

## Make feedback an important part of your development.

Asking for feedback takes courage, but is also a key to unlock potential. Feedback provides information about strengths and weaknesses from a number of different perspectives and so is a core mechanism for building self awareness. Getting an accurate picture of your current leadership style and impact is a good starting point to any development plan. This is then compared with your personal vision or expectations, to get a better understanding of the gap and the development or support required. Getting feedback face to face is ideal but often getting feedback through a 360 degree survey is the best way to get open, honest and direct feedback.

Some points to consider:-

### 1. **Asking for feedback.**

The key is to identify people it would be useful to receive feedback from. Clearly your boss, direct reports and peers are important but you also may wish to hear from people in other departments, or from customers or others in the external environment. Let people know that they will be asked to give feedback and tell them why you are doing it.

### 2. **Be clear about why you are asking.**

If you are not open to feedback, don't ask for it. You will only create cynicism about your motives if you do not intend to take it seriously. It is one source of information about your effectiveness but it is not the only source. Gather feedback only if you intend to make it part of your own self assessment and if you intend to consider it in relation to your own development plan.

### 3. **Feedback will tell you about relationships as well.**

Feedback will provide you with data not only about what you do but about the relationships you have with the people giving feedback. This is because what people give you are their perceptions of what you do and not only do these perceptions vary between people, but they are also influenced by your relationship with them. If they don't know you or don't believe you are interested in them they will tend to give you low scores. At the same time if you just ask the people you like they will tend to give you high scores.

### 4. **Understand your impact.**

Feedback is a way of gauging your impact upon people. It is a way of understanding what you might do to improve that impact. It is important therefore to seek feedback from people who contribute to your effectiveness.

### 5. **You don't need to get feedback from everyone.**

It is not helpful to get too much feedback. Asking everyone you know or everyone who has contact with you is too much. **Feedback from around 10 people is ideal** – just get the right 10 people. Too many or too few is a waste of their time and ultimately yours.

### 6. **Do something with the feedback.**

Whether the feedback is good or bad you need to thank people for taking the time to give it. You want people to do it seriously and take the time to do it thoughtfully and if they feel that their efforts are appreciated, and that you are open to feedback they will tell you what they think.

Feedback is intended to put you in charge of your own behaviour. It is to tell you what is working and what is not working so that you can make necessary adjustments. The formal process also opens the door for informal discussions about the feedback and what you might do differently and what you should continue to do the same. When you receive feedback it gives you the opportunity to have a follow up discussion where you thank the person for giving the feedback and in a very open, non defensive way you seek to clarify the person's expectations and discuss options for improvement. These then can be areas for mutual improvement – what you both can do better. In this way feedback can be a useful process for opening dialogue.