



Working with Feedback – Ideas from Sixth Sense

It's the start of the year. That often means feedback on what we have done over the past 12 months and/or you giving feedback to others. Feedback is great but where next? Here are some practical ideas from the business psychologists at Sixth Sense. You'll find these and many more on our website at www.sane.works and if you have your own favourites, get in touch and we'll add your ideas in.

The bold text represents some feedback that you might have had or that you want to give. The text that follows suggests what you should do about it or the guidance that you could offer to others.

Each week, for the next six weeks, we will tackle a common theme. Our first one is the problem of **delegating**. And don't worry if you miss a week as back copies can be found at:

www.sixthsenseconsulting.co.uk/blogs

Delegating

- **No communication?** Talk to each member of your team; find out what sort of tasks they would like to do and consider how they compare to the current or expected work of the team.
- **Not sure where to begin?** Draw up a list of the tasks you have. For each one, mark on a sliding scale where it falls between 'must be done by me' and 'can be done by someone else'. Think very carefully about your choices. If you tend to keep things to yourself, push yourself to see what else you could delegate. If you tend to over-estimate other people's autonomy, push yourself to consider if others genuinely have the capability to handle a task.
- **Need practice?** Take on a role outside work where you have to delegate tasks effectively; e.g. coordinate a fundraising event, join a school PTA, or chair a committee for a social or religious group.
- **Uninvolved staff?** Identify a problem that is having an impact on your staff. Rather than solving it yourself, encourage your team to generate potential solutions. Involve them in the whole process of making the decision and implementing the most appropriate solution.

- **In the routine of doing things yourself?** Go through your diary and actively delegate tasks to others, e.g. appoint someone to stand in for you at a meeting.
- **Not sure how to delegate?** Take time to consider the personal style of each person you delegate to. Think about their capabilities, their confidence levels and how structured they are. Use this to inform how you should delegate to each person: how small are the chunks you need to break things down into; how regularly will you need to touch base with them; how much reassurance you need to provide; how much freedom to let them determine their own way; what facts, contacts or approaches you need to give them.
- **Need inspiration?** Ask people in similar jobs to yourself what tasks they delegate. Find out how and why they do this. Discuss how they balance managing risk with giving people opportunities to grow.
- **Not being understood?** End 1:1s by asking the other person to summarise the actions. Make sure the requests you made have landed – you may need to go over requirements again or in more detail. Is your list of actions to take away longer or shorter than theirs? Have you got the balance right of things you will do versus things they need to do?
- **Too directive?** Encourage others to take personal responsibility by placing the person firmly in the driver's seat and ask as many open questions when you attempt to guide others rather than be prescriptive in your advice.
- **Miss-trusting?** Ensure that you push yourself to trust others to take accountability rather than just falling back in doing things on your own or ask for tasks to be completed by others instead of delegating accountability for outcomes. Identify if you feel scared at letting go of the control and letting others take over the responsibility. Think back to the first time you took real responsibility and someone trusted you and let go. Think about how valuable that experience was for you and how you build upon what you learned from it today. Then think about how you can be instrumental in creating the same kind of growth experience for someone else by letting go and letting them get on with it with our support in the background of course, should they need it.
- **Struggling to motivate others?** If you struggle to get others motivated to take on board responsibilities set them stretching targets and let them know what you are expecting of them. Usually people grow with the level of challenge as long as it is not too stretching or too comfortably within their comfort zone. Knowing what the appropriate amount of stretch is for someone to become motivated to learn and grow and show you what they can achieve on their own is key here.
- **Causing confusion?** Make sure that you do not leave people confused. Instead give clear direction in terms of what you are expecting of them and what the parameters they can operate within are. This includes, deliverables, what by when, what they are accountable for and what they are not accountable for. What the consequences of success and failure are. Ask the person to repeat these to you so you can be sure they have fully understood and committed to the delivery targets.
- **Micro-managing?** Do you have a tendency to micro manage or use monitoring as an excuse to get overly involved in their work? If so think about how you would feel if somebody did that to you? How demotivating it would be? How it might turn you off the goals in their entirety? Force yourself to step aside and give them free rein.
- **Biased?** Do you tend to delegate responsibilities to your usual suspects whom you know will perform to your requirements and already know how to delivery upon what you are asking for? If so - think again. By doing that you fail to develop the succession and allow the organisation to develop newer members of staff or spread the skills around. Instead think about partnering people up on delivery, one who know how to do it to support and help one who is new to it but has the potential to learn or the need to learn a particular skill related to the delegated piece of work.

Further Reading

Books

Coaching for Performance: The Principles and Practices of Coaching and Leadership, by John Whitmore (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009). A reliable standby.

If You Want It Done Right, You Don't Have to Do It Yourself: The Power of Effective Delegation by Donna M. Genett (Linden Publishing, 2004). An easy, entertaining read. Quite light.

Other Resources

Videos

Why good leaders make you feel safe.

Simon Sinek Ted Talk Published on May 2014

“What makes a great leader? Management theorist Simon Sinek suggests, it’s someone who makes their employees feel secure, who draws staffers into a circle of trust. But creating trust and safety — especially in an uneven economy — means taking on big responsibility.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmyZMtPVodo>

Audios

A Coach's Dilemma: Resistance to Feedback.

Podcast, Center for Creative Leadership, 'A Coach's Dilemma: Resistance to Feedback', (3 minutes and 32 seconds) at:

<https://www.ccl.org/multimedia/podcast/a-coachs-dilemma-resistance-to-feedback-2/?pageId=1784>

Internet

Delegating authority, skills, tasks and the process of effective delegation.

<http://www.businessballs.com/delegation.htm>