



Giving and Receiving Feedback

When we analyse our response to feedback we can see that our brains are actually playing a trick on us by responding to feedback as a threat - when it should be considered a crucial opportunity to learn something. Even when feedback is offered with our best interests at heart, we tend to deflect it.

In doing so, we dismiss observations about our behaviour that can actually help us be more effective in critical areas of our work and lives. During this workbook we are going to rewire the way you think about feedback. Your business needs brave and fearless managers who know how to give and receive feedback, and this workbook is packed full of ideas to help you.

NAME



GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

How to use this workbook

Use this self-study workbook to help improve your ability to give and receive feedback.

It is designed to support the feedback skills and strategies explored in the Giving and Receiving Feedback e-learning course.

You can work through the entire course, or, because we know how busy life can be, you have the option to go straight to particular skills you'd like to work on.

Once you've completed the workbook we hope any feedback fears you might have had will be gone and you'll see feedback as the powerful tool that it is.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS?

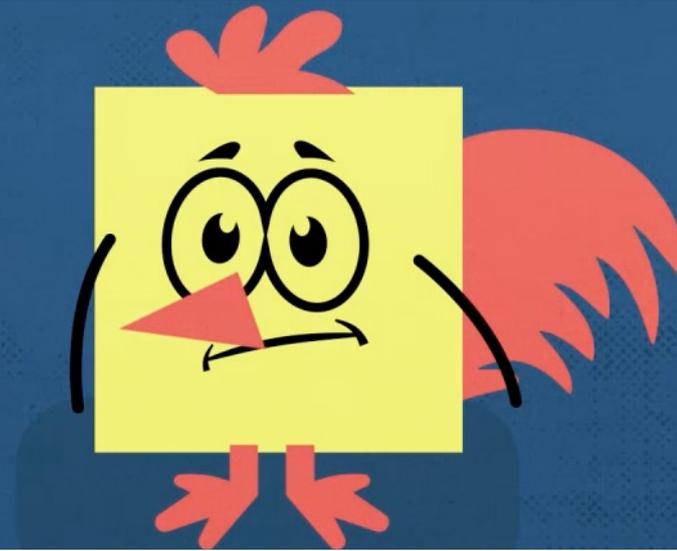
- Anyone who manages people and needs to provide ongoing feedback and support.
- Anyone who currently responds to feedback with defensiveness or avoidance.
- Anyone who avoids giving feedback because they are worried how other people will react.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. Perfect delivery – How to give feedback to others.
2. Feedback fights – 2 simple tricks to avoid getting into a feedback fight, and instead, tap into people's curiosity.
3. How to receive feedback – Discover why feedback is never a one-way street, and improve your ability to receive feedback in four easy to follow steps.

PERFECT DELIVERY

How to give feedback to others



Why do we find it so difficult to tell employees (and family and friends for that matter) that they are doing something wrong and need to change?

Most of us avoid feedback because we're worried about how the other person will react.

“What will I do if they become upset?”

“Or angry?”

“What if they get super-defensive and start blaming me?”

With all of these thoughts running through your head it is easy to convince yourself it is not that big a deal and maybe the behaviour will change on its own. It won't.

DON'T BE A FEEDBACK CHICKEN - YOU NEED TO BE BRAVE.

People will not magically change behaviours on their own. Without feedback, people will continue to make the same mistakes over and over again.

But we know giving feedback isn't easy - so here is a 5 step system you can use that both reduces the other person's defensiveness and makes the feedback actionable.

1. ASK FOR PERMISSION

A simple “Hey, have you got a minute for some quick feedback?” can help the person receiving the feedback be mentally ready for it.

2. BE SPECIFIC

To avoid coming across as judgemental you must use specific examples. “You’re rubbish at presentations” is not as helpful as “In the presentation yesterday, I noticed that you didn’t seem that confident, how can I help you improve?”

3. EXPLAIN THE IMPACT

Get to the point and explain the impact that resulted from the behaviour you’re addressing. Again, you need to be specific.

For example – saying “I noticed the customer became more irate when you said X” is much better than saying “You don’t know how to deal with customer complaints”.

Phrases like “it made me feel” – “I noticed that” and “I think that” are really tough to argue with and stop the feedback session developing into a debate.

4. USE SILENCE AND GIVE THEM TIME

This is a simple step – once you’ve delivered the feedback give the person time to think through what you’ve said, reflect on it and react to it.

5. SUGGEST HOW TO IMPROVE

Give one or two actionable suggestions that the other person can use to change their behaviour. People will appreciate that you’re helping them to improve.



TAKEAWAY

Invest some time getting comfortable and skilful at giving employees feedback.

People and behaviours do not magically change themselves.

Help people to succeed by letting them know what they need to do differently to improve.

FEEDBACK FIGHTS



Feedback is all around you. When you step on the scales in the morning, you get feedback about how much you weigh, and indirectly, about the behaviours that make your weight go up or down. You might not like the feedback, but you don't tend to argue with it, and accept what the scale is telling you. With people, we are far less accepting.

Typically, there are two ways people respond to feedback they don't like. See if you recognise these responses in your own behaviour.

NUMBER 1 - DISREGARD THE FEEDBACK.

We tell ourselves "yeah, whatever - what do you know?" or we discount the source of the feedback "well you're not perfect - who are you to judge my behaviour?"

NUMBER 2 - ARGUE.

We say things like "when I need advice I'll ask for it, I'm doing just fine without your feedback thank you very much".

Do the responses sound familiar? Try to think of the last time you got into a feedback fight.

Describe the scenario (e.g. my sister commented on how I was disciplining my child)

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What was your response?

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Do you think your response matches response 1 or 2? (Circle the response it most closely matches).

1 - Disregard the feedback

2 - Argue

How did you feel?

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What do you think the other person thought about your reaction?

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Now you've had time to reflect, would you respond differently?

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ANOTHER WAY

As a manager you need to tap into a third kind of response – curiosity.

Others see things about us that we can't see for ourselves. When people choose to be curious, feedback helps us learn how to be more effective. To tap into people's curiosity and avoid the fight response there are some common mistakes you need to avoid when delivering your feedback:

Start by Listening – open a feedback discussion by letting the other person know that you'd like to talk with them about something, and then invite them to share their point of view. This might sound like:

“Jane, I'd like to talk about the Project with you. What do you think has been going well, and not so well?”

Listening first will make the conversation much less adversarial, and will generally make the person better able to listen to you when you respond. The employee might even bring up the very issue you wanted to address – then it becomes more of a supportive, coaching conversation.

Don't be too vague – use specific examples, and connect behaviours to impact. If you're dealing with a disruptive employee don't say:

“I don't like your attitude”.

Because that's a recipe for an argument. Instead visualise what it is you don't like about the person's attitude, think of it like a mental recording of what happens. You might see them being disruptive in a meeting, or leaving early without permission. The things you visualise form the basis of your feedback. So the feedback might go something like:

“I've noticed you finished work early several times this week without permission”.

or

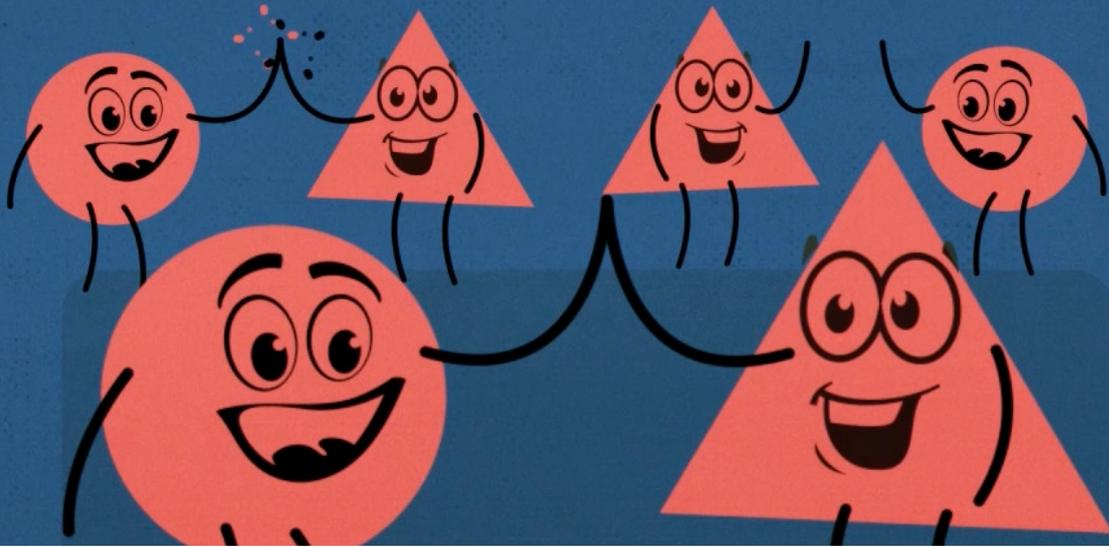
“In yesterday's meeting I thought you were very aggressive when responding to questions”

It's not easy for the employee to hear, but it's more specific than:

“You've got a bad attitude”.

Remember, feedback shouldn't avoid real problems. If there's an issue, don't be afraid to state it.

HOW TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK



It's important to remember that feedback isn't a one-way street. Employees should "manage up" and give leadership feedback as well. But this can be a very uncomfortable process. Let's face it, feedback, and more specifically criticism, hurts.

Sure, we all say we want feedback, but what we truly want is to be liked, maybe even loved, and that our team think we're awesome. And yet criticism, by its very definition, is our team letting us know that we're not the perfect manager and we still have some work to do. This can be a hard thing for our egos to hear.

That response is normal, but you mustn't let it get in the way of receiving the feedback, in fact, it's a good sign that you need it.

Keep these steps in mind next time you're on the receiving end of feedback:

1. FEEDBACK IS A GIFT

No matter how painful, think of feedback as a gift – you must treat the giver of feedback appropriately. So that's a big no to rolling your eyes, or slamming the door shut mid-sentence!

Instead, maintain good eye contact and keep your body language open. When the person has finished, summarise what you heard and use questions to clarify anything that is unclear.

2. SAY THANK YOU EVEN IF YOU DISAGREE

When you feel like you've been wrongly criticised – it's very tempting to go immediately on the attack. But don't. Even if you're right, and the feedback was wrong, defending yourself sends the signal to the giver that you are unreceptive. This can land you with the 'unapproachable' label in your team. Instead, say thank you.

3. LET IT SINK IN

Evaluate the feedback slowly. Think it over for a day or two. You might find your initial feelings towards the feedback change over time as you reflect on your behaviours. The next time you find yourself reacting to unwanted or unappreciated feedback, come back to it after your emotions have settled. Saying something like, “I appreciate your feedback. I’d like to give what you’ve said some real thought and get back to you,” and then adding, “Is there anything else I should know?” will demonstrate that you take what you’ve been told seriously and will ensure that there’s been nothing left unsaid.

4. CLOSE THE FEEDBACK LOOP

If you feel the criticism was justified and you are better off for it, don’t forget to close the loop and share your progress with the feedback giver.

TAKEAWAY

Whilst positive feedback feels good, it’s constructive criticism that aids personal and professional development. Whether it’s from your employees, a mentor, your boss, or even from family and friends, being receptive to feedback is essential.

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ACTIONABLE ADVICE

Hopefully, you're now thinking differently about giving and receiving feedback. But here's the thing, if you fail to spend a little time in advance thinking about what you'll do the next time someone delivers some unexpected criticism, all the good advice you've heard about how to react won't come immediately to mind. Unprepared, you're likely to be so caught up in the immediacy of the moment that you won't remember the simple steps we've covered.

So your takeaway action is simple - spend some time reflecting on how you'll give and receive feedback in future. Visualise the scenarios in your mind, and repeat them, refining your response each time. By thinking your actions through now, you'll be prepared in the heat of the moment.

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ACTION PLAN

KEY SKILLS (WHAT ARE THE KEY SKILLS YOU HAVE LEARNT DURING THIS COURSE)

WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IN THE WORKPLACE?

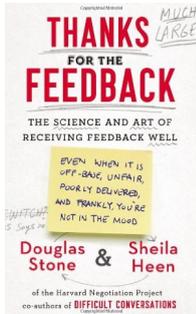
WHAT OBSTACLES MIGHT GET IN THE WAY OF YOU ACHIEVING THIS?

WHAT, OR WHO MAY HELP YOU OVERCOME THESE BARRIERS?



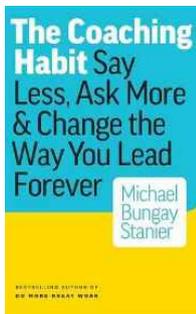
SUGGESTED READING

For those wanting to read more about how to give and receive feedback, there are some great reads available that the course authors would recommend:



THANKS FOR THE FEEDBACK

Douglas Stone & Sheila Heen



THE COACHING HABIT

Michael Bungay Stanier



WHAT DID YOU SAY?

Charles N. Seashore

This workbook was produced by:

