

## **Feedback Mastery**

### **The gift that is rarely given**

*“If you're not willing to give people feedback, you're not helping them get better. And if you're not willing to receive feedback, you're not allowing yourself to grow.” — Adam Grant*

Sometimes feedback can be difficult to give, but that does not mean it should not be given. Feedback can also be difficult to hear, but that does not mean it should not be received.

As you rise into senior leadership, meaningful feedback often becomes scarce. You may find yourself in a vacuum - where constructive input is limited, or feedback is delivered in vague headlines without depth and unsubstantiated.

One of the reasons elite athletes reach *elite* status is through the constant feedback they receive, over many years and from a variety of sources — some is important and actionable, such as feedback provided by coaches and teammates; while some may need to be tuned out, such as reactions from fans and spectators.

The important shift is knowing the difference and focusing on the feedback that is designed to improve individual and team performance, whilst minimizing the unhelpful (and often unsolicited) noise provided by detractors, who are there to diminish and be destructive.

**Giving Feedback** - Feedback turns insight into improvement when it is delivered well.

1. **Check your intent when providing feedback.** Feedback can be a gift, but only when it is wrapped in respect. Is the feedback I am giving intended to release someone's potential or to relieve my frustration? Is it in the service of the person or in service of me?
2. **Check in on your tone.** Is your approach one of correction or cultivation? Is your tone chastising or one of coaching and caring?
3. **Create the right environment** – one where feedback isn't just normalized, but it is safe to receive it and safe for the individual to practice the actions.



4. **Be clean, crisp, and direct.** Waffling leaves room for interpretation.
5. **Check in for alignment.** Ask the feedback receiver to play back what they have heard to ensure they understood your intended message.
6. **It is not only the words that matter.** Check in on your tone. Your tone can be off even on your most well-intentioned days.
7. **Your body language is feedback too.** Your energy, posture, and expression send powerful signals that can either invite honesty or shut it down.
8. **The best time to give feedback is...always.** Constant dialogue rather than a moment in time. Real growth happens In Real Time (IRT), not during a year-end review. Give them the opportunity to course correct.
9. **Everything that's in the universe that grows incrementally slowly over time.** Think about a child or a flower. People are the same.
10. **Feedback should be a two-way conversation.** After a meeting, but before giving feedback, ask the person how they think it went
11. **What Went Well, Even Better If (WWW, EBI).** A simple yet powerful framework that shows you are also paying attention to their strengths.
12. **Anchor your conversation to a shared outcome.** This will depersonalize feedback and steer the discussion toward the end vision.
13. **Reassess if your feedback isn't landing.** Is it your tone or timing that needs adjusting? Or could it be that the issue lies in a mismatch of subject matter expertise, not a flaw in character?
14. **Modify and morph how you give feedback.** To lead effectively across diverse teams, adapt how you give feedback. Different generations and cultures will receive and synthesize info differently. Shaping your approach ensures it lands with clarity and impact.
15. **ABC – Awareness Brings Change.** People don't know what they don't know. Blind spots are called bling for a reason.
16. **Feedback isn't just retrospective; it can be proactive too.** We tend to focus feedback as something that comes after the fact: 'How did I do?'. Some of the most Valuable input comes before the moment. Asking for advice or inviting input in advance enables you to sharpen your approach. Feedback can be a compass, not just a mirror.

### **Receiving Feedback – Are you bracing for feedback or embracing it?**



1. **Do not ask for feedback if you are not ready to hear it.** You will not be as open to receiving candid feedback when you are secretly seeking a compliment.
2. **API – Assume Positive Intent.** People often have good intentions, even if their delivery is clumsy or the feedback comes out poorly.
3. **Feedback is not eternal judgement.** Look for patterns rather than outlier feedback which is inconsistent with the views of others.
4. **Remember it is difficult to give feedback when you are the receiver.** Not everyone is skilled at delivering feedback, but do not resist hearing what they have to say.
5. **Clarify.** Ask questions to better understand feedback that is not clear.
6. **Do not bite your tongue but always mind your tongue.** Words can leave an imprint. Take a pause if you feel yourself becoming emotionally triggered.
7. **Include detractors in your portfolio of sources,** but make sure they have both you and the company's best interests at heart.
8. **Diversify your sources of feedback.** Don't just ask people who are 'Team You' and don't gravitate just to people who are stylistically comparable with you.
9. **Be strategic and invest in your network.** Know who the influencers are and who is highly invested in your success.
10. **Use the 'Start Stop Continue framework'** to invite focused feedback: What should I start doing? Stop doing? Continue doing? It's a simple tool that encourages reflection and surfaces actionable insights.

**Applying Feedback** – A growth-oriented mindset will be more eager to embrace feedback.

1. **Feedback grows with time.** Revisit it. Ask for check-ins.
2. **Remember that feedback is a gift and fuel for growth.** If hard to digest in the moment, let the feedback sit until you can better contextualize what actions you need to take.
3. **Not all feedback will be serving your best interests.** Know the source. Are they a coach or detractor? Are they in it for you or for themselves? This will help you decide whether to take action or file it away.
4. **What you measure improves** and when paired with meaningful feedback, it accelerates growth by turning insight into action.



5. **Evidence that you have adapted to feedback received.** You can't just say you will take it on board, you have to actively demonstrate action.
6. **Be clear about what you are working on with your leader** and keep track of progress. share this with your leader(s) and others.

Progress that drives continual growth and leads to higher levels of performance occurs once the feedback has been provided, the message has been understood and accepted, and action is being taken as a result. When you want to create psychological safety and motivate growth, this simple 19 word phrase provides an authentic message of trust, belonging, and high expectations:

*"I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I'm confident that you can reach them." — Daniel Coyle, The Culture Code*