly feedback worked better than more frequent feedback.

From a credible source

People act on feedback when they trust the person who gives it and believe that person saw the work.

STRUCTURING FEEDBACK

Situation, behaviour, impact, and then ask

1. **Situation**

   Say when and where it happened, as precisely as you can, such as “in Tuesday’s call with the Madrid hiring managers”.

2. **Behaviour**

   Describe what the person did or said, in words a camera could have recorded. Leave out opinions and labels.

3. **Impact**

   Say what effect it had on you, the team or the work. The impact is the reason the feedback matters.

4. **Intent**

   Ask what the person was trying to do. Their answer may change your view, and it turns feedback into a conversation.

FROM VAGUE TO USABLE

The same comment, written so it can be used

A vague comment tells someone that something is wrong, but not what to do.

- It names the situation and behaviour.
- It states the impact on others.
- It ends with a question.

BEFORE

"Your reports are too long."

AFTER

Situation. In last week's report to the Spanish managers,

Behaviour. the summary was on page four.

Impact. Two managers replied to ask what decision you needed from them.

Ask. What would change if the decision went in the first two lines?

THE ALTERNATIVES

Other ways to structure feedback

Feedforward

Ask about a time the person worked at their best, and plan how to repeat it. One trial found better performance later.

Ask first

Before giving your view, ask how the person thinks the work went. Many people name the problem themselves.

One thing at a time

Choose the one change that would matter most. A list of ten points leaves the person unsure where to start.

When to put the model down

A model helps you prepare. If the talk turns to health, family or distress, stop and use what lesson 5.4 teaches.



Corrective feedback is a conversation, not a message.

A chat message or an email cannot carry tone, and the person cannot ask a question at the moment it matters. Hold the conversation by video, and then put what was agreed in writing.

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ONLINE

Four steps for a difficult feedback call

1. **Book it, and say what it is about**

   Send a short invitation that names the topic, so the person is not surprised. Avoid the last hour of the week.

2. **Open with the facts**

   Use situation, behaviour and impact. Keep cameras on if both of you can, and make sure nobody else can hear.

3. **Listen before you decide**

   Ask for the person’s account and wait for the answer. A silence on a call feels longer than it is.

4. **Agree the next step in writing**

   Send a short summary the same day: the facts, what was agreed, and the date of the next check. Ask them to correct it.

AFTER THE CALL

A summary that confirms what was agreed

A short summary turns a conversation into a record that both people accept.

- It repeats facts, not feelings.
- It states the next step and date.
- It invites the person to correct it.

From: Marta · To: Tiago
Subject: Summary of our call today, 10 October

Hi Tiago, thank you for the call. This is what we said.

The facts. On 3 and 4 October, 11 learner chats waited more than two hours for a first reply. Our target is 30 minutes.

Agreed. When more than five chats are waiting, you post in the team channel, and I will find cover.

Next check. We look at the numbers together on 24 October.

If I have missed or misread anything, please correct it by replying.

DOCUMENTING IT PROPERLY

What belongs in the written record

Leave this out

- Guesses about why the person did it.
- Comments on health, family or private life.
- Data on when the person was online.
- Labels such as “lazy” or “difficult”.

Write this down

- The date, and the facts that were observed.
- What the person said in reply.
- What was agreed, and by when.
- The date of the next check.

BEFORE IT BECOMES FORMAL

Check what applies where you work

Feedback is not a sanction

Everyday feedback, even corrective, is not a disciplinary measure. Sanctions, and the hearing before them, are set by national law and collective agreements.

The right of access

Written comments about a person's performance are personal data. Under Article 15 GDPR, the person can ask to see them.

Workers' representatives

Where there are workers' representatives, national law may give them a say on appraisal criteria. Check before you change the system.

Before you write "warning"

If a word in a review could read as a sanction, ask HR first. A warning has a procedure behind it.



A manager who cannot see the team may be tempted to watch it instead.

CEC European Managers advises managers of remote teams to set clear objectives and build trust, and warns that monitoring tools can create an illusion of control.

SUPPORTING LINE MANAGERS

What HR can give managers new to remote work

A goal template

Give managers a one-page format for result, measure, date and evidence, and check the first goals they write.

A check-in rhythm

Agree how often each manager meets each person, and make the time fit both time zones and part-time hours.

A review of drafts

Offer to read written feedback before it is sent, as you will do in this lesson's activity.

A line to HR

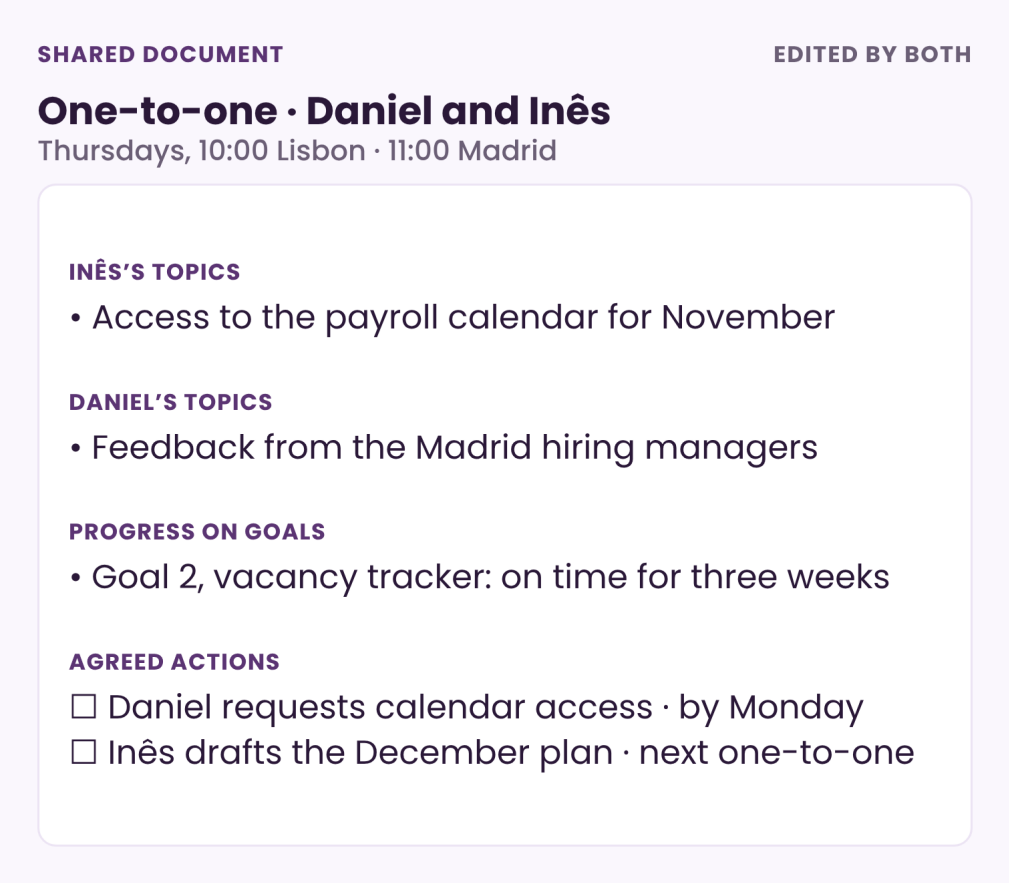
Tell managers when to call HR: before anything is called a warning, and as soon as health or distress comes up.

THE ONE-TO-ONE

A one-to-one that works at a distance

The one-to-one is where continuous feedback happens in practice.

- Same time, every week or two.
- Both people add to one agenda.
- It ends with an action and a date.



Tools you will see used

Google Docs

Free with a Google account. One shared document per person for one-to-one notes.



Trello

Free for up to 10 collaborators. A board shows each goal, its date and its evidence.



LibreOffice Writer

Free and open source. Opens Word files and records changes, for the activity.



Any equivalent your organisation already uses is fine. Keep feedback records where only the right people can open them.

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN

Rewrite the review comments



Turn a manager’s draft review into feedback a person can act on

Daniel has drafted Inês’s day-90 review and asked HR to check it. Use the evidence log to rewrite each comment with tracked changes, remove what should not be there, and write him a short note. About 40 minutes.

It feeds into

Your onboarding plan: how feedback is written at each checkpoint, on days 30, 60 and 90.

How it is read

Your tutor reads it and replies in writing. There is no mark. If something is missing, your tutor names it.

RECAP

Before you move on

- Agree goals by result, measure, date and evidence, so contribution can be seen without watching.
- Regular check-ins steer the work; the periodic review looks back and records decisions.
- Feedback helps when it is about the task, specific and from a credible source. About the person, it can do harm.
- Give corrective feedback by video, using situation, behaviour and impact, then confirm it in writing.
- Write records as if the person will read them, and check your country's rules before anything becomes formal.

Next: the activity, then the knowledge check. Lesson 5.4 is wellbeing, burnout and signposting.

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Lesson 5.3 complete

Do the activity and the knowledge check. Then lesson 5.4: wellbeing, burnout and signposting.

mountains of research

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