

Summary of feedback interview process

<p>What is this?</p>	<p>A guide to gathering, recording and sharing effective feedback, on behalf of the coachee.</p>
<p>What does it do?</p>	<p>This type of interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers perceptions of the coachee from people the coachee has nominated for feedback. • Explores opinion on the strengths and development areas of a coachee. • Provides the coachee with additional sources of reflection to support their development. • Helps raise the self-awareness of the coachee.
<p>When might I use it?</p>	<p>In the early stages of a coaching assignment, e.g. after the first session, or any time the coachee feels the information is relevant/useful.</p>

Guiding principles

Collecting feedback on someone’s behalf must be done sensitively and as openly as possible. For example, anyone that you interview must be aware that the feedback summary document will be attributed to them. They must also have a chance to review and change the document before it is shared in the coaching session.

Your role as a coach is to collect the feedback in a way that is both efficient and effective. For example: interviewing people in a professional manner, recording comments in a way that distils the message clearly, and handling the approval process quickly. The other value you add is in the delivery of the feedback. For example, you help your coachee to hear and digest the messages, before they decide what they want to do as a result of the feedback.

1. Gather feedback: The approach

Agree on three or four individuals for you to interview; these are normally chosen by the coachee although occasionally the coachee’s manager may also suggest individuals to consider. As well as colleagues the coachee knows and trusts, I also encourage nomination of an individual whom someone has a less comfortable relationship with (or even some tension). I usually interview the coachee’s manager, as they are both a stakeholder and influencer in the coachee’s success. Interviews are conducted in person or by telephone and normally take around 30 minutes.

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2. Gathering feedback: The questions

During interviews, I use the following questions:

- What is this person (my coachee) good at?
- What do you value most about them?
- What do they need to get better at?
- What do they need to do to be successful in their current situation or role?
- Do you have any other messages for this person?

All messages are attributed, i.e. the coachee hears both what was said, and who said it (and it's important to make that clear to everyone).

3. Record feedback and gain approval for disclosure

After an interview, I'll summarise the conversation in a document, then send it to the interviewee, and ask that they review, edit and approve it (for open use). People can change or reshape their comments, making them clearer, or more helpful. An example of a feedback summary document follows at the end of this document.

4. Gather feedback which is clear, supportive and constructive

During interviews, encourage statements in a balanced, constructive manner and eliminate any overly harsh or insulting language. Whilst I rarely hear insulting language, if I do, I'll ask for a more helpful version of the statement. For example, if someone tells me, 'Jayne's team is making a fool out of her, instead of her managing them it's the other way round', I may say, 'Okay, that sounds a tough message, what's appropriate for me to record here?' The person will normally give me something more constructive like, 'She needs to lead from the front more and find a way to keep the stronger characters following her lead'.

Where the more challenging messages are stated constructively and balanced with positive praise and acknowledgement, most people respond very well and are grateful for the additional information and input. So, as a coach you need to help people give feedback that is clear, objective and balanced. You are a natural 'filter' in the process and your job is to encourage openness, clarity and constructive comment.

5. Deliver feedback messages in a considerate, constructive manner

I mostly deliver feedback face to face and try to share all feedback gathered at the same time. This helps illustrate any strong themes or messages, as well as a broad selection of opinions. After telling the coachee what to expect, I'll then read aloud from the document, (in a positive tone). I'll also add



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any balancing statements I think will help, e.g. 'This person is clearly a supporter of yours and wants to see you do well.' While I don't want to tell the coachee how to respond, I can help them distil key messages or keep messages in perspective.

When delivering feedback, it's important to remind your coachee that **comments simply reflect a perception**. People's comments are not 'true', they are simply that person's perception of the coachee. For example, in the feedback a colleague may have described my coachee as 'disorganized'. That does not necessarily mean that the coachee is disorganized (and they may be!), but it does mean that they have created the *perception* of being disorganized with the person giving the feedback. The coachee is more likely to accept responsibility for having created the impression of chaos than the fact that they are truly 'disorganized'.

6. Rarely do we see ourselves through the eyes of others

Your coachee may be surprised by how other people experience them, and the feedback can lead to breakthroughs in someone's understanding. For example, a coachee is frustrated with her lack of acknowledgement or promotion at work. When her feedback is returned, she gains information that helps; her manager and colleagues view her as happy, contented and unambitious. In addition, she is viewed as someone who prefers a small group of colleagues and does not actively seek new friends or contacts.

After the conversation, leave paper copies with your coachee, so that they can work through them again after the session. Also encourage your coachee to contact those interviewed to acknowledge their input and discuss the feedback further, if that seems helpful.

By receiving the feedback, your coachee can decide for themselves what the important messages are, and what they want to do about those. Their goals for the coaching assignment can be refined or changed, e.g. 'I need to promote myself and my goals more. I also need to develop relationships with a much broader group of people.'

7. Develop the skill of giving constructive, helpful feedback

The information and messages arising from this process should be experienced by your coachee as valuable, insightful and stimulating. Clearly, the use of these feedback interviews requires you to be able to give effective feedback. This demands you to devote time and energy to delivering the results in a supportive, sensitive manner. For further help and guidance, please refer to the feedback section in Chapter 4: Fundamental Skills of The Coaching Manual, by Julie Starr.



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<p>Coachee name: Simon Everett</p>	<p>Interviewee: Helena Phillips</p>
<p>Date of interview: 17th March</p>	<p>Date approved for use: 25th March</p>
<p>Q1. What is Simon good at?</p> <p>Generally, Simon brings skills to the role we really need, he’s got relevant experience and qualifications and it shows. He’s experienced in both building strong teams and managing projects; he’s a professional. When things get awkward, e.g. we’ve got technical issues, Simon can usually contribute. He’s also pretty objective and remains focused when things get stressful – I wish I could say that of more people around here. Plus, he’s a nice guy to have around generally, he’s well liked.</p> <p>Q2. What do you value most about him?</p> <p>On reflection it’s probably his ability to focus on solutions, rather than problems. We have some pretty difficult individuals here who like to apportion blame. Simon seems to stay out of all that, he automatically seeks the resolution, e.g. ‘OK, that’s how it is – so what can we do now?’ I think I’ve come to really rely on him for that.</p> <p>Q3. What does he need to get better at?</p> <p>I’d like to see Simon speaking up more, making a bigger impact. He tends to stay quiet sometimes. He’s often got a lot to add to the conversation but can sometimes get ‘drowned out’ by the bigger personalities in the room. I don’t know if it’s a confidence thing, he seems pretty confident. I wonder if it’s about avoiding conflict, not sure. In a pacey environment we need people to get in fast with views and opinions. It’s just not a culture here where people seek out consensus or listen patiently to quieter voices.</p> <p>A smaller point is that he sometimes seems preoccupied with detail. In discussions it sometimes feels like he’s over-explaining. Keep the conversation at an appropriate level. It’s fine to tell us that the plan is going to be changed, but as an operational area we don’t need always to understand the finer detail of what led us to that decision. We’re more concerned about what’s going to happen most of the time – if we want the detail, I guess we can always ask. On matters of planning and scheduling, we trust his judgement – maybe he doesn’t appreciate that?</p> <p>Q4. What does he need to do to be successful in his current situation or role?</p> <p>He’s already doing a good job, so I’d he’s already fairly successful. I think if he wants to bring true value to the role, he could use his position to act more as a ‘bridge’ between departments. For example, he sits between the customer-facing departments and the more technical functions. He’s in an ideal position to mediate some of our issues or facilitate discussions for us more. His ability to remain calm in a crisis (or a row) makes him ideal. But that’s going to mean stepping forward more often into those situations, which may cause him discomfort.</p>	



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Q5. Do you have any other messages for him?

Just that I'm pleased to have been asked to do this. Simon is someone I'm incredibly supportive of, we really value his contribution. If there's any of this feedback he wants to discuss with me, I'd be glad to – I'll even buy the coffee!

Additional support & reading, by Julie Starr

- The Coaching Manual, Pearson Education
- Brilliant Coaching, Pearson Education
- The Mentoring Manual, Pearson Education

For more information and free downloads, go to www.starrcoaching.co.uk

