

The Essential Role Of Seeking Feedback In Leadership

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Have you ever received feedback from a team member that caught you off guard? Perhaps during a team meeting, one of your direct reports expressed concerns about feeling unheard or undervalued. This feedback surprised you because you genuinely believed you had created an inclusive and collaborative work environment. You realize there might be a gap between your intentions as a leader and the perception of your team members.

In the ever-evolving landscape of leadership, one skill stands out as a critical factor in personal and professional growth: seeking feedback. Effective leaders understand that feedback is not only necessary for their own

development but also crucial for fostering a positive and productive work environment.

Feedback is an incredibly powerful tool that, when embraced by leaders, can lead to remarkable growth, build trust and collaboration, and ultimately drive organizational success.

This resource will explore why seeking feedback is so important for leaders and discuss effective strategies for incorporating this skill into your leadership journey.

PRO TIP

While feedback is often interpreted as pointing out flaws, equally or more important is providing very specific **feedback** about what someone does right because it can **reinforce neural pathways**. The brain is then encouraged to repeat those actions, **contributing to learning and habit formation**.

Why is Feedback Important for Leaders?

Feedback is very important for leaders, and here are the reasons why:

- **Personal Growth and Development:**

Seeking feedback allows leaders to gain valuable insights into their strengths and areas for improvement. By actively seeking feedback from your teams, colleagues, and mentors, you can identify blind spots and refine your

leadership style. Feedback acts like a mirror, reflecting both the positive aspects and areas where you can grow, helping you continuously evolve and become a better leader.

- **Building Trust and Relationships:**

When leaders actively seek feedback, they demonstrate humility, openness, and a genuine interest in others' perspectives. This fosters a culture of trust and psychological safety within the organization, encouraging team members to provide honest and constructive feedback. By building trust, you create stronger bonds, promote open communication, and enhance collaboration among your team.

- **Enhancing Self-Awareness:**

Feedback provides leaders with an external perspective, helping them understand how their actions, decisions, and communication impact those around them. It enables leaders to recognize their strengths and areas where they may unknowingly hinder their team's progress. Cultivating self-awareness through

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feedback empowers leaders to adapt their behavior, refine their leadership style, and make more informed decisions.

- **Driving Organizational Success:**

Effective leaders understand that they don't have all the answers and that their success relies on the collective efforts of their team. Seeking feedback from team members encourages active participation, innovation, and creativity. By incorporating diverse perspectives and ideas, leaders can make informed decisions that drive organizational success.

Who Can Leaders Seek Feedback From?

A leader can seek feedback from a variety of individuals and sources. Here are some examples:

- **Team Members:** This can be done through one-on-one meetings, team meetings, or anonymous surveys. Team members provide insights into the leader's performance, communication style, decision-making, and overall team dynamics.
 - **Peers:** This feedback can be obtained through informal discussions, mentorship programs, professional networks, or formal leadership assessments. Peers provide a different perspective and offer constructive criticism or advice based on their experiences.
 - **Superiors:** Superiors guide strategic decision-making, leadership style, and alignment with organizational goals. Regular check-ins, performance reviews, or formal feedback sessions can be utilized to gather feedback from superiors.
 - **Mentors/Coaches:** Leaders can seek feedback from mentors or coaches who provide guidance and support. These individuals often have significant experience and can offer valuable insights and suggestions for improvement.
 - **Industry Experts/Consultants:** These individuals objectively assess the leader's organizational performance, identify areas for improvement, and offer recommendations based on their expertise.
 - **Self-Reflection:** This involves leaders evaluating their actions, behaviors, and outcomes and identifying areas for growth or improvement.
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Best Practices for Seeking Feedback

Now that you understand why seeking feedback is crucial, let's explore some best practices to make the most out of this process.

- **Create a Feedback-Friendly Culture:**
As a leader, you have the power to shape your team's culture. Encourage open and honest communication by setting an example yourself. Regularly seek feedback from your team members, share the things you are working on, provide specific feedback to them, and create a safe space where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas.
- **Be Specific in Your Requests:**
When seeking feedback, provide clear guidelines and specific areas you would like input on. This helps the person providing feedback focus on the aspects you want to improve or gain insights into. For example, you might ask for feedback on your communication style, decision-making process, or how you handle conflicts.
- **Actively Listen, Express Gratitude, and Reflect:**
When receiving feedback, practice active listening. Be open to perspectives that may differ from your own, and refrain from becoming defensive. Express gratitude for whatever is shared; it takes real courage to

provide feedback, especially subordinates. Feedback is a gift. Reflect on the feedback received, evaluate its validity, and consider how it aligns with your goals and values as a leader. Remember that feedback is an opportunity for growth, not a personal attack.

- **Follow Up and Take Action:**

After receiving feedback, take the time to follow up with the person who provided it. Reiterate your gratitude for their insights and share any actions you plan to take based on their feedback. Taking tangible steps to address the feedback demonstrates your commitment to growth and validates the feedback-giver's contribution. You can also follow up later by asking for feedback on the actions you have taken to improve and continue the feedback cycle.

How Feedback Strengthens Leadership Relationships?

Effective leadership is built upon strong relationships and open lines of communication. Feedback plays a crucial role in strengthening these relationships by fostering trust, promoting growth, and enhancing collaboration. Here's how feedback can contribute to building stronger leadership relationships:

- **Building Trust:** Trust is the foundation of any successful relationship, including those between leaders and their teams. Seeking and providing feedback demonstrates a commitment to open and honest communication. When leaders actively seek feedback, they show their willingness to listen, learn, and improve.
- **Enhancing Understanding:** Feedback provides leaders with insights into their strengths and areas for improvement. By actively seeking feedback from team members, leaders gain a deeper understanding of their impact on others and can identify blind spots they might not be aware of.
- **Encouraging Growth and Development:** When leaders receive constructive feedback, they have an opportunity to reflect, learn, and make positive changes. By actively sharing what they are working on and incorporating feedback into their leadership style, leaders demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement, inspiring their team members to do the same.
- **Strengthening Communication:** Feedback serves as a bridge for effective communication between leaders and their team members. Regular feedback exchanges create a safe space for open dialogue and encourage team members to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas.
- **Recognizing and Valuing Contributions:** Feedback allows leaders to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of their team members. By providing specific and meaningful feedback, leaders can recognize individual achievements, strengths, and efforts.

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