



CUTTINGS

Number 65 December 2006

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Feedforward instead of Feedback

Marshall Goldsmith proposes this idea for more effective performance development in organisations.

He identifies a fundamental problem with all types of feedback: it focuses on a past, on what has already occurred—not on the opportunities that can happen in the future. As such, feedback is limited and static, rather than expansive and dynamic.

In an experiment now covering more than ten thousand people, Goldsmith asks participants to provide and to accept feedforward—give someone else and listen to suggestions for the future and help or learn as much as they can. Participants one word answer that best describes their reaction to this experience are almost always extremely positive, with the most common word: "fun!"

Rightly or wrongly, feedback is associated with judgment. This can lead to very negative unintended consequences when applied to managers or peers. Feedforward does not imply superiority of judgment. It is more focused on being a helpful "fellow traveller" than an "expert".

It is therefore easier to hear from a person who is not in a position of power or authority.

Goldsmith's intent with the idea of feedforward is not to imply that leaders should never give feedback or that appraisals should be abandoned but to show how it 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 it was not only useful, it was also fun!

Quality communication is the glue that holds organisations together. By using feedforward leaders can ensure 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 organisation—one whose employees focus on the promise of the future rather than dwelling on the mistakes of the past.

10 Reasons to Try Feedforward

1. We can change the future. We can't change the past.
2. It can be more productive to help people be "right," than prove they were "wrong."
3. Feedforward is especially suited to successful people.
4. Feedforward can come from anyone who knows about the task.
5. People do not take feedforward as personally as feedback.
6. Feedback can reinforce personal stereotyping and negative self-fulfilling prophecies.
7. Face it! Most of us hate getting negative feedback, and we don't like to give it.
8. Feedforward can cover almost all of the same "material" as feedback.
9. Feedforward tends to be much faster and more efficient than feedback.
10. Feedforward can be a useful tool to apply with managers, peers and team members.

*Leader to Leader,
Marshall Goldsmith Partners LLC.*

The politics of management in the 1970s: Six Steps to Survival

A clipping from a 1971 newspaper fell out of an old South Wales town roadmap last month that dated from my earliest working days as a sales representative.

Quoting from *Management Today* magazine, the author reflected on the difficulty of avoiding the redundancy axe, and offered some ideas to ensure protection, because "neither age nor experience nor seniority nor even competence can provide adequate protection when the axeman cometh..."

Six 'Steps to Survival' suggested include:

1. KGB (Kill the Good Brains). Clip the high flyer's wings in the hope he will leave
2. Hari-kari. Never appear cleverer than your boss, let him win arguments and stage manage success.
3. Hunt the minnow. Cultivate your intelligence network by keeping in with junior staff who have access to information.
4. Dynamic inertia. Support the boss's new ideas and volunteer to take the

initiative – but let others do the work.

5. Uncle Fred. Be the organiser and enthusiast for company social events
 6. Godfather. Cultivate the friendship of those in a position to do damage or create a fuss, like major shareholders or journalists.
- All of this – so the article suggested – would help to "create a company image for yourself which is virtually fireproof."

Has much changed in forty years? The way politics is still played in some organisations, possibly not.

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Snippets

A seasonal bumper collection of thought provokers and quotations

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- ✂ "There is hope in honest error, none in the icy perfections of the mere stylist." *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*
- ✂ "Have you tried using a giant Toblerone as a toast rack? Works once!" *Linda Smith*
- ✂ "Even while they teach, men learn." *Seneca*
- ✂ "Most are engaged in business the greater part of their lives, because the soul abhors a vacuum and they have not discovered any continuous employment for man's nobler faculties." *Henry David Thoreau*
- ✂ "The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity." *Ellen Parr*
- ✂ "Unless you figure out what success means to you personally and to your organization, leadership is an almost pointless conversation." *Peter Drucker*
- ✂ "To follow, without halt, one aim: That's the secret of success." *Anna Pavlova*
- ✂ "Begin somewhere; you cannot build a reputation on what you intend to do." *Liz Smith*
- ✂ "The same work under the same conditions will be estimated differently by ten different estimators or by one estimator at ten different times." *Project Management Saying*
- ✂ "Inspiration grows into full-scale creation through persistence and imagination." *Carol Lloyd*
- ✂ "Success has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others." *Danny Thomas*
- ✂ "The road to happiness lies in two simple principles: find what it is that interests you and that you can do well, and when you find it, put your whole soul into it -- every bit of energy and ambition and natural ability you have." *John D. Rockefeller III*
- ✂ "The good life seems to be a life lived out of our values, consistent with our talents and reflecting our aspirations. Success is about integrity, commitment, and service. Often, money and other nice things arrive, too, but success is seldom found in anything as obvious as a bank account or fancy house." *Dr Phil Humbert*
- ✂ "Not only is practice necessary to art, it is art." *Stephen Nachmanovitch*
- ✂ Did you know that participants in the opening and closing ceremonies at the Turin Winter Olympics practiced their routines 11,000 times?
- ✂ "The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it's not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset. This is the mindset that allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives." *Carol Dweck*
- ✂ "Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." *Goethe*
- ✂ "He who aspires to govern the state, needs to learn to govern himself." *Socrates*
- ✂ "Men, it has been well said, think in herds; it will be seen that they go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, and one by one." *Charles Mackay*
- ✂ "He who avoids his shadow, meets his destiny." *Carl Jung*
- ✂ "We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same." *Carlos Castaneda*
- ✂ "The most rewarding things you do in life are often the ones that look like they cannot be done." *Arnold Palmer*
- ✂ "The value of a thing lies in the cost of attaining it." *David DeFord*
- ✂ "Without ambition one starts nothing. Without work one finishes nothing. The prize will not be sent to you. You have to win it." *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- ✂ "In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich." *Henry Ward Beecher*
- ✂ "You are what you think about all day long." *Dr. Robert Schuller*
- ✂ "Success flourishes best in the rich soil of a well-managed life. Wise leaders have always known that a key requirement for all success is keeping life simple, well-run and orderly. There is no secret about that!" *Dr. Philip Humbert*
- ✂ "The creativity and positive energy you put forth come back to you many times over. So do the hurt and destruction. Which would you rather get back?" *Ralph Marston*
- ✂ "The great end of learning is not knowledge but action." *Peter Honey*
- ✂ "You cannot teach people anything. You can only help them discover it within themselves." *Galileo*

ADVANCED NOTICE The European Learning Conference 2007

Learning Consortium is planning a European Learning Conference to be held in the second quarter of 2007.

This will be an event run on Open Space lines, to give attendees the maximum freedom to choose their own learning agenda from a range of discussions, workshops, activities and themes. The focus will be on our own learning and development as facilitators, consultants, trainers and HR development professionals.

Already signed up are offers on philosophy and management, learning, reflection, coaching, experiential tools, remote learning, ethics, facilitation, cultural issues in development, large group processes and more.

We plan – as always with network events – to work on a cost recovery not a profit model, so at this stage early indications of interest will encourage us to press ahead with arrangements.

Please send messages of support and suggestions for topics of interest / papers to geof@learningconsortium.net

PUBLIC PROGRAMMES

The 2007 calendar of public courses run by Geof Cox and his colleagues in New Directions and Learning Consortium is now published.

For details and bookings please call or refer to the information on our websites.

In company programmes are also available – please call for advice.

MORE INFORMATION

Cuttings is published by New Directions and distributed through an international network of consultants and trainers who work together to learn, research, design and provide consulting and training in individual, management, and organisation development.

On our website you will find downloadable copies of all past issues of **Cuttings** plus articles and information on our network and services, plus links to our partners' websites.

To discuss any ideas and to access the network, please call me direct:

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