

Seek out feedback to grow as a leader

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Everyone loves praise. But criticism can be just as helpful. As a leader, you can expect both positive and negative feedback. What you do with it can define your contribution.

Praise (as long as it's genuine) can often be self-explanatory. The message is, "Keep doing this. It's working!" You can look for ways to build on strengths and increase their impact and scope.

When interpreting criticism, it can help if your first step is a step back. That is to say: Try not to take it personally. Remember, it's about the work and how it impacts your team and your customers. It can often point the way to opportunities for improvement. Think about it: A valid criticism (whether phrased in a constructive manner or not) can be the spark of a great new innovation!

Ways to get more feedback

Maybe you're one of the lucky ones who gets so much feedback you can't possibly process it all. But a lot of managers say that even when they ask for feedback, they don't get enough. Try some of these tips for hearing more about what matters to your team and your customers.

Pave a two-way street. Give praise generously. And give constructive feedback in a non-threatening way. Ask for and act on your team's feedback often. Set up customer surveys to see if the people you're serving can give your team ideas for working even smarter to help them.

Use or create anonymous employee surveys. Some manager development programs include the use of surveys. They gather feedback from those with whom you work the closest and help you identify your strengths and areas for improvement. Anonymous feedback can help you see traits that may fall in your personal "blind spot." If you get feedback you're not happy about, remember: The first step to fixing a less than flattering perception is to know it exists!

Keep your ear to the ground. Your team gives you informal feedback every day. It's in the way they work with you. Do they trust you to make things better for them? Do they believe you'll exhaust all avenues to help them? Or do they sweep bad news under the rug because they're afraid of your response?

Ask for real-time thoughts. Hold a town hall meeting or conference call to see what's on your team members' minds. Or host an online session through instant messaging or another virtual platform. Asking for feedback in response to news or process changes can be a great way to identify and start a plan to overcome any resistance to change.

By being more conscious of the feedback you're already getting and actively asking for more, you can grow as a leader and improve your team's results.