

Why You Should Love Feedback

Let's be honest, we all enjoy hearing how great we are or how our performance exceeds expectations. Sincere compliments tend to raise our self-esteem and give us that extra bit of energy. Great leaders understand the value in showing sincere appreciation and giving positive feedback. However, in this article we are turning the tables and proposing that we should also learn to enjoy the negative or constructive feedback, especially if you are in a leadership role. Additionally, embracing this feedback will be a pre-requisite for growth, both on a personal level as well as for your team, department, or organization.

In our work with leadership assessments we see a lot of managers and leaders hesitant to receive the opinions and views of their direct reports. They assume the defensive position and prepare for the worst. Nevertheless, once the results are presented and the leader has had time to reflect, an interesting process begins. This constructive feedback starts to form into a plan of action and a motivation to develop ones competencies. At this point in the process, as long as the leader has appropriate resources and support, learning and development can take place. People are much more likely to follow growth and development versus static conditions. Even more so, people will follow leaders that have character and dedication to themselves and the vision of the organization.

What we are trying to get across is this; as nice as it is to receive positive feedback, we should not be hesitant or afraid to take on the opposite. While we need encouragement and recognition, it is equally important to appreciate the constructive feedback in order to improve. We would argue that someone who reacts adversely or hostile towards warranted negative feedback is nervous or uncooperative about learning. This person's competencies will soon be outdated and forced to develop just to stay in their position. A manager who receives criticism from peers or direct reports and is motivated to succeed will react with poise and determination to learn and develop into a better manager. That is the type of manager that people want to work for and one who will be extremely competitive on the job market.

This is a suggestion for how a true leader responds and reacts to constructive feedback:

1. "Thank you for bringing this to my attention"
2. Repeat the feedback so that everyone is on the same page
3. Suggest a different way of handling the situation in question
4. Set expectations on yourself moving forward

And most importantly...

5. Learn from it

It is essential to keep in mind that we argue this point with the recommendation to establish culture where constructive feedback is communicated in a respectful and professional manner. As a leader, open up to critical and constructive evaluation of your performance by direct reports. With some time and effort, your new skills and knowledge can become a true difference maker.

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