



## THE TOTAL FEEDBACK PACKAGE

As supervisors, one of our biggest challenges is guiding and mentoring our people. Without doubt, feedback is our most critical tool, providing us with a broad mechanism that, when used properly, results in substantial gains on many levels. Unfortunately, we do not appropriately utilize this mechanism as often as required. In addition, we as supervisors often lack appropriate training and mentorship. As people, we often let personalities and emotion cloud our judgment.

There is no one silver bullet to solve our feedback dilemma. By dilemma, we're referring to the constant struggle to both seek and provide feedback appropriately. Supervisors and subordinates alike often miss the point of feedback. Feedback is far more than simply sitting down with a subordinate and running through some check boxes on a form. Feedback is about establishing a foundation of conduct and performance based on objective and measurable standards, identifying minimum expectations, and laying out individual and team goals. Moreover, feedback is an opportunity to readdress those same points over a period of time, to review a member's performance over that period, and to provide an opportunity to help a member correct course when necessary. The Feedback Package includes several documents and references to help supervisors provide better feedback. The package includes:

1. **Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) Worksheet:** This is the required feedback document. Use it as a tool and guide, but not as the feedback itself.
2. **Standards and Expectations:** Based on the Airman Comprehensive Assessment (and corresponding Performance Report), this serves as a template from which to detail minimum standards and expectations, as well as provide a detailed objective ratings ladder in each category. This is meant to be tailored to the section's specific needs.
3. **Performance Feedback Checklist:** Use this as an addition to the Airman Comprehensive Assessment. It details several specific areas of concern that should be discussed, at least in general terms, to make sure the subordinate understands overarching big picture expectations.
4. **Official Biography:** Every member should have a current official biography on hand. This actually helps a member better understand and appreciate his/her own career, especially seeing it all on one or two pieces of paper. Although members may not have an official photo, they can still have the narrative done.
5. **Personal Biography:** Use this to better understand members, where they come from, what drives them, the challenges they face, and where they truly want to go in their lives. Note the personal bio also includes completing the Jung Typology Test. This helps better understand members' respective personalities and how best to approach them.
6. **Air Force Benefits Fact Sheet:** This document outlines member benefits and provides sources for more information. This document should be provided prior to the feedback, and doesn't

require coverage during the actual initial feedback session unless the member inquires about specific concerns.

7. **Feedback Tracker:** This memorandum for record should be used when a formal feedback RIP is not generated or readily available. It should be signed by both the supervisor and subordinate, and filed in the member's PIF.
8. **AFI 1-1, Air Force Standards:** Members should be aware of what the Air Force expects of every one of its Airmen in terms of maintaining and promoting a positive environment, understanding Air Force culture, and presenting one's self in a professional manner.
9. **AFI 36-2618, Enlisted Force Structure:** The "little brown book." Members should be aware of what the Air Force expects from each of them based on their respective ranks and positions.
10. **America's Air Force: A Profession of Arms:** The "little blue book." Members should be aware of more than the Core Values themselves. They should be aware of the integral parts from which our Core Values are based.
11. **Airman Self-Assessment Survey:** This short survey mirrors key components of the ACA. It provides members an opportunity to evaluate their own performance from their point of view and should be done as part of the midterm feedback. This then serves as a great tool to help supervisors better communicate with subordinates and separate perception and reality.
12. **Career Development Guide:** This two-page document provides an overview of the different factors that go into career development and progression, including occupational training, PME and fitness, assignments, education, and community involvement. It also illustrates the relationship between degrees of effort and likelihood of promotion.
13. **SNCO Worksheet:** Have SNCOs and TSgts fill this out. Every wing has a similar sheet that is used to help identify stand out performers. This helps to give the supervisor an idea of the member's accomplishments, as well as provide a potential mentorship roadmap.

As an introduction, all members should read *Understanding and Mastering Formal Feedback*. Beyond this, everyone should understand the feedback loop:



**Establish Baseline:** The feedback entry point. Here, supervisors build the foundation. As part of the **Initial Feedback**, supervisors should establish clear individual and team standards and expectations, discuss goals, and provide a roadmap for the way ahead. Everything should be objective, crystal clear and on point with mission requirements. In addition to using the Airman Comprehensive Assessment as a guide, supervisors should utilize Feedback Package tools to assist

fleshing out a more realistic, well-rounded initial feedback:

- a. AF Form 931, *Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) Worksheet*
- b. Standards and Expectations
- c. Performance Feedback Checklist
- d. Personal Biography
- e. Air Force Benefits Fact Sheet
- f. Feedback Tracker MFR
- g. AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards*
- h. AFI 36-2618, *Enlisted Force Structure* (“little brown book”)

- i. America's Air Force: Profession of Arms (new "little blue book")
- j. SNCO Worksheet (if applicable)



## Observe

**Observe:** Throughout the period, supervisors should monitor and interact with their subordinates. Time and circumstances may limit this interaction, but supervisors should work through this as much as possible. Work with the subordinate on particular tasks, target them for specific minor projects not only help them grow, but also help you better understand their capabilities.

- a. **Take notes.** It's sometimes difficult to recall key moments or particular pieces of information. Both the supervisor and member should consider carrying some sort of small notebook, take good notes and stay organized.
- b. **Get outside input.** Supervisors should seek and consider input from other people who work with the subordinate, especially in circumstances that force a physical or business separation between the subordinate and supervisor. Keep in mind some people may have their own issues or perceptions based on personal biases; consider their input carefully and weigh it appropriately.
- c. **Correct on the spot.** During observation, supervisors may not a discrepancy that should be addressed immediately. Make the correction on the spot; don't wait for a formal feedback session. In doing so, make sure you approach the situation professionally. Understand your surroundings and who is watching, because HOW you correct goes a long way to how those getting corrected appropriately respond and also sends a message to others who might be watching.



## Review

**Review:** Conduct a midterm feedback. Both the supervisor and subordinate know when the middle of the reporting period occurs and should plan accordingly. Both should complete some prep work to keep things running smoothly. This should not be a rushed event; it should be well-planned and thought out. Historically, we've taken no more than 60 minutes to conduct feedback. In reality, the process takes longer, especially when done correctly and thoroughly. Don't be surprised if the process takes two hours. Plan for it, and don't worry about the time. The feedback is too important.

- a. **Print the ACA:** Rather than trying to type notes into the form and distract from the feedback, print the ACA and write the notes on the form itself. Once the feedback is complete, simply transcribe your notes to the electronic ACA and forward to the member for review/signature.
- b. **Conduct Self Assessment:** The supervisor should provide this to the member prior to the feedback. Have the member perform the self assessment. Make it clear to the member to be honest with him or herself. At the same time, the supervisor should perform the same assessment on the member. Again, be honest. Take a moment to compare notes. This should drive clear discussion during the feedback session to better align both perspectives.

- c. **Be brutally honest:** Do not sugar coat anything. A supervisor should make every attempt to be positive, but conservative. Telling a member “you’re doing great!” then following up with less than a great performance report does nothing to help the member grow. Regardless of how great the member might be, there’s always room to grow. Highlight those areas where the member can improve, as well as new areas the member might be able to make an impact.
- d. **Review standards and expectations:** refer back to the standards and expectations established in the initial feedback. Speak to how well the member is meeting those.
- e. **Review Performance Feedback Checklist:** Use this to re-emphasize items as necessary.
- f. **Review goals:** Supervisors should have worked with members to establish goals in the initial feedback session, based on supervisory expectations and guidance, as well as subordinate desires. Where does the member stand? Has the member made progress? Is it time to reevaluate?

### Continue Observing

**Continue Observation:** Following formal feedback, supervisors continue monitoring and interacting with their subordinates. As previously stated, time and circumstances may limit this interaction, but supervisors should work through this as much as possible. Personal observation is as good an indicator as any as to how the member performs.

- a. **Take notes.** It’s sometimes difficult to recall key moments or particular pieces of information. Both the supervisor and member should consider carrying some sort of small notebook, take good notes and stay organized.
- b. **Get outside input.** Supervisors should seek and consider input from other people who work with the subordinate, especially in circumstances that force a physical or business separation between the subordinate and supervisor. Keep in mind some people may have their own issues or perceptions based on personal biases; consider their input carefully and weigh it appropriately.
- c. **Correct on the spot.** During observation, supervisors may note a discrepancy that should be addressed immediately. Make the correction on the spot; don’t wait for a formal feedback session. As before, make sure you approach the situation professionally.

### Report

**Report:** At the end of the rating period, a supervisor has an opportunity to tell his subordinate’s story. The performance report will follow the member throughout that member’s career. As such, it should be a well thought out, honest assessment of how the member performed in his/her given role over the course of that particular rating period.

- a. **Start early:** Planning makes a big difference. Deadlines will vary depending on the rank of the subordinate. Be familiar with the deadline and plan accordingly.
- b. **Get member input:** Nobody knows the member better than the member himself. Get input from the member. If done appropriately throughout the period, this will also serve as an

- opportunity to mentor the member on bullet writing. The member should NOT write his own performance report. But the member has a HUGE impact on the content.
- c. **Review Airman Comprehensive Assessments:** How well did the subordinate operate within the framework of these formal feedback sessions?
  - d. **Review Standards and Expectations:** How well did the subordinate meet standards and expectations?
  - e. **Get outside input:** Especially in those situations where a supervisor may not have day-to-day oversight, it's critical to consider input from those closer to the subordinate's daily work.
  - f. **Be consistent:** Supervisors must separate objectivity and feeling. A supervisor may not like the member, but he may be the best Airman around. Conversely, a supervisor may really like the member, but he may not be the sharpest Airman around. Ultimately, a supervisor has to rate each member based on objective standards, not personal feelings. Simply remove emotion from the equation to produce the most objective and honest report possible.
  - g. **Don't surprise:** Given supervisor interaction and feedbacks with the member, the performance report should come as no surprise. With great feedback, follow-up, and both a member and supervisor willing to work together to succeed, performance report results should be clear before the member ever sees the final product.
  - h. **Self assess:** Given the completed performance report, it's important to consider the supervisor's role in how the subordinate performed. As such, a supervisor should ask himself a few questions:
    - i. How did my performance as a supervisor impact my subordinate's performance?
    - ii. Given the result, could I have done more to help my subordinate?
    - iii. Is this a fair and honest representation of the member's performance over the reporting period?
    - iv. If I did not perform well as a supervisor, should I make any adjustments to the performance report to reflect this?

Once the performance report is complete, the supervisor and subordinate have gone full circle. Return to re-establishing the baseline. What, if anything, has changed with the section, the mission, the member, the member's goals, etc? What have both the supervisor and member learned over the course of the last period? What, if anything, do we need to adjust?

## APPENDIX 1. FEEDBACK PACKAGE DOCUMENTS

ITEM	INITIAL	MIDTERM	FOLLOW-UP	NOTES
<b>AF Form 931, Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) Worksheet</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Follow AFI 36-2406 guidance
<b>Standards and Expectations</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Tailor to meet your needs
<b>Performance Feedback Checklist</b>	Yes	As needed	As needed	Use as necessary
<b>Personal Biography</b>	Yes	As needed	As needed	Provide prior to feedback
<b>Official Biography</b>	As needed	As needed	As needed	Keep current; get official photo when possible
<b>Career Development Guide</b>	Yes	As needed	As needed	Provide prior to feedback
<b>Airman Self-Assessment Survey</b>	No	Yes	As needed	Provide prior to feedback
<b>Air Force Benefits Fact Sheet</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Provide prior to feedback
<b>AFI 1-1, <i>Air Force Standards</i></b>	Yes	As needed	As needed	Make sure member has copy of or access via <a href="http://www.e-publishing.af.mil">www.e-publishing.af.mil</a>
<b>AFI 36-2618, <i>Enlisted Force Structure</i></b>	Yes	As needed	As needed	Make sure member has copy of “Little Brown Book” or access via <a href="http://www.e-publishing.af.mil">www.e-publishing.af.mil</a>
<b>America’s Air Force: Profession of Arms</b>	Yes	As needed	As needed	Make sure member has copy of the “Little Blue Book” Shortcut is on standard desktops
<b>SNCO Worksheet</b>	Yes	N/A	N/A	Use for TSgts and above
<b>Feedback Tracker</b>	As needed	As needed	As needed	If no RIP supplied/available

## APPENDIX 2. UNDERSTANDING AND MASTERING FORMAL FEEDBACK

### 1. UNDERSTAND WHY ONE CONDUCTS FORMAL FEEDBACK.

While we could focus on textbook answers, it all boils down to this simple truth: we conduct formal feedback to relay expectations, develop goals, understand our people, and keep them on track. We could do better relaying the "why" of formal feedback to our people at large. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact the vast majority of our people WANT to do well; they simply lack proper guidance and direction. We MUST provide that direction and set the example.

### 2. UNDERSTAND WHEN TO CONDUCT FORMAL FEEDBACK.

Although it's common knowledge we conduct initial and midterm feedbacks, the terms "initial" and "midterm" often aren't clear to people (both supervisors and subordinates) because we overlook two key pieces of information: who actually supervises whom, and when did supervision actually start? We as leaders owe it to our people to make sure (a) everyone is aware of who supervises whom, (b) validating with the PAF that rater-subordinate relationships are correctly documented, (c) ensuring people are aware of when initial and midterm feedbacks are due, and (d) educating people that a situation may call for formal feedback beyond an "initial" or "midterm" session. While it is absolutely a member responsibility to know when he/she is due feedback, if we as leaders don't do our job to educate our people and ensure supervisory chains are clearly defined and documented, we set both the member and the unit up for failure.

### 3. UNDERSTAND WHO CONDUCTS FORMAL FEEDBACK.

We make every effort to submit Change of Rater (COR) or Personnel Action Change (PAC) forms, but often (a) forget to inform the member of the change, (b) fail to educate the section on who supervises whom within the section, or (c) fail to follow-up to ensure the COR/PAC was processed appropriately. All too often, we assume a system works. As leaders, we have a responsibility to trust but verify.

### 4. UNDERSTAND WHAT TO INCLUDE IN FORMAL FEEDBACK.

It's commonplace for supervisors to begin and end feedback with the form itself. We get so caught up in addressing the form, we fail to consider the form is not all-encompassing and is, in fact, simply a tool to guide and document the process. We have to think beyond the form and consider some key things that we need to impart on, or reemphasize with, our subordinates. This could include many things, from understanding the unit's mission and vision to hammering home a zero tolerance policy, from mentioning career progression and professional development opportunities to discussing potential stressors and outlets. Most importantly, we **MUST BE BRUTALLY HONEST** with our subordinates and ourselves. If that person is NOT "Meeting most, if not all expectations," then indicate that on the form and tell him/her during the feedback!

### 5. UNDERSTAND HOW TO CONDUCT FORMAL FEEDBACK.

Learning how to prepare for and conduct a formal feedback session is both an art and science. While we can teach the mechanics, ultimately it's up to the individual to develop his/her own style. What can we do? As leaders, we owe it to our people to teach them how to approach and conduct the process. While we want to limit things to an hour, how can we do that and convey all we need to in such a short period, while simultaneously provide for two-way communication throughout the process? In a word: planning.



For example, as preparation for the initial feedback, we can (a) provide the member with tools and references prior to the actual feedback (a la the Air Force Benefits Fact Sheet or some basic expectations/requirements we cover with all personnel within or sphere of influence/span of control) to give us more time to discuss other things during the feedback itself, and (b) actually focus on the feedback by picking an appropriate location to remove as many distracters as possible, including potentially leaving the duty section.

As preparation for the midterm feedback, we can (a) provide the member with a copy of the initial feedback as a reference and (b) any other tools and references as we did with the initial feedback.

**Helpful hints:**

- a. Observe performance and keep notes
- b. Schedule the time and place
- c. Set the agenda
- d. Choose the best approach
- e. Avoid pitfalls
- f. Conduct the feedback session
  - i. Open the session
  - ii. Identify the purpose and discuss topics
  - iii. Develop and implement a course of action
  - iv. Summarize
- g. Follow-up and monitor

**6. UNDERSTAND FORMAL FEEDBACK DOES NOT END WHEN THE SESSION CLOSSES.**

As leaders, we owe it to our people to routinely follow up to (a) ensure the member understood the direction, (b) ensure the member maintains the correct course, and (c) make minor corrections or adjustments via an informal feedback process as necessary.

**7. UNDERSTAND WHAT TO DO IF/WHEN YOU WANT FORMAL FEEDBACK.**

Too often, we depend on RIPs from the PAF or a supervisor to tell us a feedback is due. This is backwards thinking that places the onus on the system. As Airmen, we are responsible for seeking feedback. In fact, we should demand it! How do we do it?

- a. **First, we must understand the feedback process;** the what, when and why, as spelled out above. We must know our respective supervisors, and actively communicate with them.
- b. **Second, we must know when feedbacks are due:**
  - i. **Initial:** within 60 days of supervision
  - ii. **Midterm:** midway between the start and end of the reporting period. This is 180 days after the last EPR closed out.
  - iii. **Follow-up:** within 60 days of the closeout of the last EPR
  - iv. Reference AFI 36-2406 chapter 2 for other specifics.
- c. **Third, you need to request feedback from your supervisor.**
  - i. **Scheduled formal feedback (initial, midterm, follow-up):** If your supervisor hasn't made contact with you first, simply remind her/him.
  - ii. **Other formal feedback requests:** If you have not received formal feedback within the last 60 days, you may request formal feedback.
  - iii. **Making the request:**

1. Email, with read receipt, or memorandum for record. Allow 3 duty days for a response.
2. Follow-up email, with read receipt, if no reply within 3 duty days. Allow another 2 duty days for a response.
3. Notify supervisor's rater if your supervisor has not responded to the follow-up email within 2 duty days. Allow another 2 duty days for a response.
4. Notify the First Sergeant if neither the supervisor nor his/her rater responds within 7 duty days of the initial request.
5. Note times may vary based on chain of command availability. For example, if your supervisor is TDY, deployed or on leave, he/she may not be able to respond within the allotted time.

**8. UNDERSTAND WHO HAS ACCESS TO THE COMPLETED FEEDBACK**

- a. The signed original of the Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) to the member and keeps a copy for his/her records.
- b. For **SNCOs**, the Additional Rater, Squadron Commander, First Sergeant, Group Commander, Group Superintendent, Wing Commander, and Wing Command Chief are authorized access to the ACA
- c. For **TSgts and below**, the Additional Rater, Squadron Commander, First Sergeant, Group Commander, Group Superintendent, Wing Commander, and Wing Command Chief are authorized access to the ACA

**9. UNDERSTAND WE RECEIVE FEEDBACK EVERYDAY!**

We get so caught up in the term feedback and forget a simple truth: whether we realize it or not, we receive feedback every day in our interactions with subordinates, peers, supervisors, leaders, and others. While it may not be "formal" or on an official document, it is no less valuable!

**Final Thoughts:**

If we spend as much time and effort on the feedback process as we do on the EPR process, we would all be that much better for it.

If we are to leave the Air Force better than we found it, we must absolutely do our best to train and prepare our replacements to take care of our most valuable resource!