

拭着用正馈来代替反馈

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提供反馈已经被认为是作为领导的一个不可缺少的技能。作为他们努力实现本组织的目标, 员工需要知道他们做的如何以及他们的表现是否符合他们的领导的期望。他们需要学会哪些他们已经做的很好, 哪些还需改进。传统的来讲, 这些信息已经被以“向下反馈”的形式在领导和员工之间沟通。就象员工需从领导者那里得到反馈, 而领导者也能够受益于来自员工的反馈。员工能提供有用的投入在有效的程序和过程上, 同样也投入对管理者在他们的领导效能上。这些“向上反馈”已经越来越普遍的以360度多评估出现。

但是, 所有类型的信息反馈有一个根本的问题, 那就是它着重于过去, 就哪些已经发生—而不是无限的各种机会会在未来发生。因此, 反馈可能是有限和静态的, 与膨胀和动态相对。

在过去几年, 我观察了超过一万位领导, 如同他们参加了一个引人入胜的经验的训练。在训练中, 每个参与者要求充当二个角色。在一个角色, 他们被要求提供正馈—即给别人的未来提供建议并且尽可能的帮助他们。在第二个角色, 他们却被要求接受正馈—也就是要倾听对未来的建议和尽他们最大的可能去学。这类典型训练通常为期10-15分钟, 一般来说, 参与者都有6-7个对话的时间。在这次训练中要求与会者:

- 1 选择一个他们想改变的行为。这种行为的改变应该成为他们生活中的一个重大的正面的差异。
- 2 描述这种行为去任意地选择下面的参加者。做一对一的对话。它可以做的很简单, 例如, “我想成为一个更好的倾听者”。
- 3 请求正馈—两项建议。为将来也许会帮助他们在他们所选择的行为上达到一个积极的变化。如果参加者曾经一起工作过, 是不容许他们有任何有关过去的反馈。只允许他们给将来提供建议。
- 4 细心聆听建议, 并做笔记。与会者均不得对建议有任何关系, 不容许评论建议, 甚至做正面主观声明, 譬如, “是一个好想法”。
- 5 感谢其他与会者提出的建议。
- 6 问问其他人什么是他们想改变的。
- 7 提供正馈—两项建议。目的在于帮助其他人改变。
- 8 当感谢建议, 说: “我们欢迎你”时, 在给予和接收正馈的整个过程中通常需大约2分钟。
- 9 找到另一位与会者, 并不断重复该过程, 直到训练被停止。

当训练完毕, 我要求与会者提供一个最能描述他们对这种经验反应的词, 并要求他们来完成句子, “这个训练是...”。被提供的词几乎总是非常正面的, 譬如“伟大的”, “给予精力的”, “有用的”或“有帮助的。”被提及的最共同的词就是“乐趣!”

当我们接受反馈的时候，我们大多数人在想，什么是定论，教练及发展的想法呢？有趣！

十一个原因去尝试正馈

参与者随后询问为什么这次演习被看作是有趣和有益的并与痛苦，困窘或难受相对。他们给这个答案提供了一个很好的解释，阐明为什么作为一种发展工具正馈比反馈往往更有益。

1. 我们可以改变未来。可我们不能改变过去。

正馈帮助人们构想和集中于正面的未来，而不是一个失败的过去。运动员经常被训练使用正馈。赛车驾驶者们被教导，“看道路的前方，而不是看墙上，” 篮球运动员被教导去设想篮球将会投入篮中并且想象是完善的投篮。从给人们一些主意关于怎样才能使他们更加成功上，我们能增加他们在将来达到这个成功的机会。

2. 以帮助人们得到“的”，比证明他们是“错误的”更有成效。

负面反馈经常表现在一个“让我证明你是错误的”训练上。这往往会让接收人方面产生防卫性和让发送者方面感到不舒服。甚至建设性地提供的反馈也经常被视为消极的，它必然涉及到讨论错误，不足和问题。正馈，在另一方面，几乎总是被看作是正面的，因为它着重于解决方案-而不是问题。

3. 正馈由其适合与成功的人士。

成功的人士喜欢会瞄准帮助他们达到他们的目标的想法。他们倾向于抵抗消极评断。我们都倾向于接受与我们看自己的方式一致的反馈。我们并且倾向于拒绝或否认与我们看自己方式不一致的反馈。成功的人士倾向于有一个非常正面的自我形象。我观察过很多成功的行政官对正馈的反应（甚至是享受），我不确定，同样是这些人会对反馈有如此积极的反应。

4. 正馈可以来自任何知道自己任务的人，它不要求有独特的个人经验。

在曾经描述过的训练中有一个非常常见的正面反应是，参与者是很惊奇他们能从陌生人中学到如此多的东西！例如，如果您想成为一个更好的听众，几乎任何一类领导人都能给你一些如何提高的建议，他们不必认识你。反馈要求你知道这个人，而正馈只要求有一些为完成任务的好的构想。

5. 人们不象采取个人化地反馈一样去采取正馈。

从理论上讲，建设性的反馈应该“着眼于业绩，而不是人”。在实践中，几乎所有的反馈都是采取个人化的（无论它是如何被提供的）。成功人士的认同感是与他们的工作高度连结的。越是成功的人士，越是倾向于真实。这是很难让一个专业化的反馈是不去考虑个人。正馈不能涉及个人的批评，因为它讨论的一些事情还未发生！正面的建议往往被看作是客观的意见 - 个人的批评却经常被视为人身攻击。

6. 反馈可以加强个人的成见和消极的自我满足的预言。

正馈能够强化改变的可能性，反馈可以加强失败的感受。我们当中有多少人曾被自己的配偶，其他重要的人或朋友好“帮助过”，为了指出我们有缺点

的历史，这些人似乎有接近照相机一样的能力去记忆他们曾与我们一同分担过的我们以往的“罪孽”，消极反馈可以用来加强这方面的宣传，“你就是这个样子”。正馈是基于以建议的接受者能在未来做出积极的改变为根据。

7. 面对它！我们大多数的人怨恨得到负反馈，而我们也不喜欢给他人。

我曾回顾了50多家公司的360度简要反馈报告，该项目，“提供发展反馈及时”，并“鼓励和接受建设性批评，”在同事对领导人的满意程度上分数几乎总是接近底部。传统的训练似乎没有产生太大的差异。假如领导在提供反馈上做的更好些及每次成绩评价表格中“有提高”，在现在多数应该是极好的！领导不是很擅长给予或接受负反馈。这将不见得在不远的将来会改变。

8. 正馈可以象反馈一样涵盖几乎所有的同样的“材料”。

设想您在执行委员会面前做了一个可怕的介绍。你的经理宁愿待在房间内而不愿让你“重温”这尴尬的经历，你的经理可能会通过给你对未来的建议来帮助你为将来的情况介绍作好准备。这些建议可能是非常具体和仍用一种正面的方式出现。这样的话，你的经理既能“包涵相同点”，又不感到尴尬，并且没有使你感到更加羞辱。

9. 正馈比反馈往往要快得多并且更有效。

给成功人士意见要很技巧地去说，“这里有四个计划为将来作好准备。请正面的去接受这些内容，即使你只采用了两个意见，你仍然是超前的，只要忽略对你没有意义的部分。”以这种做法几乎不会浪费时间在判断意见是高质量的还是错误的。这“辩论”时间通常是消极的；它可能占去很多时间，并且不是经常很有成效的。对发送者来说去掉评断，会使整个过程变得更加乐观，对接受者也一样。成功的人往往对自己的决定有较高的需要，他们倾向于接受他们“买进”的想法，而拒绝感觉被“强迫”的。

10. 正馈可以成为一个有用的工具，适用于与经理人，同侪和团队成员。

不论对错，反馈同评断联系在一起。这可导致非常消极的-甚至是职业生涯的限制-意想不到的后果当适用于经理人或同侪。正馈并不意味着评断优势。它是更侧重于作为一个有用的“同路人”，而不是“专家”。象这样它就可以更容易的从没有权力或权威的人中得到信息。一个出色的团队建设，就是要每个团队成员问：“我怎样才能更好地在未来帮助我们的团队？”，并从团队成员（在一对一的对话）中听取正馈。

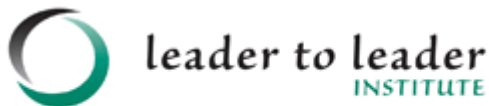
11. 人们往往更注意地听取正馈而不是反馈。

一位正馈训练的参与者指出，“我认为在这次训练中我听到的比我以往任何时候做的工作都更有效！”当记者问为什么，他回答说：“一般情况下，当其他人演讲时，我正忙于准备那将会让我显的聪明的回复-我并非完全在听他们的讲话。对于正馈唯一容许我做的回复就是表示，‘谢谢’。因为我不须担心准备聪明的答复-就可以集中精力，听取其他人”！

总之，这篇文章的意图并不是暗示领导者决不应该给反馈或成绩评价应该被摒弃。其意图是，在日常互动中，查看如何正馈往往能得到最好的反馈。除了其有效性和效率，正馈可以让生活更愉快。当经理问他：“你对上次接受

反馈的感觉如何?” 他们最常见的反应是非常消极的。当经理问他们接收正反馈后的感受如何，他们的回答说，正反馈不仅是有益的，而且还是有趣的！优质的信息交流象胶水一样把各个层次和各部门之间组织在一起。通过使用正反馈和鼓励他人使用它，领导者能够极大地提高他们的组织信息沟通的质量，确保正确的讯息传达，那些接受它的人并愿意接受其内容。其结果是一个更加充满活力，更加开放的组织之一，其雇员专注于对未来的承诺，而不是纠缠于过去的错误。

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Mission: To strengthen the leadership of the social sector

Try *FeedForward* Instead of Feedback

Adapted from *Leader to Leader*, Summer 2002

By Marshall Goldsmith

Providing feedback has long been considered to be an essential skill for leaders. As they strive to achieve the goals of the organization, employees need to know how they are doing. They need to know if their performance is in line with what their leaders expect. They need to learn what they have done well and what they need to change. Traditionally, this information has been communicated in the form of “downward feedback” from leaders to their employees. Just as employees need feedback from leaders, leaders can benefit from feedback from their employees. Employees can provide useful input on the effectiveness of procedures and processes and as well as input to managers on their leadership effectiveness. This “upward feedback” has become increasingly common with the advent of 360° multi-rater assessments.

But there is a fundamental problem with all types of feedback: it focuses on a *past*, on what has already occurred—not on the infinite variety of opportunities that can happen in the future. As such, feedback can be limited and static, as opposed to expansive and dynamic.

Over the past several years, I have observed more than ten thousand leaders as they participated in a fascinating experiential exercise. In the exercise, participants are each asked to play two roles. In one role, they are asked provide *feedforward*¹—that is, to give someone else suggestions for the future and *help as much as they can*. In the second role, they are asked to accept *feedforward*—that is, to listen to the suggestions for the future and *learn as much as they can*. The exercise typically lasts for 10-15 minutes, and the average participant has 6-7 dialogue sessions. In the exercise participants are asked to:

- Pick one behavior that they would like to change. *Change in this behavior should make a significant, positive difference in their lives.*
- Describe this behavior to randomly selected fellow participants. *This is done in one-on-one dialogues. It can be done quite simply, such as, “I want to be a better listener.”*
- Ask for *feedforward*—for two suggestions for the future that might help them achieve a positive change in their selected behavior. *If participants have worked together in the past, they are not allowed to give ANY feedback about the past. They are only allowed to give ideas for the future.*
- Listen attentively to the suggestions and take notes. *Participants are not allowed to comment on the suggestions in any way. They are not allowed to critique the suggestions or even to make positive judgmental statements, such as, “That’s a good idea.”*
- Thank the other participants for their suggestions.
- Ask the other persons what they would like to change.
- Provide *feedforward* - two suggestions aimed at helping the other person change.
- Say, “You are welcome.” when thanked for the suggestions. *The entire process of both giving and receiving feedforward usually takes about two minutes.*
- Find another participant and keep repeating the process until the exercise is stopped.

When the exercise is finished, I ask participants to provide one word that best describes their reaction to this experience. I ask them to complete the sentence, “This exercise was ...”. The words provided are almost always extremely positive, such as “great”, “energizing”, “useful” or “helpful.” The most common word mentioned is “fun!”

¹ The term “feedforward” was coined in a discussion that I had with Jon Katzenbach, author of *The Wisdom of Teams*, *Real Change Leaders* and *Peak Performance*.

What is the *last* word that most of us think about when we receive feedback, coaching and developmental ideas? Fun!

Eleven Reasons to Try FeedForward

Participants are then asked why this exercise is seen as fun and helpful as opposed to painful, embarrassing or uncomfortable. Their answers provide a great explanation of why feedforward can often be more useful than feedback as a developmental tool.

1. ***We can change the future. We can't change the past.*** Feedforward helps people envision and focus on a positive future, not a failed past. Athletes are often trained using feedforward. Racecar drivers are taught to, "Look at the road ahead, not at the wall." Basketball players are taught to envision the ball going in the hoop and to imagine the perfect shot. By giving people ideas on how they can be even more successful, we can increase their chances of achieving this success in the future.
2. ***It can be more productive to help people be "right," than prove they were "wrong."*** Negative feedback often becomes an exercise in "let me prove you were wrong." This tends to produce defensiveness on the part of the receiver and discomfort on the part of the sender. Even constructively delivered feedback is often seen as negative as it necessarily involves a discussion of mistakes, shortfalls, and problems. Feedforward, on the other hand, is almost always seen as positive because it focuses on solutions – not problems.
3. ***Feedforward is especially suited to successful people.*** Successful people like getting ideas that are aimed at helping them achieve their goals. They tend to resist negative judgment. We all tend to accept feedback that is consistent with the way we see ourselves. We also tend to reject or deny feedback that is inconsistent with the way we see ourselves. Successful people tend to have a very positive self-image. I have observed many successful executives respond to (and even enjoy) feedforward. I am not sure that these same people would have had such a positive reaction to feedback.
4. ***Feedforward can come from anyone who knows about the task. It does not require personal experience with the individual.*** One very common positive reaction to the previously described exercise is that participants are amazed by how much they can learn from people that they don't know! For example, if you want to be a better listener, almost any fellow leader can give you ideas on how you can improve. They don't have to know you. Feedback requires knowing about the person. Feedforward just requires having good ideas for achieving the task.
5. ***People do not take feedforward as personally as feedback.*** In theory, constructive feedback is supposed to "focus on the performance, not the person".

In practice, almost all feedback is taken personally (no matter how it is delivered). Successful people's sense of identity is highly connected with their work. The more successful people are, the more this tends to be true. It is hard to give a dedicated professional feedback that is not taken personally. *Feedforward* cannot involve a personal critique, since it is discussing something that has not yet happened! Positive suggestions tend to be seen as objective advice – personal critiques are often viewed as personal attacks.

6. ***Feedback can reinforce personal stereotyping and negative self-fulfilling prophecies.*** *Feedforward* can reinforce the possibility of change. Feedback can reinforce the feeling of failure. How many of us have been “helped” by a spouse, significant other or friend, who seems to have a near-photographic memory of our previous “sins” that they share with us in order to point out the history of our shortcomings. Negative feedback can be used to reinforce the message, “this is just the way you are”. *Feedforward* is based on the assumption that the receiver of suggestions can make positive changes in the future.
7. ***Face it! Most of us hate getting negative feedback, and we don't like to give it.*** I have reviewed summary 360° feedback reports for over 50 companies. The items, “provides developmental feedback in a timely manner” and “encourages and accepts constructive criticism” almost always score near the bottom on co-worker satisfaction with leaders. Traditional training does not seem to make a great deal of difference. If leaders got better at providing feedback every time the performance appraisal forms were “improved”, most should be perfect by now! Leaders are not very good at giving or receiving negative feedback. It is unlikely that this will change in the near future.
8. ***Feedforward can cover almost all of the same “material” as feedback.*** Imagine that you have just made a terrible presentation in front of the executive committee. Your manager is in the room. Rather than make you “relive” this humiliating experience, your manager might help you prepare for future presentations by giving you suggestions for the future. These suggestions can be very specific and still delivered in a positive way. In this way your manager can “cover the same points” without feeling embarrassed and without making you feel even more humiliated.
9. ***Feedforward tends to be much faster and more efficient than feedback.*** An excellent technique for giving ideas to successful people is to say, “Here are four ideas for the future. Please accept these in the positive spirit that they are given. If you can only use two of the ideas, you are still two ahead. Just ignore what doesn't make sense for you.” With this approach almost no time gets wasted on judging the quality of the ideas or “proving that the ideas are wrong”. This “debate” time is usually negative; it can take up a lot of time, and it is often not very productive. By eliminating judgment of the ideas, the process becomes much more positive for the sender, as well as the receiver. Successful people tend

to have a high need for self-determination and will tend to accept ideas that they “buy” while rejecting ideas that feel “forced” upon them.

10. ***Feedforward can be a useful tool to apply with managers, peers and team members.*** Rightly or wrongly, feedback is associated with judgment. This can lead to very negative – or even career-limiting - unintended consequences when applied to managers or peers. *Feedforward* does not imply superiority of judgment. It is more focused on being a helpful “fellow traveler” than an “expert”. As such it can be easier to hear from a person who is not in a position of power or authority. An excellent team building exercise is to have each team member ask, “How can I better help our team in the future?” and listen to *feedforward* from fellow team members (in one-on-one dialogues.)

11. ***People tend to listen more attentively to feedforward than feedback.*** One participant in the *feedforward* exercise noted, “I think that I listened more effectively in this exercise than I ever do at work!” When asked why, he responded, “Normally, when others are speaking, I am so busy *composing* a reply that will make sure that I sound smart – that I am not fully *listening* to what the other person is saying. In *feedforward* the only reply that I am allowed to make is ‘thank you’. Since I don’t have to worry about composing a clever reply – I can focus all of my energy on listening to the other person!”

In summary, the intent of this article is not to imply that leaders should never give feedback or that performance appraisals should be abandoned. The intent is to show how *feedforward* can often be preferable to feedback in day-to-day interactions. Aside from its effectiveness and efficiency, *feedforward* can make life a lot more enjoyable. When managers are asked, “How did you feel the last time you received feedback?” their most common responses are very negative. When managers are asked how they felt after receiving *feedforward*, they reply that *feedforward* was not only useful, it was also fun!

Quality communication—between and among people at all levels and every department and division—is the glue that holds organizations together. By using *feedforward*—and by encouraging others to use it—leaders can dramatically improve the quality of communication in their organizations, ensuring that the right message is conveyed, and that those who receive it are receptive to its content. The result is a much more dynamic, much more open organization—one whose employees focus on the promise of the future rather than dwelling on the mistakes of the past.

Goldsmith's, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, is the Harold Longman Award Business Book of the Year for 2007. All of his articles and video are online (complimentary) www.MarshallGoldsmithLibrary.com. Email: Marshall@MarshallGoldsmith.com

