

All Feedback Isn't Created Equal

8 ways to improve performance management conversations with construction employees



Offering employee feedback.

Employees across all industries really value conversations about how they are doing and how they can improve. It keeps them engaged...and that helps you with retention and productivity.



85% of employees who have weekly check-ins with their manager report high engagement. **Just 2% of employees** who have weekly check-ins indicate they are disengaged.

Source: [Workhuman](#)



All feedback isn't created equal.

In fact, studies have shown that saving up feedback and only doing a traditional once-a-year performance review may not work as well as expected and has the potential to backfire. While annual reviews continue to have their place, when it comes to feedback, frequent is almost always better.



55% of employees believe annual reviews don't improve their performance.

Source: [Workhuman](#)



Only 10% of employees feel engaged after a negative review. **Almost 30%** were so disengaged they began looking for another job.

Source: [Gallup](#)



It's not just quantity; quality also counts.

Just having more conversations isn't enough. How, when and by whom feedback is delivered also makes a difference.

Improve your employee performance management by following these top tips to give better feedback.

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1. Build trust.
 2. Make it regular.
 3. Make it timely.
 4. Be objective.
 5. Set clear performance expectations.
 6. Make feedback constructive.
 7. Focus on achievements and strengths.
 8. Listen.

1. Build trust.

Employees want to receive feedback from someone they respect and trust. It makes kudos more meaningful and constructive criticism less scary.

A recent [study](#) by Autodesk and FMI showed the connection between trust and business success in the construction industry. While trust is important across the construction ecosystem—for example with sub-contractors and owners—it also has a tangible impact on employees.

In construction companies that have a high degree of trust:



74% of employees would recommend their company as a great place to work.
49% routinely exceed what's expected of them

Source: [Autodesk and FMI 2020 Industry Report](#)

Outside the performance management process, managers can develop a relationship of trust with employees using the following tactics.

- Follow through. Do what you say you're going to do.
- Communicate. Offer straight talk and do it often.
- Always be learning. Continue to gain competence to inspire others.
- Be consistent. Have a clear direction and set of goals.
- Be clear about your values. People should know what you stand for.
- Have their backs. Be an advocate for your team members.
- Listen & show empathy. Put yourself in other's shoes.

Source: [SHRM](#)



2. Make it regular.

It can feel challenging to provide the amount of feedback employees say they want. For example, on a busy job site it might not be feasible to do the weekly 1:1s that are common in the corporate world.

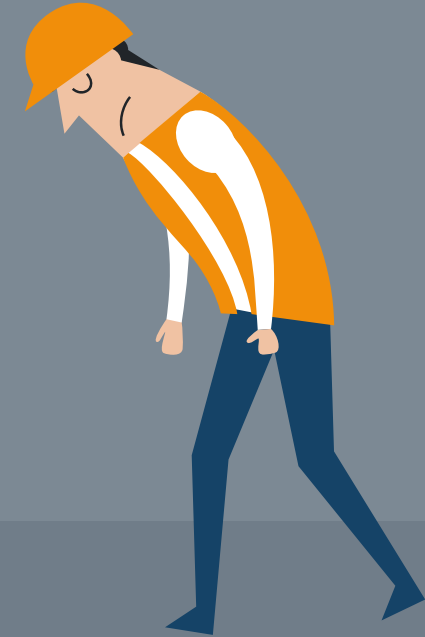
However, many employees do want more feedback so try to plan for at least quarterly conversations. Monthly is better.



28% of employees

report that feedback is not frequent enough to help them understand how to improve.

Source: [Officevibe](#)



A significant advantage to regular check-ins in the construction industry is to keep tabs on people's state of mind.

Mental health issues are more prevalent in **construction** than in the general population, and the industry has the second highest rate of suicide among its workers. By checking in regularly, supervisors and crew leaders may notice changes in performance that belie underlying mental health challenges and be able to take appropriate preventive **action**.

3. Make it timely.

Feedback and coaching should be based on recent performance, whether good or bad. This is especially important to ensure employees are working safely and cultivating good habits.

Crew supervisors and managers should address any safety issues immediately, and repeated concerns need to be part of a formal performance appraisal which could potentially lead to termination.

On the other hand, outstanding performance, including great teamwork, a positive attitude, learning a new skill and being safety conscious are all behaviors and attributes that should be recognized. And, it doesn't have to be in private. Calling people out for doing something great in a team meeting can add to their sense of engagement and pride of workmanship.

Consider giving project-based reviews and feedback. Once a project is complete, have a conversation about how the employee contributed to the work, what went well, and areas for possible improvement, learning and skill-building. Documenting this feedback in a performance management system helps ensure it is recorded for future reference.



The average worker received feedback 2.9 times a month. **33.4% of employees** said they'd like more frequent feedback.

Source: [Joblist](#)

4. Be objective.

As humans we have inherent **biases** and these can become part of the performance management process. Being objective might not be easy but it's something to work at.

Bias isn't always a negative—for example, someone might prefer people who are quiet and reserved—but even an innocuous preference can impact feedback and performance management. In that case a manager could unintentionally give the employee who's always cracking jokes a lower rating or negative feedback that isn't deserved.

Just being aware that we all have preferences and that our brains tend to categorize people and behaviors is important to consider before you offer constructive feedback.

Ask yourself:

- Would I give another employee the same feedback for the same accomplishment or area of improvement?
- Do I have different expectations for this employee based on my personal preference?
- Could anyone accuse me of showing favoritism based on the feedback I'm giving?

One way to address bias in performance management is to get input from others during the process. **Many performance management systems** have functionality that can collect feedback on employees from others in your company. This includes project managers, crew leaders and co-workers to provide a more complete picture of that employee's performance.



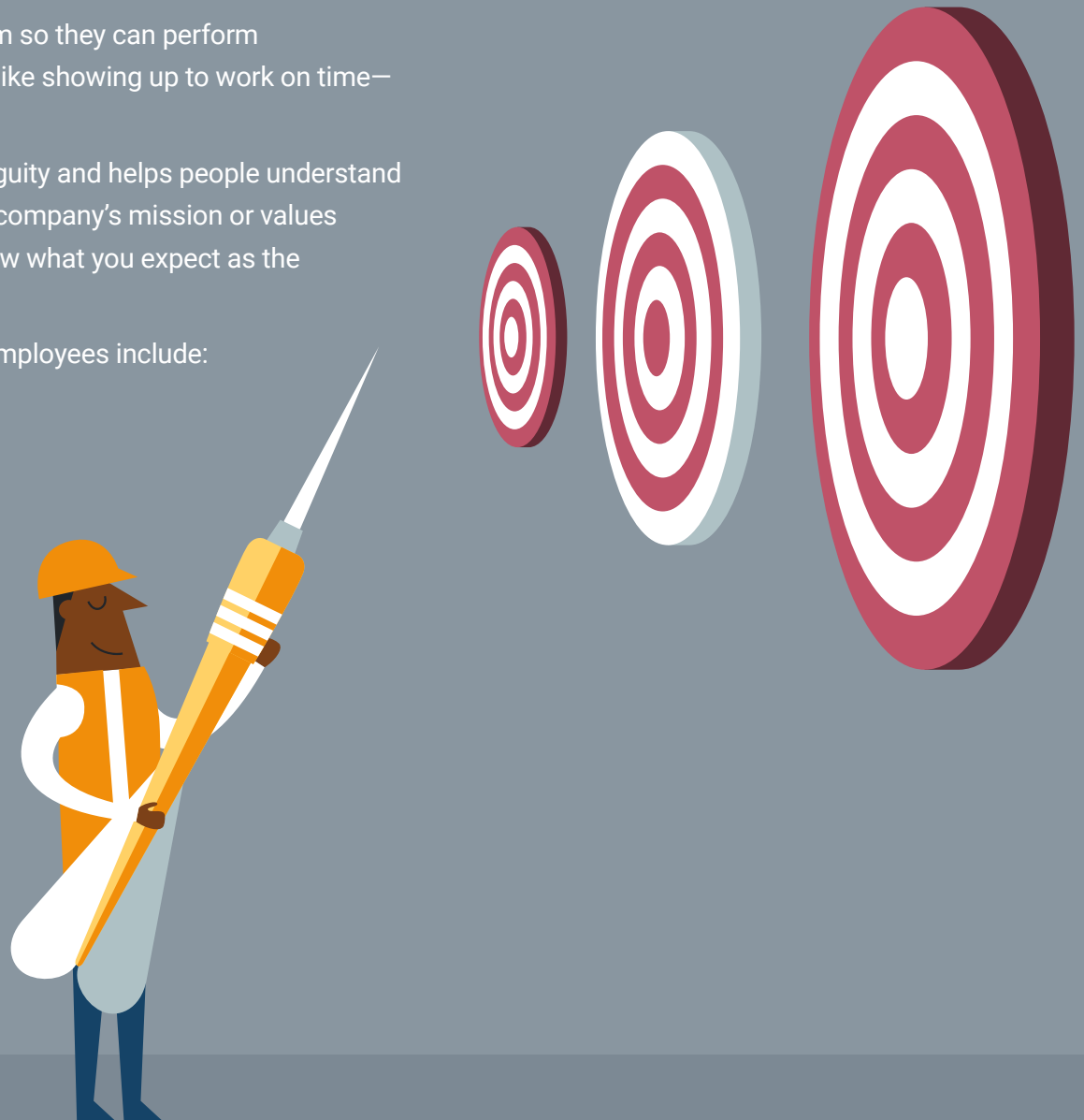
5. Set clear performance expectations up front.

Employees should understand what's expected of them so they can perform appropriately. Even if an expectation seems intuitive—like showing up to work on time—it's worth reinforcing.

Knowing what the **non-negotiables** are removes ambiguity and helps people understand the parameters of their job. These can be part of your company's mission or values statement but it's also important for employees to know what you expect as the manager, supervisor or crew leader.

Some examples of non-negotiables for construction employees include:

- Following all safety protocols.
- Watching out for colleagues.
- Treating tools and equipment properly.
- Focusing on effective team communication.



6. Make feedback constructive.

In the feedback equation you need more carrot than stick. No one wants to constantly hear they are doing poorly.

And with skilled construction employees in such **short supply**, you can't afford to inadvertently performance manage someone out of your organization by only focusing on their weaknesses.

Instead of a disciplinarian, consider yourself a coach. Don't simply highlight mistakes or a performance shortfall, have a conversation that includes suggestions and advice on how to improve.



7. Focus on achievements and strengths.

Feedback shouldn't always be around something negative. It's important to celebrate employees when they are meeting or exceeding expectations.

Employees most appreciate recognition from their manager but it's also meaningful coming from the company CEO or other leader, coworkers and even customers.

According to [Gallup](#), employees rate the following types of feedback highly:

- public recognition or acknowledgment via an award, certificate or commendation
- private recognition from a boss, peer or customer
- receiving or obtaining a high level of achievement through evaluations or reviews.

Even a simple but authentic *thank you* can give employees a lift.



8. Listen.

Feedback should be a dialog, not a one-way street.

When feedback is given regularly it becomes an ongoing discussion in which you and the employee work together to set and adjust expectations and next steps. Invite and expect input from the employee on where they may be facing challenges along with how they would like to grow.

Listening is also vital to that trust mentioned earlier. When you listen to an employee's concerns, input and ideas you build that level of trust that's necessary for effective feedback.

As an added bonus, having a manager who listens inspires people to do their **best work.**

Unfortunately, the smaller the contractor (whether GC or specialty) the less likely they are to conduct any form of a Performance Review. This is unwise from an employee growth strategy and as a way to retain workers – especially the better workers.

– **Brad Humphrey**



Meaningful feedback helps employees succeed.

Construction companies need to get the best and the most from their employees and that's a function of engagement.

Just like in other industries, construction employees want and need feedback—whether they're on the job site or the home office. People want to know they are seen, heard and appreciated. And, they want to know how they can sharpen their skills and advance.

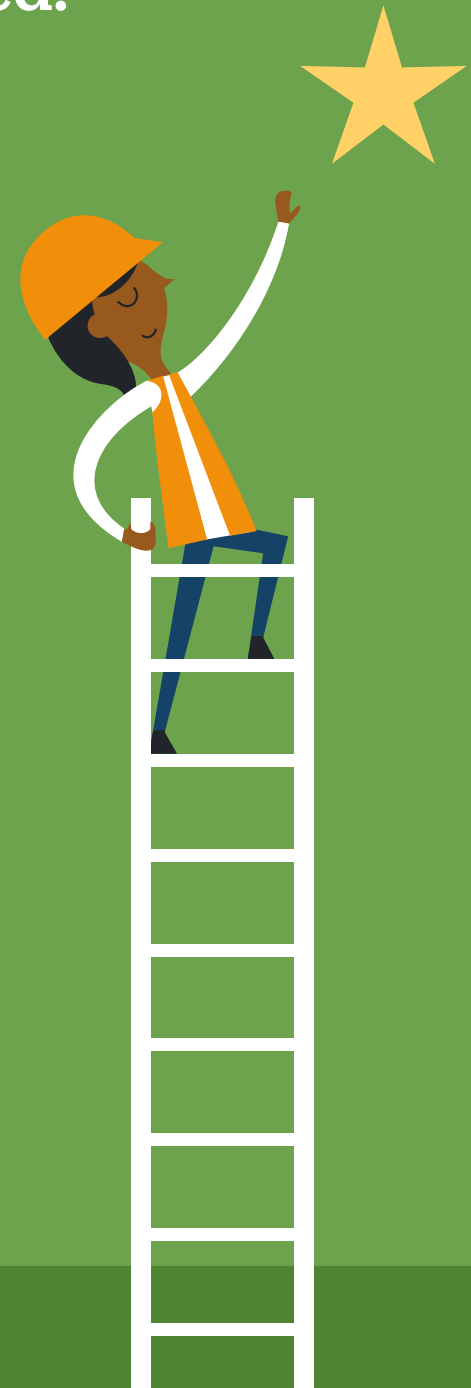
Feedback is part of the performance management process but too often it's overlooked. Annual performance reviews are important but they are only part of the equation.

To ensure you're giving your employees the level and quality of feedback that will help them be their best, follow the tips in this guide including the following.

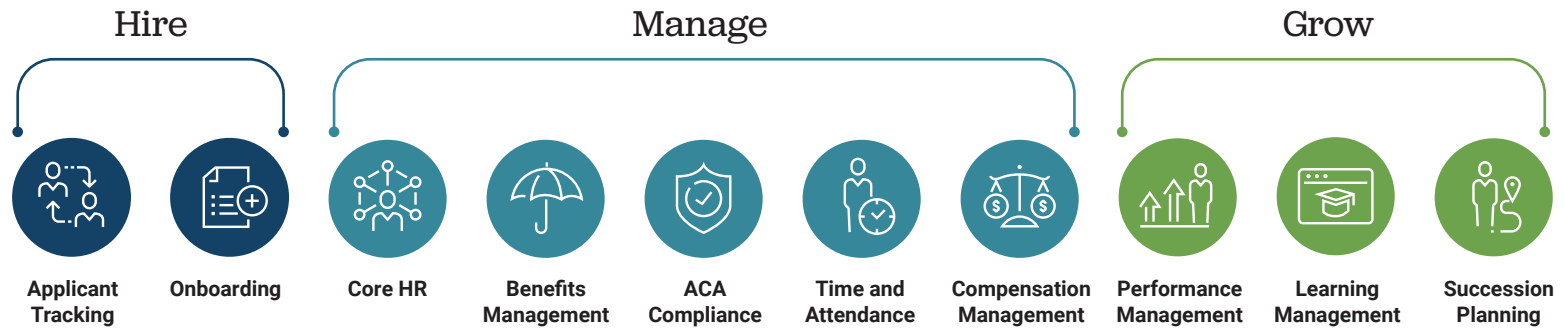
- If you're not already giving regular feedback and coaching, plan to increase conversations with employees to monthly or at least quarterly.
- Consider giving feedback at the end of each project.
- For annual reviews, seek input from others including co-workers for a more balanced view of performance.
- Ensure all feedback is documented in a performance management system so that all parties may refer back to it when needed and leverage it for future projects and learning plans.

Looking to improve employee performance management and increase engagement? Arcoro's cloud-based HR solutions, including our [performance management tool](#), helps construction companies make feedback [more timely and meaningful](#).

Want to learn more about how Arcoro helps construction employers enhance performance management? [Read this case study](#).



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