



## From The President's Desk

Suzanne Miklos, Ph.D.

**L**eaders operating in technological, environmental, and cultural change need to be adaptable and able to work in ambiguity. This places a high bar on ongoing responsive communication.

A widely downloaded article on feedback in 2019 raised important cautions about the use of feedback systems, including 360 feedback. While the difficulties associated with feedback are real, the necessity is greater than ever. Consider several keys to making feedback effective.

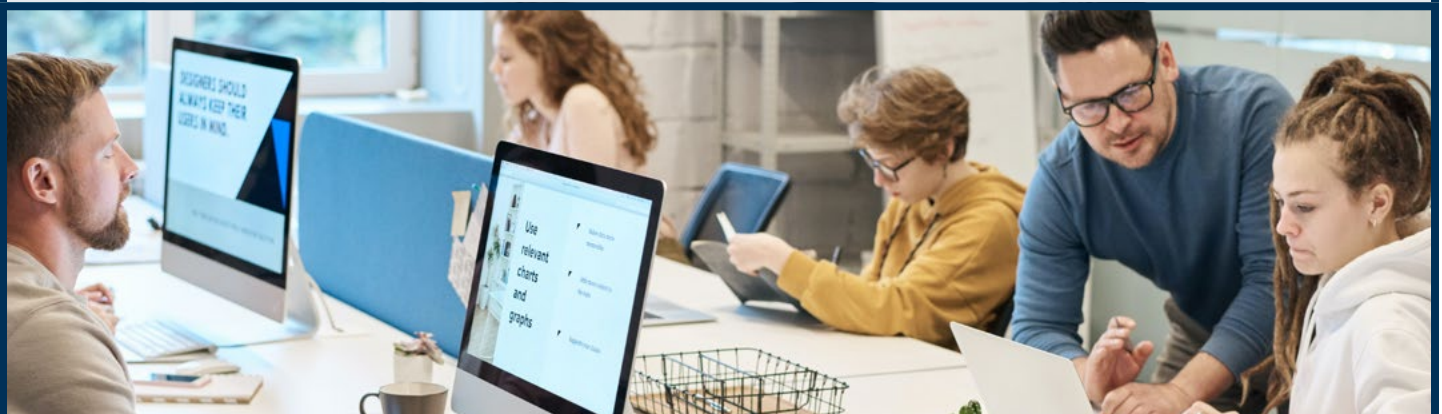
Feedback seeking is an often-overlooked factor in studies of effectiveness. Regardless of delivery, supporting the recipient's orientation toward self-acceptance and self-improvement will make feedback valuable. These seemingly paradoxical traits can allow leaders to thoughtfully digest and respond to feedback without becoming defensive or despondent. We recommend using 360 feedback for developmental purposes only and pairing it with action planning support.

Criticism on 360 feedback reliability misses that there is no one objective truth. As one directive, fast-paced leader is realizing, the style that has worked well with other drivers with the same technical background is not perceived as universally effective for leading a broader organization. His 360 feedback has inconsistencies that

suggest a need for a more flexible style. Behavioral items highlight for him how the same behavior has two different impacts. He can now decide how to shift his approach to relationships. In a complex organization, this nuanced leadership is not easy to develop without feedback from a variety of sources.

Growth mindset also illustrates how 360 feedback can be useful. People who want to achieve mastery seek continuous improvement. I have one child who is mastery oriented and often provided me the score and a pencil prior to band concerts. She wanted supplementary feedback from an audience perspective. Marking a decrescendo that did not span the intended measures was gold to her. Getting an A may not be as interesting as the pursuit of becoming better. We see many leaders in developmental assessments disappointed that their managers provide only positive feedback. How do I get better every day? These high performers know that moving the needle is harder when you are already very good. Feedback is fuel in a learning-oriented culture.

Best practices such as rater training, defining items behaviorally and offering support for interpretation and action planning all drive the success of a process. Using 360 tools in the context of a growth-oriented culture for leadership roles can be an essential part of nimbly leading in complex environments.



## MANAGER'S CORNER

Providing Feedback to Millennials and Gen Zs

Michael Sliter, Ph.D.



**T**he fact is that the workplace is more generationally diverse than ever before. A quick glance around your office will likely reveal that fact, with nearly all generations being represented in some way, shape, or form. Every generation brings their own values, expectations, and communication style, all of which can impact their preference for, and receptivity to, feedback. Millennials (now nearing 40 years old at the high end!) and Generation Z represent the future of workplace communication, so it is especially important to understand how to provide them with actionable feedback.

### Identify how people like to receive feedback

First, before relying on generational stereotypes to guide your thinking, be explicit about identifying how *individuals* like to receive feedback. This should happen at the beginning of a person's tenure in your organization, or even before. During interviews, I like to inquire, "Tell me about a time when you received challenging feedback" or "Tell me how you prefer to receive feedback." Some like frequent conversations while others like quick, corrective messages. Some like face-to-face while others might prefer text. Some have never really received critical feedback and might be stumped by these questions. In that

case, experimenting with how they *think* they want feedback can help you find that perfect way.

### Gen Z and Millennials tend to prefer electronic feedback with a human element

Identifying how people like to receive feedback is tougher with an inherited team; learning the norms and the individuals takes time. In this case, defaulting to some of the research-based findings can help you navigate those waters. Over 65% of Millennials and Generation Zs prefer to communicate via email, text, or chat, which includes feedback. The caveat here is that such communication is ripe for misinterpretation; being clear yet diplomatic will help soften the message. These generations also tend to desire more frequent touchpoints; Gen Zs especially are sensitive to feeling as if they belong and want to hit the ground running. Feedback helps to get them there and reaching out with specifics that show how you understand their unique needs and personality can add the human element that they want.

Though it might be tempting to give feedback in the way that you like to receive it, that could limit others' receptivity. It is your job as a leader to adjust your style to others.





## RESEARCH ARTICLE:

### Moving Feedback into Action: The People-Centric Approach Ashley Moroney

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#### **he Problem:**

How many times have you personally struggled to digest constructive feedback in a way that allows you to create actionable items and move forward with a goal? Don't worry; you're not alone. According to the Harvard Business Review, 41% of tasks on developmental plans spanning a year were not accomplished (2016). So often, we load ourselves up with action items without recognizing the full gravity of our to-do list. It can be tempting to do this as we help our teams set goals for their performance as well, leading to overwhelmed, confused, and disengaged employees. A carefully crafted action plan can solve this problem.

#### **The Behavior Link:**

Research has shown that when someone actively commits to something, they will be 10 times more likely to follow through than someone who has passively committed (Goldstein, Martin & Cialdini, 2009). Action planning is a systemic approach to achieving specific goals which are actively committed to by you and your team member. By creating an action plan, you're setting clear expectations for which goals are a priority, what steps are needed to accomplish them, and accountability for the results.

#### **The Goal-Setting Process:**

Most are aware of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals; however, studies have shown that the key to goal achievement also lies in motivation (Grant, 2012). When setting goals, it's important to create an action plan around a custom set of 2-3 goals while considering the motivation of each team member. Are they driven by monetary gains? Does achievement give them personal satisfaction? Andrew Grant emphasizes that when team member values align with goals, the motivation to achieve the goals will increase. Any

goals that are set should complement each other and build towards a strategic long-term accomplishment.

#### **The Follow-Up Process:**

Once goals are set and an action plan is in place, it can be tempting to micromanage the process to ensure results; however, space allows your team member to be an active participant in the process and provides them time to see results from their actions. Research has shown that effective progress monitoring is a key contributor to goal attainment, further supporting the practice of regular, meaningful touchpoints with your team members (Harkin, Webb, Chang, et al., 2016). There is no hard-and-fast rule on how frequent these follow-ups should be; consider how long it will take to change a behavior in a meaningful way, as well as how long it will take to see results from that change, and schedule a follow up after that point. By giving adequate time for results to occur, you will be able to properly assess the attainability of the goals in place and make adjustments, thus improving your team member's overall well-being (Nicholls, Levy, Carson, et al., 2016).

Overall, action planning is most effective when goals are individualized for each person. By combining the evidence-based strategies with your tried-and-true methods, both you and your team members will reap the benefits of achievement and forward motion.

#### **References**

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## Elevate Your Brand

Wednesday, June 17, 2020  
9am to Noon

Understanding the value of self-awareness and intentionality about leveraging strengths in a way that is visible to others is a career management miss for many women.

You must complete the Harrison Assessment prior to the workshop. The Harrison Assessment is an online assessment which takes approximately 30 minutes to rank order statements in order of preference. It measures behavioral tendencies and preferences to help better understand the patterns that lead to success.

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## OUR VIRTUAL SERVICES

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Michael Sliter, Ph.D.

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