

The Role and Importance of Feedback in Building a High Performing Organization

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Feedback – Why it's important

- Feedback accelerates achieving higher levels of performance.
- Creating a feedback-oriented culture is key to becoming a high performing organization.
- To create an open, feedback-oriented culture, people need to be receptive to giving and receiving feedback, and to understand when and how to give it.
- Feedback comes in different sizes and shapes –
 - *At a macro-level:*
 - Internally from employees.
 - Externally from stakeholders -- grantees, donors, partners.
 - *At the micro-level:*
 - In one-on-one performance conversations between a manager and an employee.

Types of Feedback:

- Broad-based surveys - e.g. employee satisfaction/engagement survey; grantee perception survey; short periodic “pulse” surveys.
- One-on-one performance management and annual appraisal discussions.
- One-on-one feedback through coaching and mentoring.

Surveys

Feedback can be obtained from internal and external constituencies about the many aspects of organizational life including leadership and vision, management and internal practices and operations.

- Surveys are used to collect the opinions of internal staff and external stakeholders.
- These types of surveys –
 - *Empower staff* and others to share their views about what's working well and not so well.
 - *Uncover issues* – which are often opportunities to evolve and transform a culture.
 - *Enable HR to establish an agenda* to help the organization achieve higher levels of performance and accountability (as defined by senior leadership).

Survey Process:

- Ideally feedback is obtained through an anonymous process conducted by a third party (e.g. CEP; Gallup; independent consultant). A software tool (e.g. survey monkey) can facilitate data collection.
- Surveys often include a comparison to industry best practice norms.
- Data is typically collected and analyzed using a 5-point Likert Scale (*ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree*).
- After a survey is conducted, an action planning process should be facilitated across the organization to address issues, with the goal of:
 - Demonstrating a commitment to change,
 - Having a positive impact on the culture,
 - Improving internal or external perceptions and opinions.
- Improvement in scores at various organizational levels (organization-wide, unit or individual manager level) can be tied to performance appraisals and even pay decisions.
- High neutral scores represent an opportunity to change so-so opinions into positive ones.
- Surveys can be done periodically or embedded as a regular process (e.g. repeated every 18 months or two years).

One word of caution, only embark on a survey effort with a serious commitment from senior leadership to address issues.

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Performance Discussions and Annual Appraisals

- Performance feedback at the individual level keeps the organization running.
- One-on-one feedback is how organizations create and sustain a *continuous improvement mindset*.
- When people are engaged in a culture of giving and receiving direct and honest feedback, individuals and organizations learn, develop, grow and improve.
 - Without challenge, there's no growth and development.
- Every boss has a boss, so feedback exchanges occur at all levels, all the time -
 - Between a manager and employee
 - Between an executive and a manager
 - Between the Board and the CEO
- The key is to make these exchanges as effective and impactful as possible.
- Holding managers accountable for giving clear, direct, honest and timely feedback, and empowering staff to ask for feedback when they need it or are not getting it, creates a healthy tension in an organization.
- An effective technique in helping managers deliver feedback is the **Balanced Feedback Technique** – otherwise known as the “**Feedback Sandwich**”. Using this technique makes it easier for managers to give constructive feedback.

The “Feedback Sandwich” --

- Position constructive feedback between two positives:

Accentuate the positive (*what the person is doing well*).

Deliver constructive feedback (*what could be improved upon*).

End with positive reinforcement (*and recognize strengths*).

Feedback is a “gift” --

- The giver took the time to share the feedback.
- When delivered effectively, the receiver embraces the feedback, learns from it, and modifies their behavior.

Coaching and Mentoring

What is the difference between coaching and mentoring?

- **Mentoring** –
 - Mentors provide advice and show the way.
 - Give navigational advice. Share what they know.
 - Share facts and information (e.g. Don't talk to so and so; here's how you get this done.)
 - **Coaching** –
 - Empowers people to take risks and explore new options.
 - Stimulates creative thinking.
 - Gets people to do things for themselves.
- Allows an organization to leverage the strengths of its managers and leaders.
- By taking a “coach approach”, managers and leaders can –
 - Move people to higher levels of performance.
 - Empower people to take risks and make their own discoveries.
- “**GROW**” model – **Goals/Reality/Options/Will (Sir John Whitmore)**:
 - A manager coaches an employee by asking open-ended questions:
 - What are you trying to accomplish?
 - What is your planned approach?
 - What will success look like?