

GIVING FEEDBACK - EXERCISE

Reconnecting to your experience

- Can you remember a time when you were given feedback that wasn't helpful? Why was it unhelpful?
- What do you know already about feedback? Collect your answers on a flipchart.
- What personal assumptions on expressing appreciation do you hold?
- How often do you praise team members for a job well done?
- What excuses do you tell yourself when you withhold giving praise? (personal discomfort, fear of embarrassing others, lack of time,...).
- How can you get around these excuses? How can you create in your team an environment in which praise really means something?

Practicing feedback

Get into a pair with someone NOT in your usual group. Each of you is going to think of a situation (recent, either for you as a manager or in your workplace) where some unwelcome feedback needs to be given. Explain the situation to the other person (they will be the one giving you the feedback). You will have 10 minutes each this time. Rotate after 10 minutes.

Reflecting and gathering insights

- How did you feel RECEIVING this feedback?
- How would you have reacted to the feedback giver in a real setting?
- What would you have done afterwards in response to the feedback?
- What would have helped you receive the feedback in a more effective way?

Gather your insights in your learning journal.

Applying Feedback Models

Read the input and handout and repeat the above exercise using the feedback model that you find the most appropriate.

- Go back to your notes and write down learning and insights following this exercise.
- What changed in your approach? Share with a partner.

ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

Using The Four Parts of Speech (in the Practices and Exercises section), prepare your feedback by **Framing** the context, **Advocating** or expressing your point, perspective, suggestion, etc.; **Illustrating** using examples, your reasoning, your assumptions; **Inquiring** as to the other person's view, interest, agreement

GIVING FEEDBACK- INPUT

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership and coaching requires strong feedback skills to acknowledge team members' achievements and inform them when they need to adjust their course. Feedback is not reduced to a downward communication from managers to employees nor limited to specific performance reviews. On the contrary it offers a wide variety of opportunities that can improve individual and team productivity and build morale. Just like listening, effective feedback requires practice.

MAIN IDEAS

There are various opportunities for feedback as well as many methods for doing it.

Opportunities for feedback	Various Feedback Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual accomplishment• Successful project completion• Project in progress• Project failure• Organizational restructuring or project change• Performance review• Complaints or mistakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One-on-one (individual) feedback• Team feedback• 360 Feedback• Positive Feedback: Giving praise• Developmental Feedback• Corrective Feedback <p><i>Each of the above ways can be done through various mediums: in person (informally or during a formal meeting), by email, by a personalized written note, by an official memo,</i></p>

The handout builds on the above list and provides an overview of the different types of feedback, their advantages as well as additional exercises, reflections and helpful keys to giving effective feedback. Feel free to build on what is suggested and add other methods for acknowledging performance.

Adapting feedback to maximize growth

Bringing a discerning attitude to feedback is important to ensure that it is balanced and adapted to the individual and situation at hand. When all that team members receive is negative criticism, they may feel stressed out or disheartened. Similarly, when most feedback is positive or sugar-coated, people may develop an unrealistic view of their capacities or fall in complacency. By being compassionate, sincere and direct leaders can develop people on their teams (both in terms of capacities and skills) and strengthen their confidence and motivation at the same time.

More specifically, feedback should be adapted to how each individual can best receive it, learn from it, and improve as a result. As highlighted before, adults learn and make meaning of their reality in qualitatively different ways.

Instrumental knowers for example tend to be rule-based and often see things in black and white (“Just tell me clearly what I need to do”). They want to know concretely what they did wrong and what they did right and receive clear instructions about the next steps. As a growing opportunity, they may need to develop their flexibility and capacity for reflection beyond “right” solutions. Consequently it is important to acknowledge and attend to these nuances when sharing feedback to adults with this way of knowing.

Similarly, it may be helpful to keep in mind that critical feedback can be difficult for socializing knowers, who are other-oriented and may tend to harshly internalize any kind of negative remark as a threat to their self (Ellie Drago-Severson, 2014). For more on the various ways of knowing refer to Module 1.

Seeking and Receiving Feedback

As well as providing feedback to others, and in the spirit of mutuality, leaders are invited to seek their team members’ opinion about their strengths and potential.

When approaching others, keep in mind the below to maximize the value from feedback that is shared:

- Describe your desire to seek feedback clearly and simply to others. You can ask for specific feedback about your best behaviors and how you can improve.
- Try to be aware of and manage any defensiveness you may feel. It is important to create a safe environment for others. Resistance and justifications make team members reluctant to give feedback, especially if you are in an authority position.
- Actively listen to what they have to say. Try to keep a positive body language and expressions that will encourage them to genuinely share. Summarise and reflect what you hear. (Refer to the worksheet on Listening in the Practices and Exercises section)
- Ask for examples or clarification to make sure you understand what others are saying.
- Remember that feedback is a gift that others give to you as they share how your interventions are seen in the world. It is not a judgment about who you are but rather an interpretation of how others see you through their own lenses and experiences. It is helpful data that you can use to improve your exercise of leadership.
- Thank others for their sharing and take some personal time to reflect on what to do with the feedback.
- Share the feedback received with your support structure (trusted colleagues, mentor, coach). Reflect with them how you can incorporate these insights in your work habits and how they can hold you accountable.

IGNATIAN NOTE (Adapt, reformulate, develop)

Praise in the Ignatian Tradition

- “Praise is to human development and maturation what the sun is to the growth of plants. The plant does not live on dew and water alone. It needs them. But it also needs light and sun and warmth. Human beings blossom when recognition and praise are bestowed on them. Persons discover strengths, talents, possibilities in themselves that they never dared to dream of. “ Willi Lambert
- Words of praise are important not only for individual persons, but also for a whole community, for the atmosphere in a society, for the life of the church. This is very clear in Ignatius’ rules for “thinking with the church”. We find the formula “we should praise..” repeated ten times. Certainly, constructive criticism can be an important factor for growth, but when everyone does nothing but criticize, then nothing, and no one, can stand up under it. (Lambert)
- “The human being is created to praise...” - principle and foundation. Made to praise God, but surely other human beings as well, the creature of the God who has made all things good. A reflection of God’s making resides in every human being. And how can human beings really praise God when they constantly criticize God’s creatures? (Lambert)

Growing sensitivity to people and circumstances

- Add short note on the importance of adapting to people’s context and circumstances. Add quotes from Memorial about Ignatius adaptability.
- Being sensitive when giving feedback and speaking to others:
- Ignatius had to become acquainted with courtly speech and courtly etiquette. He came to master the art of speech. Example in Memoriale (MEVI, no 107) dealing with persons in different ways, on different levels and altered his use of words. (page 127 in willi lambert)
- “How sensitive am I to the language to be used in the interplay of encounter? How consciously do I handle the tool of language?”

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Understanding the importance of feedback in communication and leadership
2. Developing the skill of giving feedback
3. Increasing awareness of the effect of giving and receiving feedback

GIVING FEEDBACK - HANDOUT

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

An environment where feedback always comes with a “but” is a missed opportunity. Developmental and corrective feedback are best absorbed in teams where there is already a culture of noticing and responding to performance. Positive feedback can increase trust, be a powerful team-building tool, and reduce stress levels in new and under-confident staff.

There are 3 main types of positive feedback:

- **Positive feedback - “You did...”**
Highlight specific work and actions that were done well. Particularly useful with people who struggle to accept praise. Concrete evidence is presented, and the detail of their contribution valued, but without adjectives and gushing.
- **Acknowledging- “You are...”**
Recognise the person’s qualities demonstrated in a specific situation. It’s powerful to receive affirmation of qualities (one’s being), not just actions (one’s doing).
- **Championing- “You can...”**
Affirm their potential. Most useful with under-confident people, or those operating at a suddenly increased level of skill of responsibility.

Keys for effectively giving positive feedback

- **Don’t delay it** until the next performance review. Positive feedback is much more effective when it comes directly after a behavior worth praising.
- **Be genuine and sincere.** An authentic appreciation is not to be confused with daily politeness or with exaggerated expressions and superlatives (in both cases, we tend to be inattentive to feedback because it seems like routine, or dismiss it because it sounds not real).
- **Be specific.** Stay away from generalities in favor of acknowledging how a particular behavior positively impacted the organization, the project or people.
- **Keep it positive.** Ending praise with a note of criticism dilutes the positive reinforcement.
- **Include it in your daily routine.** Making time to recognize others is not always easy with the hectic pace of leadership work. Try to be intentional about praising team members by making the practice part of your work habits.

□ It is important to be aware of our own natural understanding of praise. Although we may know that an authentic appreciation of others for their contributions is a crucial element in strengthening the relationship and bringing the best out in people, we often remain reluctant to give praise. Similarly it helps to be aware of one’s default response to praise. When people receiving praise are ambivalent about it or uncomfortable with it, it messes with their Ladder of Inference (refer to Module 1) as they may interpret it in a counterproductive manner.

DEVELOPMENTAL FEEDBACK

Developmental feedback models balance affirmation of good work with suggestions for improvement. It is very similar to the “sandwich model”, but without the down-side of waiting for the “BUT”. These models root themselves in people’s self-awareness first, and build on it.

There are 4 stages for developmental feedback:

- **Self-analysis** (staff member says what went well, and what they would improve for next time)
- Manager **confirms** things done well and adds in extra strengths they observed
- Give suggestions on **areas to improve** (only one if you are building confidence; maybe more with a secure/ self-aware person. Example: “and to make your next step, how about...?”)
- **Finish with a positive.** Encourage or sum up the good points (no development points to finish)

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Corrective Feedback Models are useful where underperformance or destructive behaviour are having an impact. Listening is a vital stage here, both to understand the source of the problem and to empower the receiver with the chance to help design the solution. This 6-stage model helps to defuse defensiveness:

- Share evidence (objective and factual)
- Ask ‘why?’
- Listen and check you have understood fully
- Explain your concern and the impact/ consequences
- Ask for their solutions
- Summarise, agree actions, and write up clearly

360° FEEDBACK

This is where anybody can give anybody feedback - peers to peers, upwards to their manager, volunteers to paid staff... It has some distinctive advantages- for the person collecting it, for relationships of trust in teams, and for leaders.

- 360° feedback generally asks approximately 5-8 peers to tell a staff member about 3 strengths and 1 development area, **giving specific examples.**
- It helps the requester grow in self-awareness, and articulates their strengths and their value to the team as well as their development areas.
- Relationships of trust and mutuality grow as a team shares positive and developmental feedback, knowing they will be receiving it in their turn.
- The leader gets additional perspectives on their team’s work, including extra insights on their strengths.

The language of feedback

Receiving developmental and corrective feedback often feels uncomfortable or even threatening. When planning to give feedback, it is essential to plan not just what is said, and how it is said, but what outcome you need. The goal is to share feedback in a way that makes it clear and fair, so that it is fully accepted by the person receiving it. If the person feels attacked or unrespected, the feedback will not have the outcome you need.

When giving feedback, it is not your responsibility to make it pleasant, but it is important to contextualise it in a way that readies the person as much as possible to hear and absorb it.

Asking the person you are giving feedback to for their opinion and their solutions in advance is not just a soft skill habit:

- It can be very revealing of what the person already knows and doesn't know.
- Even a defensive response gives many insights into what the person believes the problem to be, and how self-aware they are.
- It can also reduce the weight of feedback. If you have three main concerns (e.g. poor timekeeping, small errors in written work, lack of participation in meetings), by asking first, you may find the staff member is already aware of some aspects and you do not need to be devastatingly thorough. You can instead affirm their self-awareness and agree that they are right, which helps to contextualise even difficult feedback into a constructive environment.

The same applies for inviting a person's own solutions:

- First, you get insight into their problem solving ability.
- Second, you give them a chance to choose solutions they welcome rather than solutions they don't. This steadily builds a culture of more shared responsibility and less top-down expectations (which strengthens a team and builds leadership skill).
- Third, you can offer only the solutions they have not already thought of, which again frees you from having to be comprehensive.
- Perhaps most importantly, they are more likely to own the development plan you put in place- if they offered good solutions, they will have shared the design of the plan; if they didn't offer solutions they have no grounds for rejecting whatever you design (for full disciplinary or competency procedures, this can be important).

General DO's for giving feedback

- Let people know you would like to give feedback before giving it.
- Prepare well.
- Choose a good time – never give feedback when you are angry, and set aside enough time.
- Choose a good place- feedback is often sensitive to the receiver, even when the giver feels it doesn't need to be.
- Before you share, think what the other person is likely to do with your feedback.
- Offer feedback on what others do, not on who they are. Describe don't judge.
- Say what you saw, know and felt - Don't make assumptions. Remember the Ladder of Inference.

- Be specific. Try not to use impressions (“you seem...”) or generalisations (“you always...”, “you never”)
- Focus on behaviours which can be changed.
- Focus on aspects which are the most important and don’t try to cover too much.
- Ask the receiver questions – feedback is a two-way dialogue. Allow them to respond and leave them with some choices.
- Check that the receiver has been heard and understood correctly your point.
- Ask if they have ever been given a similar feedback before.
- Ask the receiver to suggest what they intend to do differently as a result of the feedback.
- Include comments on what the individual did well, as well as on areas for improvement.
- Observe others’ reactions, and respect their limits. Respect their feelings, opinions and beliefs.
- Don’t use “but” to begin developmental feedback: use “and” (e.g. “And to take it to the next level...”, “and to strengthen this even further...”, “and to reach your full potential...” etc).

GIVING FEEDBACK - RESOURCES

GENERAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
Tell me so I can hear: A developmental approach to feedback and collaboration	Ellie Drago-Severson and Jessica Blum-DeStefano	The Learning Professional	2014	Link
Make Getting Feedback Less Stressful	Ed Batista	Harvard Business Review	2015	Link
When to Give Feedback in a Group and When to Do It One-on-One	Roger Schwarz	Harvard Business Review	2015	Link
Ten Common Mistakes in Giving Feedback	Center for Creative Leadership	Center for Creative Leadership	2014	Link
Motivation: Try Praise	Bob Nelson	Inc.	1996	Link
The Art of Giving Praise	Steven DeMaio	Harvard Business Review	2009	Link
A Bit of Perfume: Giving Praise	Bruna Martinuzzi	Mindtools	2016	Link
How to Give Tough Feedback That Helps People Grow	Monique Valcour	Harvard Business Review	2015	Link
How to Tell a Coworker They're Annoying You	Caroline Webb	Harvard Business Review	2016	Link
Encouraging the Heart: A Leader's Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others	Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner	Jossey-Bass	2003	Link

IGNATIAN RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
Directions for Communication	Willi Lambert SJ	The Crossroad Publishing Company	2000	Link

QUOTES

- We all need people who will give us feedback. That’s how we improve. - Bill Gates
- Criticism, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish a man’s growth without destroying his roots. - Frank A. Clark
- All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual. - Albert Einstein
- Make feedback normal. Not a performance review. - Ed Batista
- Praise is to human development and maturation what the sun is to the growth of plants. The plant does not live on dew and water alone. It needs them. But it also needs light and sun and warmth. Human beings blossom when recognition and praise are bestowed on them. Persons discover strengths, talents, possibilities in themselves that they never dared to dream of. - Willi Lambert
- I think it’s very important to have a feedback loop, where you’re constantly thinking about what you’ve done and how you could be doing it better. - Elon Musk
- Feedback is the breakfast of champions. - Ken Blanchard
- Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things. - Winston Churchill
- You make decisions, take actions, affect the world, receive feedback from the world, incorporate it into yourself, then the updated 'you' makes more decisions, and so forth, 'round and 'round. - Douglas Hofstadter
- Everything in my environment is offering me feedback, if I will only listen. - Sharon Weil
- “The culture the leader creates impacts the feedback a leader receives.” - Ron Edmondson
- True intuitive expertise is learned from prolonged experience with good feedback on mistakes. – Daniel Kahneman
- There has to be a willingness to constantly accept critical feedback and rapidly iterate to make things better. - Sam Yagan
- Continuous delivery without continuous feedback is very, very dangerous. - Colin Humphreys