# DELIVERING CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

Providing corrective feedback isn't easy. It's a complex skill that requires patience and practice. The following process provides a framework for providing corrective feedback, including:

- Preparing for Corrective Feedback.
- Delivering Corrective Feedback.
- Following-up on Corrective Feedback.

## Prepare for Corrective Feedback

Careful preparation for delivering corrective feedback is essential. Preparation helps you gain a clear understanding of why you want to provide corrective feedback and what you're going to say. The SOAR Observation and Assessment Tool, or SOAR Card, provides a quick, accurate, and consistent way to take notes about a Soldier's behaviors and performance. It is also helpful to use as a guide when providing a feedback recipient with feedback (see table on steps for delivering corrective feedback).

| SOAR Card Block | Explanation |
|---|---|
| ***Situation*** | Describe the situation/conditions of the performance. When recording your observations, be sure to do so without delay to ensure that you capture all important information. Use words that depict action and that link effects and outcomes. Importantly, think about the constraints that the recipient was under during the task. For example, did something occur prior to the observation that may have affected their concentration? Is there a personal problem that may be distracting the recipient? |
| ***Observation*** | Describe the objective and specific behaviors observed, and the impact on the mission and/or Soldiers. You might consider recording the elapsed time and actions both taken and NOT taken. Record behaviors in chronological sequence, and do not allow mission accomplishment to influence recorded behaviors. |
| ***Associate & Assess*** | Associate recipient strengths and development needs observed with FM 6-22 competencies or attributes. Refer back to FM 6-22 to learn more about the Army Core Leader Competency Model. For quick reference, refer to FM 6-22, Appendix A: Leader Attributes and Core Leader Competencies. |
| ***Reinforce & Recommend*** | Note appropriate feedback, praise, or correction. Recommend action to sustain/improve recipient behavior. Ensure that you and the recipient share an understanding of what occurred. Think about providing action-oriented advice on how to enhance a recipient strength and/or improve upon a developmental need. These notes will help you plan feedback to discuss with the recipient. |

## Format for using the SOAR method:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Situation:** Describe the situation/conditions of the assessment. | |
| **Observation:** Describe behavior and impact on mission and/or Soldiers. | **Associate & Assess:** Identify FM 6-22 competency; assess proficiency. |
| **Reinforce & Recommend:** Note appropriate feedback, praise, or correction. Recommended action to sustain/improve leader behavior. | |

## Sample SOAR Card

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|---|---|
| **Situation:** Describe the situation/conditions of the assessment.<br><br>*2LT Pinkham leads night convoy operations. LT supervises 4 NCOs and 18 enlisted Soldiers; 5 vehicles.* | |
| **Observation:** Describe behavior and impact on mission and/or Soldiers.<br><br>*Thorough OPORD – briefed specifics; asked for brief-back to ensure understanding; missed turn and got lost; did not ask others for assistance; lost confidence; convoy late with resupply* | **Associate & Assess:** Identify FM 6-22 competency; assess proficiency.<br><br>*Communicates – strength;*<br>*Leads by Example – development need;*<br>*Gets Results – development need* |
| **Reinforce & Recommend:** Note appropriate feedback, praise, or correction. Recommended action to sustain/improve leader behavior.<br>*Reiterate strength as ensuring shared understanding.*<br>*AAR the missed-turn incident.*<br>*Recommend shadow of other convoy operations.*<br>*Recommend AAR with NCOs to work better with them; learn when to ask for help.* | |

When you're preparing to deliver corrective feedback, you'll also want to consider how open the feedback recipient will be to receiving feedback from you. To increase the odds that a recipient will accept and act upon the feedback you deliver, think about the following potential barriers you may encounter and the kinds of adjustments you'll need to make:

- **What's your intent in providing feedback?** Ensure that the feedback you provide has a positive intent. If the recipient doubts or mistrusts your motives, demonstrate that you're genuinely interested in helping and developing him by acknowledging his perspective and clearly affirming your positive intent.
- **What's the content of the feedback?** If the feedback is related to a core duty or something that the recipient takes pride in, it is more likely to harm his self-esteem and result in resistant behaviors. In such cases, it will be especially important to frame the message in a positive and supportive manner.
- **Are you a credible source for the feedback recipient?** If you believe your credibility may be an issue, make sure you have plenty of objective and specific examples to support your feedback.
- **What kind of working relationship do you have with the feedback recipient?** People are willing to accept feedback more readily from someone with whom they have a good working relationship. If you don't have a good working relationship with the recipient, you may need to work on reestablishing the relationship by developing rapport, mutual respect, and trust with the recipient. When your feedback is urgent, you may not have time to wait for your relationship to improve, so it'll be particularly important to frame your message in a positive way that highlights benefits to the recipient.
- **What's your status relative to the feedback recipient?** In a hierarchical environment, it is often difficult to give feedback to a peer or a superior. If you are presenting feedback to a peer or a superior, present plenty of objective and specific examples to establish your credibility and remember to present your comments as supportive rather than critical.
- **What's the feedback recipient's likely reaction based on prior feedback interactions with him?** After repeated feedback sessions with the same person, you may find that they often tend to respond in a certain way. Some people are generally more sensitive to corrective feedback while others are more likely to welcome information about how they can improve. Try to tailor your message to what you think will work best for the recipient.

The final step for preparing for feedback is scheduling the feedback session with the recipient. When scheduling the feedback session, consider the following "go" behaviors:

- **Schedule the meeting as close as possible to when the performance issue occurred.** Setting up a feedback session involves thinking about when to deliver the corrective feedback. The most effective feedback is given when the recipient is receptive to it, and it's sufficiently close to the particular situation being discussed for it to be fresh in their mind.
- **Schedule the meeting in a private place where you won't be overheard.** When you schedule a corrective feedback session, you'll want to choose a private place. This doesn't mean that you have to give feedback behind closed doors. However, it does mean that you shouldn't single people out in front of their peers. Generally, praise can be public, while corrective feedback should remain confidential.
- **Inform the feedback recipient of the reason for the meeting, noting the situation and focusing on development.** Providing the recipient with a heads up about the situation and the intent of the meeting gives him an opportunity to reflect and prepare to listen and receive feedback. This approach also reduces the likelihood that the recipient will be preoccupied, nervous, or defensive.

## Deliver Corrective Feedback

The next step in the feedback giving process is actually delivering the feedback. The following steps provide a framework for delivering corrective feedback and flow in a logical sequence:

| Step | Explanation |
|---|---|
| ***Confirm the situation*** | Start by orienting the recipient's attention to the situation you've observed. This information will help the recipient recall the situation and the circumstances surrounding it.<br><br>Refer to the information you record in the "Situation" block of the SOAR Card. |
| ***Ask for a self-assessment*** | Ask the recipient for a self-assessment of the situation and his actions. Focus your questioning on his behaviors and performance during the given event or situation. The recipient's response should match your assessments. If it does not, ask more specific questions.<br><br>Refer to the information you record in the "Associate & Assess" block of the SOAR Card. |
| ***Clarify and come to an agreement*** | Either confirm or continue probing until the recipient verbalizes your assessment of the situation. Come to an agreement on the linkage of actions and consequences.<br><br>Refer to the information you record in the "Observation" block of the SOAR Card. |
| ***Add your observations*** | Include your observations, which the recipient may be unaware of. Build on what the recipient has already said to increase his self-awareness. Include specific behaviors that had an impact on the consequence or outcome.<br><br>Refer to the information you record in the "Observation" block of the SOAR Card. |
| ***Engage and expand*** | Raise questions that will prompt the recipient to think about how to act or respond in the future. Ask for a recommendation about how to improve the recipient's behavior in the future, how to avoid problems, and how to take advantage of an opportunity. Action may be taken by the recipient, you (the feedback giver), or both parties, including taking steps to improve or change the recipient's behavior, providing more support or guidance (you), clarifying expectations (both), and developing abilities and skills (both).<br><br>Refer to the information you record in the "Reinforce & Recommend" block of the SOAR Card. |
| ***Reinforce*** | Reinforce something the recipient is doing correctly (i.e., validate a strength). Once you and the recipient are in agreement on the behaviors that contributed to a consequence and a recommendation for the future, provide reinforcement on what he's doing correctly.<br><br>Refer to the information you record in the "Reinforce & Recommend" block of the SOAR Card. |

As you follow the steps for delivering feedback, consider the following “Go” Behaviors:

- Focus the feedback on the situation and the recipient’s objective and specific behaviors.
- Acknowledge and address the recipient’s response.
- Describe the impact of the recipient’s behavior on the mission and Soldiers.
- Utilize authoritative feedback – which is more prescriptive – only if the recipient seems open to more input from you.

## Follow-Up Corrective Feedback

As you close your feedback session with the recipient, you’ll want to make sure you’re following up to make sure he is acting on the feedback you gave him. To effectively follow up on feedback that you deliver, consider the following tips:

- Allow the recipient time and space to adjust his actions and behaviors.
- Observe for a change in the recipient actions and behaviors.
- Give brief verbal and nonverbal reinforcements when changes in actions and behaviors are observed.
- Observe for changes in outcomes and consequences.
- Bring the recipient’s attention to changes in outcomes and consequences – reinforce success.