

How to Promote Feedback

Tips & Tricks for Killer Communication

The Communication-Feedback Relationship

Good communication has tremendous potential to help leaders lead people effectively. Exchanging information face-to-face, holding regularly scheduled meetings, and promoting questions are all key to helping an organization reach its goals.

Action

- Meetings are a great way to encourage feedback and the exchange of ideas, so be sure to hold them regularly.
- Develop an environment in which people feel comfortable asking questions by convincing others that you welcome their participation.
- Include a question and answer session as a customary part of every meeting. This will help make the routine exchange of information the norm.
- Review with your team that there are two types of feedback: negative and positive. Negative feedback closes the gap between where you are and where you want to be. Positive feedback confirms that you are moving in the right direction.
- If you encounter tough questions and don't have all the answers, it is perfectly acceptable to admit you don't know and offer to get back to the person. Following up earns you credibility for doing what

you said you would do, acknowledges the validity of the question, and tells the individual he or she is worthy of a response.

- In dealing with complex information, such as financial management or a shift in goals, it's a good idea not to assume that everyone understands the issue on the first hearing. Often an issue bears repeating so that people can fully comprehend it. Most everyone will benefit from a discussion in a meeting or other appropriate setting. A discussion gives people a chance to air questions and concerns that would otherwise turn into speculation and rumor.

Other ways to encourage feedback:

- Be available. Make it easy for people to approach you.
- Take more time with people. Ask more questions. Get their opinions and their reactions to changes.
- Managing more visibility by circulating and making it clear that you are an accessible manager.
- Check in regularly with the grapevine. It will probably have information before you do. Chances are it won't be accurate, which gives you the opportunity to set the record straight — and if you don't know, find out.

- Talk to everyone, formally or informally. It's surprising what people will tell you in between classes or over lunch.
- Share successes from your group as well as other groups in the organization. Nothing sells like success. When the news is often less than positive, people start to get the feeling that "we can't do anything right." The truth is, people are probably doing a lot of things right. Pass it on.
- Conduct your own communications survey. Give people a chance to tell you anonymously what they need. But listening and communicating does not always mean agreeing or doing something you don't want to do. It simply means clearing the air.

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