

THE POWER OF FEEDBACK



A CATALYST FOR WOMEN'S CAREER GROWTH

As a seasoned executive coach and women's success expert, I have had the privilege of working with countless women across diverse cultures. One recurring theme that has emerged is the transformative power of feedback. While it might seem daunting at first, embracing feedback is a critical step toward unlocking your full potential and accelerating your career.

Why Feedback Matters

Feedback is like a mirror, reflecting our strengths and areas for growth. It provides invaluable insights into how we're



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perceived by others, which can significantly impact our relationships and communication skills. For instance, a leader who receives feedback about being too direct might adjust their approach to become more collaborative, fostering a more positive and productive work environment. Becoming aware of how we communicate and act affects others are key to lead more effectively. Feedback provides the opportunity to close the gap between who we are and who people think we are. It does not require change, only to adapt in some situations to ease relationships and in other cases to amplify or dim our message to be audible and emit on the same frequency. For some, new skills might be needed to develop, allowing for expansion.

From a systemic approach, I also want to stress the fact that feedback results in better team engagement. When you receive feedback, you can also master sharing feedback with others. A study by Zenger Folkman found that leaders who ranked in the top 10% for giving effective feedback had team engagement scores that were 77% higher than leaders in the bottom 10%. This demonstrates how impactful feedback can be in creating a thriving, engaged team. An engaged and autonomous team enables leaders to reclaim time and energy towards more strategic topics. A true win for women who often juggles with many hats.

Moreover, constructive feedback offers a roadmap for growth. By identifying specific areas for improvement, we can target our development efforts and acquire new skills. According to a report by Gallup, employees who receive regular feedback are 3.6 times more likely to be engaged at work compared to those who do not. What would you personally do with this increased level of engagement? What would be possible for you?

The benefits of seeking feedback extend beyond skill development. It can also boost our self-confidence. When we actively seek and implement feedback, we demonstrate a willingness to learn and grow, which can empower us to take on new challenges and achieve greater success. In fact, a study by the Harvard Business Review found that employees who receive constructive feedback are 12.5% more effective at their jobs than those who do not. We receive constant constructive feedback from life. From the day we were born till the day we die. Don't you remember the first time you rode a car or a bike? Any time you received feedback from your parents or your instructor, you learned. We tend to take it personally because we associate the feedback to our identity. But we are not what we do or don't do, we are powerful constant learners adjusting constantly to our



environment to thrive and not only to survive.

The Gender Gap in Feedback

Despite the importance of feedback, studies have shown that women often receive less feedback than their male counterparts. According to a study by McKinsey & Company, women are less likely than men to receive the feedback they need to advance their careers. This feedback gap can hinder women's career growth and contribute to the persistent gender gap in leadership positions. Imagine that for months you have something on your face that makes it unpleasant to watch and nobody tells you, leading to a misinterpretation of how you look. You wish someone could tell you so you could adjust what's wrong if you choose to or be aware of its impact so you can act accordingly. Feedback creates awareness and Awareness is the power to choose your experience of life. Belinda MJ Brown.

The same study found that women are often given more vague and less actionable feedback compared to men. For example, women might be told they need to be more "assertive" without specific guidance on how to do so, while men might receive detailed feedback on specific actions they can take to improve their performance. This disparity in feedback quality can leave women at a

disadvantage when it comes to career development and progression. Discomfort about feedback for women is noticeable and must be addressed.

Additionally, a Harvard Business Review article highlighted that women are less likely to receive feedback that is directly related to their business outcomes, focusing instead on their communication styles or personalities. How interesting! What could you do moving forward to seek more elaborated feedback is my question for you? If you are managing a woman, I invite you to observe how you provide feedback to her because this can perpetuate stereotypes and prevent women from receiving the constructive feedback necessary for their professional growth. We have been habituated to view women as sensitive and reluctant to share feedback that could lead to tears. For your information, tears are mostly a chemical reaction to cortisol stress hormones that relate to frustration, guilt or shame, not sadness or weakness. Men when frustrated might raise their voice or have more aggressive behaviors due to the different hormones mix. I will write an article specifically on this topic since it is one very common in my practice.

Overcoming the Fear of Feedback

It is natural to feel apprehensive about receiving feedback, especially negative



feedback. However, it's important to remember that feedback is not a personal attack. It's a tool that can help us improve. To embrace feedback effectively, consider the following tips:

- **Cultivate a Growth Mindset:** Believe in your ability to learn and grow. Carol Dweck's research on growth mindset has shown that individuals who perceive their abilities as malleable rather than fixed are more likely to embrace challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, and ultimately achieve higher levels of success.
- **Active Listening:** Pay full attention to the feedback without interrupting. According to a study by the International Listening Association, effective listening can improve workplace productivity by 40%.
- **Ask Clarifying Questions:** Seek further clarification if needed. This not only ensures that you fully understand the feedback but also shows the feedback giver that you value their input.
- **Focus on Intent:** Understand the underlying intention of the feedback. Most feedback is given with the intent to help, not to harm. Recognizing this can help you receive it more openly.
- **Regularly Seek Feedback:** Make it a habit to seek feedback from your manager, colleagues, and clients. A Deloitte study found that organizations with a continuous feedback culture are 30% more likely to be high

performers.

Embracing Feedback and Feedforward: A Comprehensive Approach

While feedback focuses on reflecting on past behaviors and outcomes, feedforward is about looking ahead and anticipating future needs and improvements. In other words, feedforward is another way to receive or share feedback, instead of focusing on the past, it is an opportunity to reflect on what we would like to see or experience differently the next time a similar situation occurs. If you have children, you probably use this a lot.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, feedback is information about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc., used as a basis for improvement. In contrast, feedforward is defined as the modification or control of a process using its anticipated results or effects. Feedforward is less likely to be taken personally as it addresses future behaviors rather than past mistakes.

A Gallup survey found that when managers provide weekly (versus annual) feedback, team members are:

- 5.2 times more likely to strongly agree that they receive meaningful feedback.
- 3.2 times more likely to strongly



agree they are motivated to do outstanding work.

- 2.7 times more likely to be engaged at work.

Practical Application: Feedback and Feedforward Exercises

To implement feedback and feedforward in your professional and personal life, consider the following exercises:

1. Triad Feedback Exercise: Form groups of three with a group of trusted peers and prepare one piece of feedback and one feedforward for each person based on your observations. Observations are facts not opinions. Share your insights and discuss how this might affect your relationships and the impact you desire to make.
2. Keep-Stop-Start Exercise: Identify behaviors to keep doing, stop doing, and start doing based on the feedback received. This helps create a clear action plan for personal and professional growth.
3. The Johari Window: Enhancing Self-Awareness through Feedback

The Johari Window is a useful model for understanding the dynamics of feedback and self-awareness. It consists of four quadrants:

1. Open Area: Known to self and others.
2. Blind Area: Unknown to self but known to others.

3. Hidden Area: Known to self but unknown to others.

4. Unknown Area: Unknown to both self and others.

Effective feedback helps reduce the Blind Area by bringing unknown traits or behaviors to our awareness, thereby expanding the Open Area and fostering better communication and understanding.

Let's Embrace Feedback Together

By embracing feedback (and seeking the guidance of an executive coach to process some feedback), you can unlock your full potential and achieve your career and life aspirations. Remember, feedback is a gift, not a judgment. Let's embrace it and use it to propel ourselves to new heights.

Personal Stories: Transformative Feedback Experiences

To further illustrate the power of feedback, let's explore some real-life examples of how feedback has transformed careers.

Case Study 1: Transforming Leadership Style

Sarah, a senior manager in a multinational corporation, was known for her meticulous attention to detail and



strong work ethic. However, her team often felt micromanaged and stifled. After receiving feedback during a 360-degree review, Sarah realized that her leadership style was hindering her team's performance. During our sessions, she worked on self-confidence, appropriate delegation of tasks and trust in her team's capabilities. Within a year, her team's productivity and morale improved significantly, and Sarah was promoted to a director position.

Case Study 2: Enhancing Public Speaking Skills As A Non Native Speaker

Rachela, a marketing executive transferred abroad for an assignment was quite effective at leading, influencing in her native language. Yet, at her arrival she lost confidence in her ability to mobilize a team who was expecting her to speak their local language. It was her fourth language but her desire to be perfect hindered her ability to project confidence. She received difficult feedback from her CEO and decided to address it in her coaching. The first thing we did was to acknowledge her discomfort and honor her inner critic for showing up. Then we recycle this voice to create empowering statements and see opportunities. She developed her vulnerability and reassessed her own expectations about what to say and how to say it using less elaborated language and tell stories to illustrate her

thoughts. She connected more deeply with herself and with the people she worked with and noticed the impact very quickly. A few months later, with her regrown confidence, she dared to use silence and her broken language to her advantage.

Statistical Insights: The Impact of Feedback

I want to go back to the impact of feedback as a powerful tool for impact. Women often seek to live and leave a legacy, what a wonderful opportunity to do it using feedback. Indeed, it is important to consider the broader statistical impact of feedback in the workplace. Here are some compelling statistics that highlight the importance of feedback:

- **Employee Retention:** According to a study by Office Vibe, 65% of employees want more feedback than they're currently getting. Regular feedback can significantly reduce turnover rates, as employees feel more valued and engaged.
- **Performance Improvement:** The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that companies with a culture of regular feedback have a 14.9% lower turnover rate than those without. Additionally, these companies report 23% higher employee engagement.



- **Feedback Frequency:** A study by the Corporate Leadership Council found that managers who received regular feedback showed a 39% increase in performance. This emphasizes the need for consistent feedback mechanisms within organizations.

Ladies, it is time to embrace feedback!
Feedback is a Catalyst for Growth

Feedback, when embraced with an open mind and a growth mindset, can be a powerful catalyst for personal and professional growth. It provides us with the insights we need to improve, the motivation to take on new challenges, and the confidence to achieve our aspirations. As women leaders, let's harness the power of feedback to break through barriers, lead with impact, and create lasting legacies in our careers and communities.

In the spirit of the Live & Leave a Legacy newsletter, let's commit to seeking, embracing, and acting on feedback. Share your stories, learn from others, and continue to grow. Together, we can achieve remarkable success and leave a legacy of excellence for future generations of women leaders.

Zenger Folkman Study on Feedback and Engagement

- Source: Zenger Folkman Blog

Gallup Report on Feedback and Employee Engagement

- Source: Gallup Workplace Article

Harvard Business Review on Constructive Feedback

- Source: [Harvard Business Review](#)

Carol Dweck's Research on Growth Mindset

- Source: [Stanford University Profile on Carol Dweck](#)

International Listening Association on Effective Listening

- Source: International Listening Association

Deloitte Study on Continuous Feedback Culture

- Source: Deloitte Insights

Office Vibe Study on Employee Feedback

- Source: Office Vibe Blog

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) on Feedback Culture

- Source: SHRM Article

Corporate Leadership Council on Feedback
and Performance

- Source: Corporate Leadership Council
Research

Gallup Survey on Weekly Feedback

- Source: Gallup Workplace Article

McKinsey & Company Study on Feedback
Gender Gap

- Source: McKinsey & Company Women
in the Workplace 2021

Harvard Business Review on Feedback
Quality for Women

- Source: [Harvard Business Review
Article](#)