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Growth®**

Connecting People, Purpose & Productivity!

What Do You Think & Feel? The Art of Giving Feedback

- Marcia Hughes & James Terrell

“What is the shortest word in the English language that contains the letters: abcdef? Answer: feedback. Don't forget that feedback is one of the essential elements of good communication.”
www.thinkexist.com

Through 360 reviews for leaders, team surveys and coaching we have found that giving effective feedback is one the most likely actions to be missed even by the most effective leaders. There are many reasons given. Some say they're just too busy, other will say they just don't know how. No matter what the excuse, leaving effective feedback out means significant compromise to productivity and engagement. Feedback is at the heart of effective communication, of getting the job done well and being able to replicate that success and in building good relationships. It matters at all levels – between individuals, in teams and in every aspect of our lives.

If it's so important you'd think we'd be really good at it, right? Wrong! So what's the challenge? Giving effective feedback requires time, discipline, reflective capacity, courage and compassion. To give effective feedback we need to be disciplined to observe how something is done or communicated and then take the time to honestly communicate our observations while inviting, listening and responding to the thoughts and feelings of the others involved. It takes time and skill and sometimes those are in very short supply.

Feedback is defined as providing information and reflection on how something was accomplished and preferably it is designed to result in specific decisions about how to move forward. Feedback is by far best when it's a multi-party open communication. Thus it's not just boss to employee but a respectful, reciprocal conversation. If it's feedback at the team level, everyone is invited and encouraged to participate, and that means giving time for the more quiet deliberate thinkers to speak up as well.

One of us is coaching a client we'll call Jose, he is a new supervisor and eager to do a good job. Jose has many skills, but he hasn't ever been a supervisor. He is seeking to learn and to try different approaches. Unfortunately his immediate supervisor, the department manager, doesn't like to give feedback, he's happy to talk about the game last Sunday but isn't available to help Jose understand what to do when an employee is routinely late to work, or underperforming, or demonstrating any of the myriad of challenges that are a part of developing an effective workforce. The manager just won't have the conversation. We're able to give Jose feedback through coaching and help him take an in-depth look at viable strategies and that's very good. However, coaching doesn't last forever, and we're not in the environment and able to respond to all the nuances. One day Jose put it perfectly when he made a heartfelt simple statement, “I miss receiving feedback from my boss.” Jose wonders if



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he's doing a good job, craves help in prioritizing to meet his boss's and organization's goals and much more. He's luckier than most. He does receive regular coaching and has a mentor at a more senior level. What happens to all those employees who just operate in a vacuum? Imagine the loss of productivity!

3 R's and Emotional Intelligence for Teams and Individuals

Providing effective feedback is a skill that can be learned. It isn't a big mystery, yet its successful use occurs only when we intend to incorporate it as a part of our effective workplace. Key components are:

1) Do it!

Intend to provide feedback and specifically build in feedback opportunities. With your team you can set aside an hour a month, or time at the end of each project, or set some other specific time that you'll conduct deliberate review of how things are going. Invite comments from everyone.

2) 3 R's roll you to success

Respect - make it safe, but not so sanitized that it is pointless by being so careful that nothing is said. Do be safe in the sense that there are no personal putdowns. Don't seek to make some people better than others, but do look for strategies that are more successful. Make the point of the conversation an open, interesting learning conversation. Feedback should never be for retribution or it will be seriously counterproductive.

Reflect - think about what you saw and felt when the communication or event occurred. Then talk about both thoughts and feelings.

Reciprocal - this is a two-way conversation. Even if it's initiated by the boss for the employee, it's important for the boss to listen and respond to the ideas and questions of the employee. Making feedback reciprocal at team meetings requires attention and possibly some facilitation to be sure that everyone's ideas are heard. Balance the thoughts of the extroverts with those of the introverts.

3) Keep it alive – establish next applications

Start the feedback with the explicit intention that this discussion is being held in order to recognize the efforts that were made and to move toward more success in the future. The past is over and literally can't be changed. However, the people who participated in the conversation or event likely have feelings about how it went, this is a great chance to reflect on those feelings and then decide how to approach similar situations in the future. People have the most energy and creativity when we are moving toward what we want rather than moving away from or against what we don't want. Together develop positive next steps that will be applied.



4) Emotional Intelligence skills matter for teams

At the team level each of the seven skills reviewed in the [TESI](#)[®] (Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey[®]) support effective feedback. In particular teams do the best at feedback when they apply:

Emotional Awareness – take time to notice and respond to one another including the non-verbal communication.

Communication – check out whether the sender of the communication sent the same message that was received. Use active listening and check out if you're on the same page.

Conflict resolution – conflict can be a creative stimulus that supports team growth when feedback is used as a part of effective communication with respectful feedback.

5) Emotional Intelligence skills matter for individuals

We work with the [EQi](#) and EQ 360 and find that all 16 skills support effective feedback. Some of the most essential skills are:

Self Regard – experience self confidence so that you recognize your own strength and feel safe in communicating fully with others. Too much self regard leads to narcissism and then the person is not likely to listen to others. Any skill when over used becomes a detriment.

Emotional Expression – as a part of feedback it's important to include how you feel and to ask about the others feelings. This builds trust and motivation. For example, "I felt awkward when Abigail couldn't remember the results from the report, and then I was so proud when Sandee stepped in with a compliment to Abigail's work and reviewed the report. Now that's teamwork!"

Empathy – using empathy allows you to demonstrate to the other person that you care about his/ her best interest and the feedback is given with this positive intention. That makes your responses much more likely to be listened to and acted upon.

Impulse Control – be in charge of your effective engagement. Don't talk over others or talk so much they can't get a word in edgewise. However, if you control yourself to the point of not participating, you've lost your chance to be helpful. Find a good balance.

Problem Solving – notice both the emotional and factual data that's a part of the feedback conversation. Incorporate both for a thorough and inclusive result.

Remember to be intentional about giving and receiving timely feedback!