

The Forgotten Key to Effective Feedback



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Every leader has, in a formal setting or not, needed to provide feedback on performance.

In workshops around the world I have asked people to give me their best tips for providing effective feedback. To a person, leaders create great lists of techniques and approaches. Yet one thing, perhaps the most powerful piece of advice, is never mentioned.

That's why I call it the forgotten key to feedback.

This key unlocks the door to better understanding, acceptance and use of any feedback you want to provide. Without this key it will always be more difficult for your feedback to have maximum impact.

What is the key?

Start any feedback conversation by asking the other person what he/she thinks about the performance.

“So, how did you think it went?”

“What did you notice about your performance?”

“What did you think went well?”

“What would you wish you had done differently?”

“What pleased you?”

“What disappointed you?”

“What might you change next time?”

These are just some suggested ways to open up the other person and create a dialogue about the performance, rather than you simply sharing your feedback in a one-way discussion.



Why is this an effective approach? Thanks for asking . . . there are at least five reasons why this is so valuable and important.

It engages the performer.

Especially if the situation is a formal performance review, people are likely anxious or stressed. They are mentally bracing themselves for your input, not knowing exactly what it will be. It is, after all, your team member's performance and, while their perspective may not be complete, they do have insights into how they did. By asking them to share their thoughts first you take some of the pressure out of the situation, immediately engage them and encourage them to participate.

It creates accountability in the development process.

By asking their thoughts, you are telling them this performance conversation is theirs – it isn't just something you are doing to them. In a not so subtle way, you are telling people you want their input and their involvement. People can't deny or get defensive about things that they saw in their performance. You create ownership in the conversation by involving them.

It increases accountability for future performance.

Any feedback situation is meant to improve (or at least maintain) future performance. When people are engaged in the conversation, you are improving the chance they will be accountable for making any necessary changes. Why? Because, at least in part, they own the feedback and their behaviors. Once ownership is created, accountability increases.

It gives you a valuable insight into their perspective.

When you know what they think about their performance you are in a far better to have your feedback received. If you need to give some corrective feedback, will it be more effective if you know before you begin whether they agree (or completely disagree)? Of course! They also may have noticed things – positive and negative – about their performance that you (the boss) didn't



see – so with their input you have the opportunity to have a more complete conversation about their performance.

It helps you put any additional feedback in perspective for the performer.

If you have a disagreement about their performance on a specific area of situation, knowing their perspective will allow you to give that feedback in a way they are more likely to accept.

The next time you need to give someone feedback – whether largely positive or negative – start by asking what they think. That will unlock the door to a more productive and effective conversation and likely lead to what you truly want – higher performance in the future.

You are Remarkable!



Kevin Eikenberry

Remarkable Revolutionary

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If you need help or assistance, let us know – we want to be Your Leadership Help Button. And while we can help, only you can decide to take the actions and build the habits to become a Remarkable Leader.



This free resource was written for leaders who are serious about helping others grow and development through encouragement, support, belief and positive reinforcement by [Kevin Eikenberry](#), Chief Potential Officer of [The Kevin Eikenberry Group](#).

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