

New Work Playbook: Feedforward

Focusing on solutions, rather than mistakes.

Focusing on the future, rather than the past.

The term feedforward is initially a linguistic gimmick. Feedback has a positive effect on performance when it is directed towards the future. Therefore feedforward instead of feedback. Instead of just giving feedback on past performance, concrete possibilities for change are pointed out for the future. How exactly can I change my behaviour in order to complete a task better, faster, easier, leaner?

Feedforward therefore changes the attitude with which feedback is given. Instead of retrospectively evaluating what was good or bad, the focus is on concrete possibilities for improvement. One experience: Feedforward is easier for employees to "accept". They are not praised or criticised for things they can no longer change. Instead, they deal with the potential that lies within them. Instead of a self-fulfilling prophecy ("I'm just like that!" or "I just can't do it."), employees focus on new possibilities in the conversation.

[Marshall Goldsmith](#) offers us 11 reasons to try feedforward method:

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 (as they tend to have a very positive self-image).
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. Most of us hate getting negative feedback, and we don't like to receive it.
8. Feedforward can cover almost all the same "material" as feedback.
9. Feedforward tends to be much faster and more efficient than feedback.

10. Feedforward does not imply superiority of judgement, that's why it is a great tool to be used in teams between peers.

11. People tend to listen more attentively to feedforward than feedback.

How to

Feeding with appreciation

One of the findings of Positive Psychology is that those who look for and observe only good in others feel better about themselves. That is why many steps are taken to help us learn to be appreciative of each other. One way to provide appreciation is through pure respect for the other person's performance - without comparing, without judging. Here are a few examples of how a sentence can begin:

- I like / admire how you ... (do something). Keep it up!
- You are effective when you ...
- The way you ... (do something) seems to work well. Keep that.
- I appreciate your ability to ...
- I see your strengths as ...
- You are very good at ...
- You have a special talent for ...
- Keep doing ... (something). You are effective when you do this.

Supporting development

Of course, despite looking for positive moments, we also recognise development potential in each other. Feedforward is future-oriented, and so the main point here is to show the other person a way in which he/she can learn. It is about encouraging each other and making suggestions that can be implemented.

Possible phrases are therefore:

- As you develop, you could be more successful if you ... (do something).
- Also consider ... (to do).

- A suggestion for the future is ...
- Start to ... I think that would be helpful.
- For the future, I would like you to ... (do something). It would help me (or the team) ... (to reach a goal).
- I have seen several people increase their effectiveness by Maybe that's an idea for you?
- From now on, ...
- Looking forward, ...

This New Work practice has been gathered for the [New Ways Of Working Playbook](#). For any questions about further New Work practices or our [New Work Toolbox](#) please contact:

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or visit our [website](#).

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HR Professionals, Change Consultants,
Organisational Developers and Leaders
to share, to learn and to experiment so that we
together can actively shape the future of work.



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