



# Performance Matters

Vol. II No. II

Newsletter

## Increase Your Power and Influence through Feedback

Feedback happens all around us. Our bodies naturally send us messages when something is wrong. In nature we see feedback occur to balance the natural course of things, like a thunderstorm that comes when it's extremely hot. In our jobs we constantly need feedback on our performance to improve our effectiveness. Yet, people tend to shy away from direct and honest communication: If you want to perform at your best – feedback matters.

People get better at what they do when individuals they work with give them timely, honest observations of their performance. In today's changing world, you have to evaluate what's working and what's not, what's staying the same and what's changing. Feedback plays that role. When rightly done, it impacts the bottom-line, yet it is not happening fully in most organizations today.

### Inside this Issue:

Increase Influence  
7 Principles of Feedback  
Powerful Questions  
Favorite Quotes

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Robin has facilitated presentations with groups of 150 or more, and has been a guest speaker for several well-known organizations, including the New York State Conference of Mayors, The Governor's Office of Employee Relations, and the New York State Society of Medical Assistants Annual Convention.

She co-authored the book *Maximize Your Mind; Peak Your Potential* available on her web site.

Her article "Ethics in Sales" was published in the HRDQ Press.

For a complete listing of products and services visit our web sites at: [www.ReachandAchieve.com](http://www.ReachandAchieve.com), and [www.PerformanceLeadershipTools.com](http://www.PerformanceLeadershipTools.com)  
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## Leadership is increasing the total power of each individual

David Bradford and Allen Cohen, authors of *Power Up*, describe leadership as a capacity for increasing the total power of each individual. While few would disagree that this is a lofty goal to aspire to, few leaders know how to make it happen. When you give a person an honest appraisal of their behavior, the purpose is to influence them to make a change. As a leader, whatever kind of feedback you give has an influence, positive or negative, which can work both from the top down and from the bottom up. In other words, power is increased through *mutual* influence with feedback allowing each person to impact the other.

*“Once you've found your own voice, the choice to expand your influence, to increase your contribution, is the choice to inspire others to find their voice. Inspire (from the Latin inspirare) means to breathe life into another. As we recognize, respect and create ways for others to give voice to all four parts of their nature-- physically, mentally, emotionally/socially, spiritually--latent human genius, creativity, passion, talent and motivation are unleashed. It will be those organizations that reach a critical mass of people and teams expressing their full voice that will achieve next-level breakthrough in productivity, innovation and leadership in the market place and society.”*

■ Stephen Covey

## What's Important

For influence and feedback to take hold there are a couple conditions that need to be present:

**Commitment to a vision or goal.** If people are not on the same page, feedback cannot happen. When both parties are dedicated to achieving the same outcome, feedback is natural and part of the process of achieving the vision.

**Openness and Trust.** When openness and trust develop, both parties can be more responsive to feedback and influence can expand. As a leader and direct report get to know each other they feel safe in voicing their thoughts and feelings as well as discussing their goals, aspirations and concerns. Managers can feel confident that their feedback will be received and understood and staff can feel comfortable in communicating what's on their mind.

*“The influence of each human being on others in this life is a kind of immortality.”*

■ Winston Churchill

## Challenges and Myths

Leaders often view feedback as something done once or twice a year during review time or when performance issues arise, usually *after* the problem has reared its ugly head. Workers frustrated by a problem finally speak out after months or years of silence. Communication about the quality of work, done only at select times, makes it impossible to improve. Feedback done only at select times often results in unspoken defensiveness or espoused statements of action with no change. We need a continuous loop of information to help us gauge how well we are doing. Imagine getting feedback from our bodies only once a year! We would not be able to function properly and diagnosis would be a much lengthier process.

### 5 Powerful Questions

1. What's missing in your feedback conversations?
2. Where do you need to expand your influence?
3. What are you not speaking the truth about?
4. What conversation are you avoiding right now?
5. What needs to happen to increase openness and trust in your organization?

## Finding time

The challenge most people face is time. Most leaders have multiple demands on their time and the crucial conversations that need to occur don't. Yet they pay a hidden price that may not be evident right away and the bottom line of that cost is performance. The key to feedback is having the conversations about the key issues. When you postpone or avoid an important discussion you are giving power to that unresolved issue. The only way around a problem is to face it directly with compassion and understanding.

Feedback is natural and we all need it regardless of where we are on the corporate ladder. What creates effective organizations is open dialogue and mutual influence that builds relationships. As Don Peters, former CEO of Ford Motor Company said "Results depend on Relationships" and relationships are developed through successful interpersonal exchanges. Let us not be afraid of feedback but embrace it.

*"Whenever we respond to another person, we are giving that person feedback."*

- Shirley Poertner and
- Karen Massetti Miller

## **The 5 Keys to Effective Feedback and Transforming Conversations**

### **Key #1 - Challenge the Assumptions**

People make assumptions often and are usually not aware of them. To avoid this we need to ask questions, test our interpretation, look for evidence and consider different points of view. When we test our assumptions we see reality as it is and not how we hope it will be.

### **Key #2 - Be yourself, Speak the truth openly with warmth and understanding**

Not speaking the truth in conversation is expensive for the individual and for the organization. No one has to change, but everyone has to speak the truth as they see it. When the conversation is open and honest, change can occur before the conversation is over.

### **Key #3 – Be fully present in the feedback conversations**

We can transform relationships, our work and our lives through our daily conversations. For that transformation to occur we have to be fully present; not thinking about the report we have to get out or things that happened in the past. The only thing happening in that moment is the conversation, speak and listen as if this conversation is the most important thing at that time, because it is.

### **Key #4 – Take Responsibility**

It is easy to blame another person or say something with out awareness of how it may impact the receiver. There is no trivial comment. Something you may not even remember saying may have had a devastating impact on someone who looks to you for guidance and approval. Deliver your message responsibly without the emotional baggage.

### **Key #5 – The Magic of Silence**

Learn the magic of silence. Talking can simply be a lot of words with no real meaning. Know when to be silent and listen. With silence we can listen to not only the words but also what's behind the words. With silence we can gain wisdom. Don't be compelled just to talk for the sake of talking and let the magic of silence be the space between the words to transform the conversation.

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