

# Giving and Receiving Feedback

## Overview

Although receiving fair and valid feedback that is presented in a constructive manner can be very instructive and helpful, most of us find critical feedback difficult to receive. It is hard to keep a non-defensive and open attitude as the implication is that we are flawed or wrong. The reality is that a defensive reaction to feedback results from it being at least partially accurate, otherwise we would simply dismiss it.

Multi-source or 360-degree feedback is based on the premise that the people who work closely with us are in the best position to provide helpful performance feedback. When the nature of feedback is consistent and those providing it are in an informed position, validation almost takes place by consensus. For example, Jackie may think she is a superb listener although everyone who works with her feels she is abysmal.

It is very difficult to see ourselves as others see us. The irony is that our self-image is at least in part a reflection of how others see us. However, we tend to judge ourselves by our good intentions while others judge us by what they observe or what they think they observe. Some people are much more sensitive to criticism than others. The most sensitive areas for feedback relate to job performance and integrity. The other barrier is that people find it very difficult to give honest feedback. This is due to a range of reasons, including cultural norms, power differences and fear of conflict. Developing skills in giving and receiving feedback is essential if the process is to be constructive.

## **Giving Feedback**

### **Prior to the meeting**

- Make sure you are fully briefed about all details of the FCF-360 process.
- Review the Feedback Report, looking for major patterns and themes. Spend no more than 20 minutes reviewing the report, otherwise you risk over interpretation. Your role is to facilitate not diagnose. You cannot interpret an FCF-360 report without the participant.
- Arrange to spend one to two hours with the participant in a quiet location away from all distractions.

### **Beginning of the meeting**

- Confirm the purpose of the 360-degree project, explain how the Feedback Report will be used and confidentiality. Outline the role of the facilitator and the session process. Be assertive, specific and supportive at all times.
- Reinforce that 360-degree feedback is simply a collection of perceptions. Assess the levels of defensiveness in the participant's body language and verbal responses. Concentrate on establishing a rapport if there is evidence of resistance to feedback seems evident.
- Ask the participant who was in their rating team. Explain that the participant is likely to find the feedback useful and interesting. It is your role to ensure that the session is constructive.
- Ask the participant to list three of their strengths and three challenges which they face in their current role.
- Ask the participant to give a summary of the feedback they have obtained in their career to date and the knowledge that has resulted from this feedback.
- Ask the participant to describe their relationship with their manager and team.
- Spend no more than five minutes on this introductory activity, as participants will be keen to explore the report.

### **During the meeting**

- Ask clarifying questions to stimulate insights.
- Use tentative/hypothetical language when building a picture with the participant.

- Observe and provide feedback about visible behaviour linked to the report.
- Provide support and encouragement – lead with the positives.
- Help the participant to identify key themes within the report. What are some of the overall messages?
- Identify major gaps and similarities between the self-rating and the perception of other raters.
- Focus only on behaviours not the personality.
- Try and make sure that the Participant is providing most of the comments.

### **End of the meeting**

- Brainstorm options for improvement and development.
- Develop a few specific actions that can form the basis of an Action Plan.
- Ask them for feedback about the process. You can gain ongoing feedback for your own development by asking this question.
- Thank the participant.

### **Follow up**

- Encourage the participant to have a follow-up meeting with their manager. Participants usually have questions about the ratings given to them by their manager. It is also important for the manager to be involved in ongoing development plans
- Encourage the participant to give their rating team some feedback about what they learned from the process

## **Receiving Feedback**

### **Prior to the meeting**

- Write down your personal idea of success in the workplace.
- Reflect on how you could be more effective in the workplace.
- Consider your current level of job satisfaction. What is having a negative impact on your commitment?
- Consider how open you are to considering how your actions might impact on others.
- Ask yourself how willing you are to accept the perceptions of others, even if you do not agree with them.

### **Beginning of the meeting**

- Make sure you have a non-defensive and open attitude. It sounds easy, but it can be hard to maintain under threat.
- Relax and treat the session as an interesting exploration. The potential for learning is high.
- Make sure all distractions have been removed and that you are able to focus on the process.

### **During the meeting**

- Develop an overview of the report. Try to identify key themes and patterns.
- When a particular rating puzzles you, try and think about how that perception may have been formed.
- Look for differences in rating from different groups. When gaps are evident. Ask yourself if you behave differently with different groups?
- How do you tend to rate yourself? Are you overly harsh or generous?

### **End of the meeting**

- Identify a few key points and related actions.
- Brainstorm appropriate development opportunities or commit to researching them.
- Consider if you have had similar feedback before in your career.

## **Follow up**

- There are likely to be unanswered questions and the reflection process will continue over the next week. Make sure that you set aside some time for reflection and discussions with key individuals to help the clarification process.
- Thank your rating team and give them some feedback.
- Involve your manager in your development plan.
- Revisit your Feedback Report and action/development plan at regular intervals during the year.