

**Feedforward Often More Impactful Than Feedback** by Karen Dee, Managing Partner of ACCENDO Leadership Advisory Group. Karen is a proven leader and executive coach certified in the Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching methodology.

One of the key premises of the Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching methodology is to encourage leaders and teams to participate in feedforward instead of the traditional feedback. After coaching and leading people for over the last twenty years I have seen so many incredible leaders struggle to give constructive feedback even though they believed it would help to improve overall performance. When you think about it, it's easy to understand why. Giving feedback focuses on a failed past which can't be changed. It's limited and static. Often it's received negatively and defensively.

Upon receiving my Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching Certification I had the opportunity to learn the feedforward process and quickly became a believer in this engaging, simple, quick and fun process. The exercise is especially productive when working with teams who are trying to take performance to the next level. This has proven to be so effective that my leadership advisory firm, ACCENDO, has now incorporated the exercise into our High Performance Team Building One Day Workshop.

In the feedforward team exercise participants are asked to pick one behavior that they would personally like to change to help the team significantly impact the team's collective behavioral goal (the behavior chosen by the team to take their performance to the next level). Then each participant plays two roles. In one role they are asked to feedforward or provide one or two suggestions on what each of their teammates can do *for the future* to support the collective team goal. In the second role, they are asked to receive the feedforward by listening to the suggestions *for the future* from other team members and learning as much as they can. Each participant takes notes on what is said in their one on one dialogues. They are not allowed to comment or pass judgment on the suggestions. Instead they must simply say thank you and then move on to another team member until everyone in the room has paired up and simultaneously participated. The entire process for a team of ten takes no longer than 20 minutes. After the session, individual action plans can be built by incorporating the feedforward suggestions for the future. Agreement on individual and team accountability is put in place, monitored and measured by the leader and/or coach.

As described by Marshall Goldsmith in his article, "Try Feedforward Instead of Feedback", there are numerous benefits to this fun and effective process. Feedforward helps people envision and focus on a positive future and not a failed past. It is especially suited for successful people who like getting ideas that are aimed at helping them achieve their goals. Feedforward can come from anyone who knows about the behavior looking to be changed. It does not require personal experience with the individual. People do not take feedforward as personally as feedback. Feedforward tends to be much faster and more efficient than feedback. And, feedforward can cover almost all of the same "material" as feedback...without the often associated negative judgment. Additionally and perhaps most importantly, people tend to listen more attentively to feedforward, thus making it more likely that they will practice and change for the better.

I am not suggesting that the feedforward process should completely replace feedback. There certainly is a place for feedback, for example in performance appraisals where constructive feedback done in the right manner is important and productive. The bottom line is that in daily interactions feedforward often is more impactful than feedback.

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