



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 fourth one is the knotty problem of **decision making**. And don't worry if you miss a week as back copies can be found at: www.sixthsenseconsulting.co.uk/blogs

Decision Making

- **Stuck?** Identify someone who is good at making well thought-through decisions. Talk to them about their approach; ask them to describe how they tackled a recent problem.
- **Thinking too narrow?** Take a work problem and ask a range of people for their opinions. Draw on their experiences to reach a solution. Stop to consider who else might have a view? How will the decision play out in the longer term?
- **Hasty?** Before you decide, stop and think about whether you need to gather more information about an issue or if you have enough experience to make an intuitive choice. You can always check your decision with analysis before acting on it.

- **Negative?** If you tend to look for the flaws in a situation, take a step back to challenge yourself to consider the opportunities, or what could be done if a few questions were answered.
- **In your own bubble?** Ask your colleagues for feedback on how you have made a recent decision. What are you good and what do you need to improve?
- **Lack of balance?** Use SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) as a tool to help ensure balanced consideration of an issue.
- **Not sure where to begin?** Define the issue, problem or situation you intend to decide on and map out a process for how to proceed before you begin your decision-making process. Define the context and the parameters and your intended outcome and success criteria up front. Then gather all the relevant data, analyse it, interpret it and test your own assumption involving the right people along the way to help you reach the right conclusions and test your thinking out with. After the decision, monitor what happens, what worked, what didn't, how close were you to achieving your success criteria, and why? Build on this learning when you repeat the process for the next decision you need to take.
- **Too broad brush?** When analysing data or information avoid being imprecise or slap dash with your evaluations. Apply the same degree of intense rigor each time and hold yourself to account for it. Ensure that you challenge all your own assumptions and are critical of previous learnings and evaluate each new situation or decision in its own right rather than draw too heavily on an earlier similar, yet still unrelated situation. Anticipate potential issues, engage your stakeholders in the process rather than simply informing them of your decision and continue to re-evaluate your decisions, re-tweaking along the way, before you reach your final decision.
- **Over-thinking?** Recognise your own tendency to either get lost in the details, spend too much time on the less important details or activities and failing to focus your efforts and drive decisions at speed. Begin practicing making decisions before you have all that data or based on certain assumptions. Slowly become confident making definite decisions based upon less and less definite information and data.
- **Over-confident?** Make sure that you are balanced in your approach to considering all the factors and facets of your decision making process. Identify your own pitfalls relating to honing in on a specific piece of data and favour it in your analysis over other equally important points. Make sure that you seek and listen to many alternative views and fully listen to and appreciate the arguments of others who hold a different view on the potential best decisions and take their arguments into account in your final decision making process rather than dismiss them.
- **Poor timing?** Ensure that you consider the best time to make a decision. Is it a decision that needs to be made without delay or is it better suspended until a particular piece of information or data point has become available? Make sure you take the right approach dependent upon your above analysis so you do not delay too long on some decisions that can be made now, or move to quickly on decisions that would benefit from a more considerate approach.

Further Reading

Books

The Thinking Manager's Toolbox: Effective Processes for Problem Solving and Decision Making, by William J. Altier (Oxford University Press, 1999). In print for a while but still has some good ideas.

Business Strategy: A Guide to Effective Decision-Making, by Jeremy Kourdi (Economist Books, 2003). Also been around for a while now but includes lots of useful ideas. Quite commercially oriented.

The Thinking Manager's Toolbox: Effective Processes for Problem Solving and Decision Making, by William J. Altier (Oxford University Press, 1999). This one has a more analytical approach

The Mind of the Strategist, by Kenichi Ohmae (McGraw-Hill Inc. 1991).

It's Not Luck, by Eli Goldratt (Routledge, 2016). This is a novel underpinned by various management techniques – no heavy research, but raises awareness of relevant issues, as well as being a good read.

Thinkers 50: The Art and Science of Strategy Creation and Execution, by Stuart Crainer and Des Dearlove (McGraw-Hill, 2014).

Black Box Thinking, by John Syed, (John Murray, 2016). Best seller about changing our attitudes to failure and the implications for success

Other Resources

Internet

SWOT Analysis - Brief SWOT overview and links to related topics.

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

The 5 whys – A Six Sigma tool for getting to the root cause of a problem.

<https://www.isixsigma.com/tools-templates/cause-effect/determine-root-cause-5-whys/>

PEST Analysis – a business measurement tool.

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