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Feedback for Leaders

Leaders must get consistent feedback from their team members and peers...and they must act on it.

The first time I asked for feedback, it really sucked. I felt like I had been punched in the gut. I thought maybe I should just walk away from the company that I had helped build. I didn't see a way out of the hole I had dug. There was no light at the end of the tunnel for me.

I gave my team and peers an anonymous evaluation form, encouraged them to be honest and then spent two days being hurt, angry, and in denial, Then I put on my big boy pants and decided to take each fault, each area of improvement, and order them based on two things:

1. How bad I was (based on average score of the feedback). The lower my score, the worse I was.
2. How quickly I thought I could improve.

I got a mentor, read voraciously and developed an action plan based on improving these areas of weakness.

I focused on only one area of improvement each month and listed seven core areas of improvement. In seven months, I figured I would be a completely different leader. I also figured that within only a few months I would be a decent enough leader that people would start to notice the changes I had made. Within six months, I thought, I would start to develop trust with my team and peers. Within one year, I would actually be able to lead effectively.

Here were the seven areas I chose to improve upon in order:

1. Leading by example by arriving to work early and staying until at least 5:00 pm

This was the easiest change. It required no major life changes or learning. It only required that I show up by 8:15 every day and stay until at least 5:00. That meant I was there 15 minutes before my team arrived and left at the same time or slightly after they did. For one month, I did just that with no exceptions. After a month, I had the flexibility to get a mid-day long lunch if needed or leave early for the dentist, but for one month I did not. *I built momentum for the next change as well.*

2. Humility

I truly thought everyone else's ideas sucked and mine were awesome. [See #4 in my post on how to make a team member cry.](#)

3. Active encouragement

This meant really looking for positive performance and actions and rewarding it.

4. Controlling emotions, particularly anger

I was known as a hothead. I had to keep this in check. This was the hardest for me but I fought through it. I took two months to get to the point where I felt like I could move on to the fifth one.

5. Being positive

Think of me prior to the feedback as [Eeyore](#) with a temper. There wasn't a cloud I couldn't find in someone's silver lining.

6. Being available and open and being transparent

I had developed a closed-door policy essentially. I had to actively make myself more available. This was made much easier by actually being there physically (point #1)

7. Holding people accountable

This had to come last because I had to be in a positive position to do this.

After 3 months I was working the right hours, I was more humble and open to others opinions, and was actively encouraging my team. The results were already astounding.

By the eight month mark, life had changed. By the end of a year, I read the reviews and realized that I had succeeded in 6/7 areas. I [continued to struggle](#) with holding people accountable well into my next leadership position.

If you want to be a better leader, the first step is getting feedback on your strengths and weaknesses. You must ask for it. Then you must make a plan to improve and start improving. Your areas of improvement will differ from mine, but the method of discovering, assessing, and improving is the same if you want to succeed.

Have you asked or been asked for feedback? What were the results?

Do You Want to Know My Number One Leadership Tool? [Find out what it is here.](#)