

The Sandwich Method (or Sandwich Technique or Hamburger Method) is so named because the pieces of bread represent positive feedback/compliments while the meat of the sandwich (or innards if you're vegetarian) represents constructive criticism.

This method of sandwiching the constructive criticism between two compliments is an effective way to help improve/correct behavior.

The Sandwich Method

1) Slice of Bread 1: Start off with positive feedback (authentic praise of something they did recently)

Examples:

“By the way, John, I have to hand it to you on that deal you closed yesterday...that goes a long way towards helping us reach our goal.”

“Anne, I really appreciate you chipping in for Nicole this week while she was out of the office — that type of teamwork exemplifies the values I'm trying to instill at our company.”

2) The “Meat of the Matter”: Provide your constructive criticism

Be brief (yet clear and thorough) in your delivery of the meat of the matter — the criticism you want to share.



Ideally you are giving them constructive criticism on just one thing (at most two things)...I find criticism of 3 or more items is too much for a person to handle at one time.

Additionally, try to give them the criticism in the context of how it can help THEM reach their goals.

Examples:

“Jon, you’re so good at what you do that it’s hard to ever find suggestions on how you can improve. That said, I know you really want that promotion to Director of Sales. One skill you’re going to need in that position is analytics, and your weekly reports are currently pretty light on analytics. For you to earn that Director of Marketing spot, I recommend that you gain some mastery over analytics.”

“Anne, I know this is tough for you to hear, but you are perceived by some on the team as cocky. And I know that you mentioned that you wanted a transfer to Customer Service — well, we certainly don’t want them hearing that you have a reputation for cockiness. I recommend that you and I work together on making sure you’re not perceived as cocky.”

3) The 2nd Slice of Bread: End on a positive note

Ideas on how to end with positivity include

- You can simply reiterate the initial positive feedback/compliment you had given them.
- You can speak in general terms about how much progress they are making
- You can compliment them on their receptiveness to receiving constructive criticism.

Examples:

“Jon, that deal you closed was really important and I’m thrilled with the fact that you and I can have an open conversation about working harder on analytics.”

“Jon, I really admire your enthusiasm about developing yourself. You were already making headway and this analytics thing can be icing on the cake. I think it’s a huge benefit in you progressing towards the Director of Sales position you covet.”

“Anne, you’re really on the right track here. This cockiness thing is just a bump in the road and I’m looking forward to working on it with you.”

It should go without saying that all of your criticism (positive or negative) should be authentic and well thought out.

That’s the sandwich method...good luck with it!