

How to Give Feedback (and Receive it)

(Helping each other to improve)

 <p>Purpose</p>	<p>To give team members the opportunity to practise giving and receiving effective feedback, as a means of improving individual and overall team performance.</p>
 <p>Application</p>	<p>Every team is in a constant, dynamic state of learning and growing, and the most immediate source of valuable feedback exists within the team itself.</p> <p>However, if feedback is handled insensitively, or is given on inappropriate issues, the adverse impact can be catastrophic to the team and individuals.</p> <p>Use this session prior to any other module which requires the team members to offer specific feedback to their colleagues.</p>
 <p>What happens?</p>	<p>The team are introduced to the way that people learn and discuss the four stages of the learning cycle.</p> <p>Some specific principles for effective feedback are then discussed, and four key steps are introduced.</p> <p>Finally, the team is given the opportunity to practise their new skills with other team members.</p>
 <p>Resources</p>	<p>Overall time required: 1 hour 30 minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 minutes for introduction and the learning cycle • 30 minutes to discuss the four steps for effective feedback • 30 minutes for team exercises • 15 minutes for review and closing. <p>Materials and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient Copies of the Participant Briefing Notes for the Team Exercises - <i>How to Give Effective Feedback; Team Exercises 1 - 3</i> • Flipchart Stand with Blank Pads • A pack of playing cards • Marker Pens • Blue-Tack, etc. • Paper, Pens or Pencils for Participants • A slide or Flipchart showing Kolb's Learning Cycle • A slide or flipchart displaying <i>The Principles of Effective Feedback</i>
 <p>How do I do it?</p>	<p>INTRODUCE THE SESSION</p> <p>For the team to evolve and prosper, they should be taking every opportunity to learn about their customers, their suppliers, their environment and themselves.</p>

However, learning by itself is not enough. Once you have learned something, you need to be able to translate it into improved performance. That means helping individual team members to change their **skills**, **attitudes** or **behaviours**.

All day and every day, team members will be carrying out their various tasks to the best of their individual ability. Other members of the team will inevitably be able to see better ways of carrying out specific tasks, but they may be reluctant to pass their ideas on to the other person involved.

Why do we sometimes shy away from helping others to improve? Because what is already a sensitive task can, without the right approach and skills, turn into an embarrassing and counter-productive experience.

This session will arm people with an understanding of how people learn, and give some simple steps and techniques which they can use to give feedback in a positive and inoffensive way.

HOW DO PEOPLE LEARN?

We all recognise that all individuals are quite different and, whilst one person performs a task in a certain way, colleagues alongside may carry out the same job quite differently.

At various times we have all tried to explain an idea, concept or technique to another person, only to find that they don't quite catch what we mean. How does this come about?

One obvious reason is basic communication skills. We make the very false assumption that, because we speak the same language we must therefore ascribe the same meanings to words. But perhaps there's more to it than that.

How do people learn? One answer is - differently! To illustrate this, spread a pack of playing cards on a table, and ask the team how they would like to learn a new card game.

Some will say 'Let's play, and I'll pick it up as we go.' Others will say 'Please explain the rules before we start', whilst some members will say 'I'll sit and watch whilst others play.'

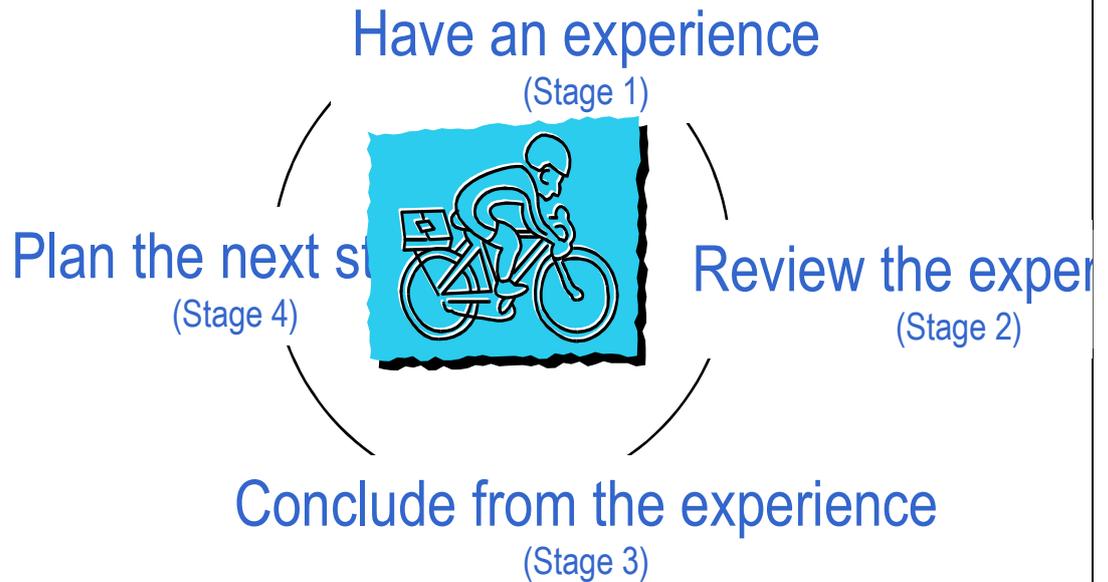
There has been a lot of research on this topic, and one idea suggests that people go round a 'learning cycle'.

THE LEARNING CYCLE

Introduce Kolb's Learning Cycle and show the slide or flipchart. Using a practical example everyone can readily understand, talk the team through the four main stages, explaining how they probably react at each stage.

HOW DO PEOPLE LEARN?

The learning cycle:



Stage 1: Have a new experience

You actually have some form of new experience – it may be good, bad, thrilling, frightening, inspiring or depressing.

Stage 2: Review the experience

You reflect on what happened, and review all aspects of the experience. What did it feel like? How long did it last? What did it cost? Who else was involved? What was the end result?

Stage 3: Conclude from the experience

You draw some conclusions from the experience. How did it happen? What might cause it to happen again? Do I want it to happen again? What might be a better outcome?

Stage 4: Plan the next steps

What can I do differently as a result? Do I need any help? Do I need any extra skills? What materials, equipment or other resources may I need?

Whilst most people progress round all four stages in the cycle, we tend to spend more time at some stages than others, depending on our own learning 'style'.

- Activists will tend to learn best from new experiences, problems or opportunities.
- Reflectors will prefer to learn by watching, observing, or thinking about an activity.
- Theorists will probably find themselves developing concepts, theories or systems to apply to a problem.
- Pragmatists may well be attracted to activities which have an immediate application, or offer the development of transferable skills.

Ask for any comments at this stage, and any personal experiences your participants may wish to add. One way to prompt discussion is to mention

- Be conscious of your body language
- Make time to deal with the problem properly
- Be positive that they can improve

Step 2: Refer to a specific situation

The objective of Step 2 is for both parties to discover what actually happened in a specific situation, and why it was not effective.

Reform the buzz groups and ask them to identify what they would do during this step. After a few minutes, do the rounds, and ask for ideas. The following guidelines will emerge:

- Deal with a specific situation, not a general sweeping statement
- Don't delay - the sooner, the better
- Discuss behaviours and what actually happened, rather than personalities
- Don't make assumptions about what happened
- Keep an open mind - truth is sometimes stranger than fiction!
- Ask questions which get the person talking
- Listen - not just to what is said, but how it is said. Observe body language
- Summarise and check for understanding

Step 3: Discuss why something was not so effective

The objective of Step 3 is to help the other person realise why a particular action or behaviour was not effective, and so begin to understand how they can improve their performance. This is the 'heart' of the whole process.

Ask your team for ideas, and ensure that the following are included in the discussion:

- Agree what would be the 'ideal' situation
- Find out what the other person would like to achieve
- Speak from personal experience - use lots of 'I' words, rather than 'we' words. For example: 'When you do XXXXX, I feel YYY'
- Concentrate on facts rather than personalities
- Ask lots of open questions . . . and listen!
- Avoid discussing situations which are beyond the person's ability to change
- Be open and honest
- Check for understanding and summarise

Step 4 - Suggest a better way of doing it

The last element is to identify a better way of handling the situation when it next arises. Ask your teams to come up with some ideas, and they will almost certainly include:

- Discuss alternative ways of dealing with a situation, asking the other person for their ideas or suggestions

- Get lots of possible solutions - don't just settle for the first idea which comes up
- Build on the other person's ideas whenever possible
- Look for Win-Win solutions, when both parties will benefit
- Develop a realistic solution, which can be implemented with the resources currently available

THE GOLDEN RULE

If there's one Golden Rule to follow, it is the following:

Make sure your colleague walks away in a positive mood, and feeling confident that he/she has the ability to improve things

TEAM EXERCISES

There are a variety of exercises which your teams can use to practise feedback skills. Rather than selecting one yourself, why not give participants the opportunity to choose for themselves?

We review three exercises in outline here, and appropriate briefing notes for participants are given at the end of the module (***How to Give Effective Feedback, Team Exercises 1 - 3***).

Briefly explain the exercises to the team, and help them to organise themselves as required. Before going off to their working areas, agree the return time, and the support you can give to the teams.

Ideally, leave them to work by themselves, calling upon your help if they get stuck. Alternatively, you may wish to visit the teams in rotation.

THE EXERCISES - IN OUTLINE

Exercise 1

Participants work in pairs, to consider and discuss the following three questions:

1. What I like about (John, Mary, Chris etc)
2. What I find difficult about (John, Mary, Chris etc)
3. What I'd like (John, Mary, Chris etc) to change

Exercise 2

Participants work in teams of 3 - 4 people, using the following questions for discussion:

1. Think of a recent experience you've had – it could be an achievement or a disappointment. How did it affect you?
2. Following this experience, what changes would you like to see in the way the group relates to you?
3. How would the group suggest you change?

Exercise 3

Participants work with a partner, and invite feedback on the following three issues:

1. What should I do more of?
2. What should I do less of?
3. What should I change?

Clearly people can choose the level of disclosure they are prepared to give. Working in small groups will enable people to be more open than they would be in a larger group.

These exercises will give an opportunity for people to discuss long standing causes of frustration, in a way which should be positive and nonthreatening.

Once everybody has decided which task they wish to tackle, and who they will be working with, it simply remains to agree timings, and working locations.

Depending on the total time available, it may be possible for people to tackle more than one round of discussions. You will need to manage this in a quiet way, so that you don't disturb any group which uses the whole time for one topic.

CLOSING THE SESSION

During your closing review, you may wish to ensure that the following issues have been discussed at some stage during the session.

For feedback to be effective, we should:

- Be sensitive to the other person's feelings
- Always be sincere - otherwise, don't do it at all!
- Give feedback on good points and successes, as well as weaknesses and disappointments.
- Recognise, but don't dwell on, areas where there is little or no scope for change.
- Be aware of your own views and prejudices.
- Remember the power of personal behaviour. People will see those around them as a role models (including you!) and they will base their behaviour on what they see you and others do.
- Focus on the importance of praise in relation to the work the work that has been done consistently well. Discussion should be centred on the strong areas of performance before moving to any developmental areas or other areas where performance could be 'even better'!
- Always express confidence that the person can achieve the agreed improvement.

Finally. . .

Learn to accept feedback yourself gracefully, and without becoming defensive!



Note

People may initially be rather wary of the exercises, but reassure them that they control totally the extent to which they disclose information about themselves.

This session will enable the team members to learn a lot about each other. Some misunderstandings will be cleared up, and others will gain fascinating insights into their colleagues' lives. Unexpected strengths will emerge, and some weaknesses too!

Once you have run this session, ensure that people give effective feedback when running other modules. The ability to give focused; timely and positive feedback is a master skill, which needs constant practice.

When you're running sessions which require the team to give feedback to others, they may need a simple way of recording and passing on comments. Suggest they use the format shown below:

Feedback for (write in the person's name)	
Things I liked	Things to improve
(write 3 things you particularly liked) Positive strokes!	(write 3 things you think they could do better)

First of all, write in the person's name at the top. They can decide later whether the feedback will be anonymous.

Next write in three things they liked or which went well, and three aspects for development. Finally, hand the form to the person concerned, either anonymously or with the opportunity to discuss the comments in more detail.

Incidentally this process is useful in a wide variety of situations, for example, when preparing for a progress review meeting, or giving feedback after a presentation.



When?

- Whenever feedback on performance is required
- When a working relationship is in need of getting back on track
- When a team is trying to determine its level of performance



HOW TO GIVE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

TEAM EXERCISE 1

Purpose

You have just spent some time discussing how to give effective feedback, in order to improve performance.

This exercise will give you the opportunity both to give, and receive feedback from a colleague.

How to do it

This particular exercise is best done 'one to one', so the first decision is to choose who you would initially like to work with.

Agree how much time you have.

Once this is settled, you should both find a quiet place, and answer the following three questions about your partner.

There is space to write brief comments.

The questions

Question 1: What I like about

Question 2: What I find difficult about

Question 3: What I'd like to change

The discussion

Now find a quiet place where you can discuss your responses to these three questions with your partner.

Remember to use the four key steps for effective feedback, which are:

1. Maintain the other person's self-esteem
2. Refer to a specific situation, the more recent...the better
3. Discuss why something was not so effective
4. Suggest a better way of doing it



HOW TO GIVE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

TEAM EXERCISE 2

Purpose

You have just spent some time discussing how to give effective feedback, in order to improve performance.

This exercise will give you the opportunity both to give, and receive feedback from colleagues.

How to do it

This particular exercise works best for 3 - 4 people, so decide who you would like to work with, and how much time you have.

Once this is settled, find a quiet place to work, and consider the following three questions about yourself. There is space to write brief comments.

The questions

Question 1: Think of a recent experience you've had – it could be an achievement or a disappointment. How did it affect you?

Question 2: Following this experience, what changes would you like to see in the way the group relates to you?

Question 3: How would the group suggest you change?

The discussion

Now find a quiet place where you can discuss your responses to these three questions with your colleagues. Take it in turns to give your own reaction, and for others to give you feedback.

When giving feedback to others, remember to use the four key steps, which are:

1. Maintain the other person's self-esteem.
2. Refer to a specific situation, the more recent...the better.

3. Discuss why something was not so effective.
4. Suggest a better way of doing it.



HOW TO GIVE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

TEAM EXERCISE 3

Purpose

You have just spent some time discussing how to give effective feedback, in order to improve performance.

This exercise will give you the opportunity both to give and receive feedback from several colleagues.

How to do it

This particular exercise is best done 'one to one', so first of all decide who you would initially like to work with. Agree how much time you have.

Once this is settled, you should both find a quiet place, and consider the following three questions about yourself. There is space to write brief comments.

The questions

Question 1: What should I do more of?

Question 2: What should I do less of?

Question 3: What should I change?

The discussion

Now find a quiet place where you can discuss your responses to these three questions with your partner.

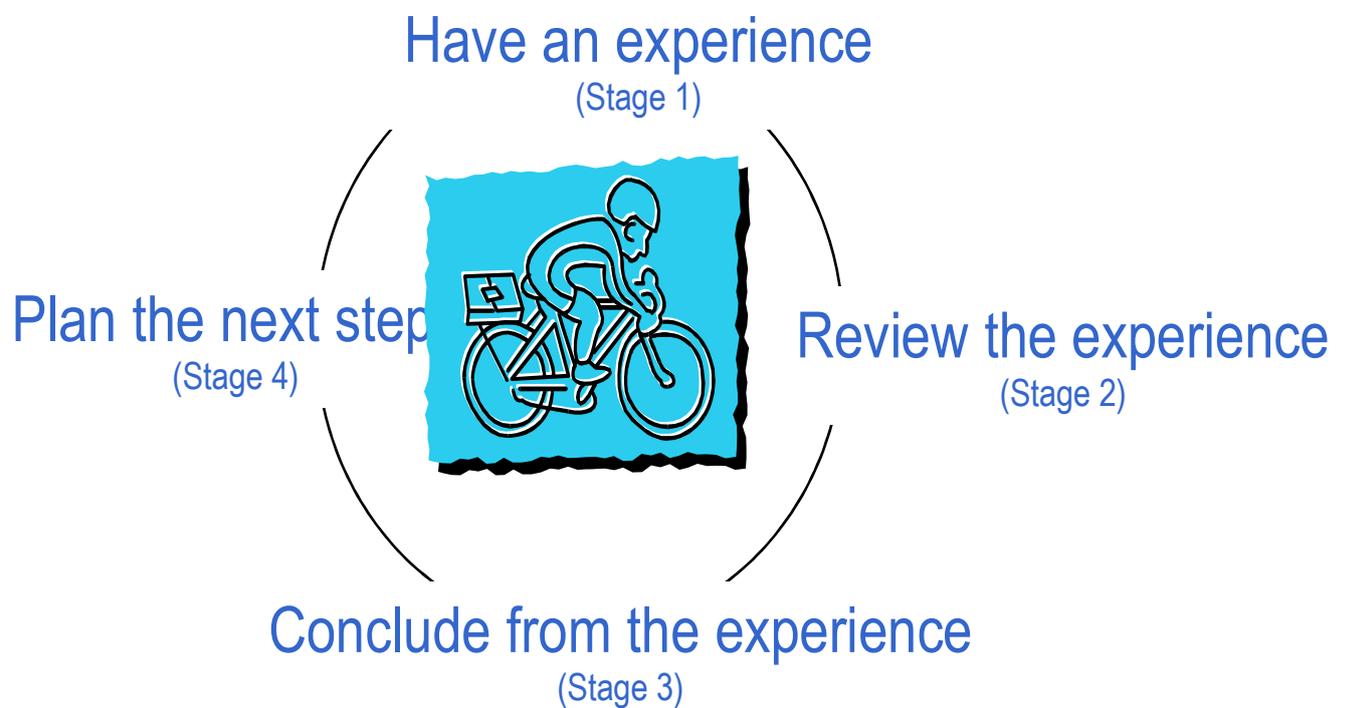
Take it in turns to discuss each other's responses, and offer feedback using the following four key Steps as guidelines:

1. Maintain the other person's self-esteem.
2. Refer to a specific situation, the more recent...the better.
3. Discuss why something was not so effective.
4. Suggest a better way of doing it.



Slide (the cycle below can be copied and pasted into a PowerPoint slide)

KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE





Slide (the information below can be copied and pasted into a PowerPoint slide)

FEEDBACK

Practice		Improved
+	=	
Feedback		Performance

How to give effective feedback:

1. Maintain the other person's self-esteem
2. Refer to a specific situation - the more recent ... the better
3. Discuss why something was not so effective
4. Suggest a better way of doing it

