
FRUITFUL FEEDBACK



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Can I give you some feedback?" might be the six most stressful words you'll hear in the workplace—even when you're the boss. After all, being criticized, even constructively, can be really uncomfortable. Giving feedback is no picnic either, especially for those who dislike conflict.

But regardless of whether you enjoy the feedback process—and some do—there's no denying it's necessary if you want your employees to grow and thrive. And as a leader, seeking out and being open to critiques from your direct reports, your co-founder, and even your board can provide insight into areas you need to work on for the sake of your team and your business.

Just ask Lisa Larson-Kelley, the founder and CEO of

Quantious, a Nyack, New York-based marketing agency that became an Inc. 5000 honoree in 2023. Larson-Kelley says she's naturally conflict-averse, but that she has prioritized changing that inclination. "It's vital to give feedback or you're not going to have a successful team," she says. "If you don't give the feedback, you're actually harming the person by sending them down the wrong path."

We asked the following founders and CEOs how they prefer to give and receive feedback. The advice they shared ranged from tactical to philosophical, but a few recurring pieces of guidance kept cropping up: Be consistent, be respectful, and be specific. And have a little fun with the process.

Inc. Power Partner



CATEGORY WINNER:
LOGISTICS & TRANSPORTATION



KEY CLIENTS: MAJOR
GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS



YEAR FOUNDED:
2001



HQ:
FAIRFAX, VA

The Logistics Provider Boldly Going Where Others Can't

Logenix creates value for clients by providing reliable logistics services in challenging markets throughout the developing world.

LOGENIX.COM

Logenix goes where other logistics services companies won't or can't: the developing world. Its myopic focus on hard-to-reach places earns Logenix an Inc. Power Partner designation, which honors growing companies that have kept their focus on providing excellence in business-to-business (B2B) products and services. "We are the only company I know of whose focus is the developing world. It is easy to focus on primary cargo lanes, but the entire industry does that. We've decided to excel in the tougher regions," says Logenix President and Founder Ron Cruse.

The company's projects include primary support of the world's largest public health initiatives for USAID and The Global Fund. Because of its expansive supply chain and ability to deliver temperature-sensitive medicines across the developing world, Logenix manages thousands of cold chain shipments annually to more than 80 countries. In addition to health care, Logenix works with power, water, education, communication, and agriculture projects in the globe's toughest regions. "We estimate we've helped bring health care to more than half a billion people, power and water to more than 250 million, and total infrastructure development to approximately one billion people across the developing world," Cruse says. Typical challenges include delivering supplies in conflict-torn regions like Ukraine, South Sudan, Niger, or Yemen. In Niger, a coup has led to a complicated bureaucratic process to reroute critical health supplies stranded in Benin from land delivery to air delivery.

Navigating the developing world

To keep up with roughly 140 developing countries, each with its own ever-changing story, Logenix focuses on intelligence gathering, prioritizing local relationships, collaboration, and constant communication across its 21 offices, 220 full-time employees, and 70 contract workers. The team has developed an exhaustive employee training program that takes years to complete. "We are thrashing some of the big guys like UPS and DHL in the developing world because of the way we train," Cruse says.



→ Ron Cruse, founder and CEO, Logenix

Reliability in unpredictable regions

Cruse sums up the company's mission as making the most unreliable and capricious parts of the world reliable for clients. The work can be grueling. But those who value the chance to challenge themselves can thrive in the fast-paced environment and make a real difference for clients. "Every person working on our clients' programs can communicate concisely and coherently. I believe we do that better than anybody—keep clients informed so they're able to make good decisions."

Clients often save time and money, as well, and gain the peace of mind that comes with a knowledgeable partner. "We bring evolutionary progress to clients' supply chains," Cruse says. "Whatever their supply chain is now, we will improve that."

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1 | **Princess Ousley** *Founder, CEO, and president* **ELITE BUSINESS STRATEGIES**

"I always ask for the why when receiving feedback—why did you come to this decision? This allows my team to think through their process so they can give me feedback that I can actually take and implement in other areas."

Ousley's Tallahassee, Florida-based emergency-management company is a two-time Inc. 5000 honoree.

2 | **Thomas Ricci** *Co-founder* **GOBBLE**

"Feedback should provide an understanding of how to move forward or tack your approach. Walking away without a clearly defined expectation only frustrates an individual's growth and success."

In 2022, Ricci sold his San Francisco-based food-delivery service to Intelligent Foods and joined as VP of culinary development.

90%

OF EMPLOYEES SAY THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO STAY WITH AN EMPLOYER THAT NOT ONLY TAKES FEEDBACK BUT ALSO ACTS ON IT.

Source: Deloitte





3

3 | **Stuart Landesberg**

Founder and executive chairman

GROVE COLLABORATIVE

“Feedback moments deserve the same or more preparation than other events. I find being prepared enhances both the quality of the feedback and the quality of the discussion.”

Landesberg’s sustainable cleaning product business, based in San Francisco, is a three-time Inc. 5000 honoree.

5



4

4 | **Grace Na**

Founder and creative director

PISTOLA

“I like to receive feedback that is direct, digestible, understandable, and actionable.”

Na’s Los Angeles-based denim company boasts eight-figure revenue and is entirely bootstrapped.

5 | **David Jarrett**

CEO

ROOTSTRAP

“I try to emphasize that feedback is not a big deal. It’s a routine part of our days. And so it’s really about, ‘Hey, here’s this quick thing that I saw. What do you think about this?’ And then, ‘What can we do about it?’”

Jarrett’s Los Angeles-based product strategy company is a five-time Inc. 5000 honoree.

Inc. Power Partner



CATEGORY WINNER:
CLOUD COMPUTING/SAAS, CRM



KEY CLIENTS: U.S.
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES



YEAR FOUNDED:
1992



HQ:
PALM HARBOR, FL

The Software Company That Helps Individuals Find Meaningful Employment

With cutting-edge software, Geographic Solutions enables government entities to offer free resources for businesses and job seekers.

GEOGRAPHICSOLUTIONS.COM

For employers and job seekers, searching for the right talent or role can be exhausting. However, unbeknownst to most, states offer free resources to make this process easier for employers and job seekers, says Paul Toomey, president of Geographic Solutions, a leading provider of public employment software in more than 40 states and U.S. territories.

Employ Florida, CalJOBS, and WorkInTexas are just a few examples of Geographic Solutions systems, which are accessible to more than 200 million individuals. These solutions are more than a traditional job board; they combine labor exchange and education resources with labor market data to help job seekers advance their careers. “We don’t just show you a list of jobs; we show you jobs that, based on your skills and background, you should be qualified for,” Toomey explains.



→ Paul Toomey, founder and president, Geographic Solutions

Innovation that drives value

Since its founding in 1992, Geographic Solutions has continually improved its software offerings, drawing on client and user input obtained via monthly meetings and feedback mechanisms built into the software. “You won’t be surprised to hear our latest innovations revolve around AI [artificial intelligence],” Toomey says. Using a ChatGPT-based tool, users can easily enhance or build a résumé. AI improves the system for employers, too: they can now create quality job descriptions and generate interview questions based on a candidate’s experience.

On the employer side, Geographic Solutions provides unemployment insurance systems for 10 states and territories and paid out more than \$60 billion in benefits during the pandemic. The company even offers a solution for correctional facilities to assist individuals approaching parole with job placement. “If they don’t line up employment prior to release, recidivism rates will remain extremely high,” Toomey says.

The real power is people

Depth of industry experience and quality software are part of what make Geographic Solutions an Inc. Power Partner honoree. Toomey stresses that people truly set the company apart, though. “Most of our business analysts and project managers have worked for a state or local entity. They bring their subject matter expertise with them,” he explains. Employees view clients as partners, rolling out software enhancements that reflect their true needs. “It’s important for us to work hand-in-hand with clients, because things change so rapidly in this environment,” Toomey explains.

Employee and client retention speak to the company’s leading role in its space—a quarter of its employees and more than 20 clients having been with the company for more than a decade. “We have 460 dedicated professionals committed to the idea of helping individuals find quality, good-paying jobs,” Toomey says.

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1 | Geoff Cook
CEO
NOOM

"I think the most effective feedback is specific and actionable. Point out a mistake they made, or a scenario where they could have done better, and make sure they know how to course-correct."

Cook's New York City-based wellness and weight-loss platform has twice made Inc.'s Best Workplaces list and the Inc. 5000 list.

2 | Kirin Sinha
Founder and CEO
ILLUMIX

"My three-part format to all feedback is: 1) Highlight an action; 2) emphasize its impact on the team, project, or company; and 3) provide alternative ways this might be handled."

Sinha's augmented reality company is based in San Francisco and raised an \$18 million Series A round last year.

3 | Seonghoon Woo
Co-founder, CEO, and chairman
AMOGY

"Feedback should be fun. We're talking about ideas, about how to get better, and it should be packaged that way. We're aiming for little marginal gains each day that compound over time into something, you know, quite large and amazing."

Woo's New York City-based Amogy, which works to scale ammonia as a renewable energy source, has raised more than \$200 million.

68%

OF RESPONDENTS TO A GLOBAL SURVEY SAY ONGOING COACHING AND FEEDBACK POSITIVELY AFFECT EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE.

Source: McKinsey

