



The Human Dimension

THE LEADER WITHIN

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"During times of change and complexity we help busy executives and their teams deliver against their most important priorities by focussing on what is most valuable - the 'human dimension' of their organisation."

We find improved performance is the reward for your investing in people. The emphasis in THE LEADER WITHIN is on the changes and growth we make within ourselves, as leadership is basically a personal growth experience over time.

'For things to change first I must change.'

Effective Feedback

Feedback is a vital tool for our growth and development, to find ways of increasing our effectiveness, and to learn how we affect the world around us. When conversations are constructive and respectful of both parties, feedback can have a powerful impact on the workplace culture, productivity and morale.

Giving Feedback

The main obstacles to giving effective feedback in today's work environment seem to be:

Timing: not having the time to devote to giving feedback properly; given at an inappropriate time; or given long after the event

Insensitivity: demeaning personal criticism/attacks; focusing on the weaknesses of the recipient; little concern for their needs

Judgmental evaluation: judging the person rather than their behaviour

Indirect: hinting at issues rather than addressing them directly

General/vague: looking at broad, indefinable issues

Familiarity: concern about jeopardizing friendships with colleagues by discussing areas for improvement

Manner: personality differences or other issues between staff interfering with effective communication

Principles for Giving Effective Feedback

Respectful (supportive, balanced, positive)

Feedback that:

- Is delivered in a non-threatening and encouraging manner
- Is intended to be of value to the recipient, and to support their growth and learning
- Includes positive acknowledgment, not just areas for improvement
- Is delivered with sensitivity to the needs of the other person
- Allows adequate time to dialogue, not just a one-way communication
- Seeks to understand the recipient and actively listen to their perspective
- Understands the context in which the recipient's behaviour occurs

Relevant (timely, considered)

Feedback that:

- Is given as close to the prompting events as possible, at an opportune time
- Is about the recipient not the person giving feedback
- Is communicated directly to the recipient
- Is only from the point of view of the person giving feedback, not third parties
- Focuses on behaviour that can change rather than personality
- Is well-considered rather than impulsive
- Takes time to clearly identify issues
- Is given in a setting and format appropriate to the type of message being delivered (e.g. formal/informal, private/public, verbal/written)

Real (actionable, measurable, achievable, specific)

Feedback that:

- Focuses on specific observable behaviours or events
- Uses examples, not generalities
- Talks about the impact on the person giving feedback
- Has a clearly stated focus
- Outlines goals and objectives in measurable terms
- States goals or gives suggestions that are realistic within the resources available
- Is based on something over which a person has control

Regular

Make respectful, constructive feedback a daily or routine habit in a way that remains consistent with the above principles.

Receiving Feedback

Although receiving constructive feedback that is presented in an effective manner can be very helpful, critical feedback can be difficult to receive.

The main obstacles to receiving feedback in today's work environment seem to be:

Defensiveness: objecting to feedback and defending personal actions

Denial: refuting the accuracy or fairness of the feedback

Closed/inactive: listening without interest nor seeking to understand

Rationalizing: finding explanations that dissolve personal responsibility

Disrespectful: devaluing the speaker's right to give feedback

Attacking: verbally attacking the speaker and 'turning the tables'

Principles for Receiving Feedback Gracefully

Seek constructive feedback: value other's insights and observations

Stay open: listen without frequent interruption or objections

Be responsive: evaluate feedback with a willingness to hear what's being said

Be respectful: recognize value of what's being said & speaker's right to say it

Stay engaged: interact appropriately with the speaker, ask for clarification

Actively listen: listen carefully to understand the speaker's perspective

Be interested: have a genuine interest in, and openness to, getting feedback

Be sincere: have a genuine desire to make personal changes if appropriate

Make conscious choices: take time to choose how to respond effectively

Call to Action:

Our company mission is *'to reawaken the human spirit'*. Our programs and coaches work with leaders and their teams to assist them to accomplish this.

If we wish to give and receive feedback more effectively, here are some things we can do:

1. **Make a commitment to give regular positive feedback.** Seek opportunities to positively affirm others through verbal or written acknowledgment. This may be directly to the recipient or indirectly in recommending/praising them to others. (The Center for Creative Leadership recommends a ratio of 4:1 of positive to critical feedback.)

2. **Create a process by which constructive feedback can happen regularly.** This may take the form of a feedback session at the end of each week, or a quick conversation at the end of each day. By making respectful, constructive feedback a habit, there is a mechanism in place for people to regularly grow and develop.
3. **Practice staying open, calm and objective when receiving feedback.** By separating the speaker from the feedback and evaluating their observations/comments more objectively, it becomes easier to stay open, non-defensive, and genuinely engaged in the conversation.
4. **Find people who give feedback effectively and notice what they do.** Noticing the manner, timing, and approach of those who give effective feedback, provides us with an opportunity to learn strategies we can apply in our own lives.
5. **Practice giving constructive feedback.** Giving effective feedback is a learnt skill, which when practiced regularly, can positively influence the quality of your working relationships and the overall work culture.

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