



Leadership Tips

February

2019:

Asking For Feedback

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We once coached an introvert who was reluctant to solicit input from others. Sally lacked confidence in her own ideas and initially didn't have a sense of her own creativity. When we helped her with asking for feedback, she found people she approached were honored to be asked, and not only did they embrace her ideas but built upon them in a collaborative manner. When she then shared her ideas in the next staff meeting the two colleagues she'd privately approached for feedback were quick to support her ideas as they felt a kinship with her and her ideas.

Her seeking of support and feedback from colleagues is actually an example of the Japanese concept of *nemawashi*, where one first informally lays the groundwork for introduction of a proposed change or action. Sally garnered support and strengthened her ideas through feedback from others before unveiling her innovative ideas in a staff meeting. We love teaching these and other tips in our *Meetings Made Fun and Easy* and [Meetings Facilitation](#) trainings.

When was the last time you asked for feedback? Were you reluctant to ask? Were you uncomfortable showing vulnerability? Were you afraid of the feedback you might receive and its impact on you? If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, please know you are not alone.

Many professionals are nervous to ask for feedback because they are afraid of what they may learn and are uncertain what will be revealed and its impact on their self-image. And yet, if we don't ask, we may never learn ways of improving, what we're doing well or about new opportunities for growth.

Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained

Have you been hesitant to ask for feedback, whether from your manager, a co-worker or a friend who knows you well? Do you equivocate about opening yourself up to the unknown? You may presume it's safer to not ask, but the opposite could be true. If you don't ask, you may not find out how others perceive you, where you can strengthen your skills, or about other approaches to your work, communication, or leadership style.

It's common to avoid "sticking your neck out" at work for fear it will be chopped off. But if you stick your head in the sand you become oblivious to ways of improving, or new approaches to collaborating, leading, or listening.

Asking For Feedback: *Not* a Sign of Weakness

It takes a confident and secure professional to request feedback. Your willingness to open up to others signals a desire to grow, a willingness to consider others' perspectives, and a learner's mentality. Congratulations on taking such a bold step.

And when you ask for feedback from another in the workplace you are also signaling that you trust and value their perspective enough to seek it. That builds stronger bonds between colleagues.

How to Ask for Feedback

There are many ways to ask for feedback. Consider the following examples:

- Hi Carlos, I really value your opinion. I wanted to know if I could get your feedback about the tone and clarity of this memo I'm working on for the county.
- Hello Samantha. I have a difficult conversation this afternoon where I have to deliver some bad news. Would you have time to let me practice what I intend to say, and let me know if I'm firm but not too heavy-handed?
- Gerald, could I get a few minutes of your time before the end of the day? I'd value your take on what happened in today's meeting when my proposal seemed to be misunderstood. I could take you for coffee or we could do a walk-and-talk.
- Hi Kimi, Could I get your perspective on a problem that's been perplexing me? Every approach I've tried has failed miserably. I fear there's something in my strategy that's misfiring. I could really use your analytic perspective.
- Kaylin, I keep clashing with a co-worker and my polite requests aren't altering our dynamic. I need your counsel on how to break this pattern. You are so skilled at these difficult conversations. I'd love to know how you'd handle the rudeness I've been encountering.

Readying Yourself to Receive

Once you've asked for feedback, it's important that you open your mind and heart to hear what others share with you. The key is to avoid becoming defensive, argumentative or else shutting down. Just listen. It can be harder than it sounds. Perhaps you can take notes to accurately record what is said.

Good feedback will strike a constructive tone and suggest possibilities or alternate approaches for your consideration. Our last several editions of *Leadership Tips* have addressed [how to give and receive feedback](#). Visit our archived editions on our site for more tips on receiving feedback.

Even if the feedback received seems harsh or indelicately shared, consider the possibility that some of the feedback could be true or accurate. It may take time to process so allow yourself time to consider its value before discarding or dismissing it.

Whatever is shared, your immediate response is to sincerely thank the giver of the feedback. You should accept all feedback as a gift. And you could also ask for clarification or second opinions to see if others concur.

In most cases, feedback will include some praise or acknowledgment

of good traits or qualities as well as opportunities for growth. So make sure to notice the positive together with any less-than-flattering feedback you may have received.

And congratulations for having the courage to ask and the willingness to improve through gathering input from others. That's what motivated professionals do as they climb the ladder of success.



COACHING:

Do you have a leader or employee in need of coaching to improve their leadership, communication skills (including listening skills), emotional intelligence or customer service? *Let us help.*

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Contact The Consulting Team to learn more about training and consulting assistance and also one-to-one coaching for leaders and employees.

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