

Turbo-Boost Performance through High-Quality Feedback

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CCH Learning:

Hello, everybody, and welcome to today's webinar, Turbo-Boost Performance Through High-Quality Feedback. My name is Susannah Gynther from Wolters Kluwer, CCH Learning, and I will be your moderator for today. Just a few quick pointers before we get started. If you're having sound problems and can't hear me, please toggle between audio and phone. Hopefully, you can see that instruction on the screen regardless. If you're looking for the PowerPoint for today's session, it is saved in the Handout section on your GoToWebinar panel, and just a reminder that shortly after the session, you will receive an email letting you know the e-learning recording is ready to be viewed.

You can ask questions at any point during the presentation by sending them through the questions box. I will collate those questions and ask them at the Q&A towards the end of today's presentation. CCH Learning also offers a subscription service which many people have termed "Netflix for Professionals." It provides members with access to our entire library of recordings as well as live webinars for a competitive flat fee. That's for over 500 hours of content. For CPD purposes, your viewing is logged automatically.

Your presenter today is Deborah Assheton who is the owner and director of The Amplify Group, a business that uses best practice frameworks to deliver very practical, high-impact leadership, change, and interpersonal-skill-building workshops, coaching and leadership programmes. Deb's passion is to help professionals deepen their self-awareness and embed behaviour that creates new levels of performance, engagement, and results for them. Deb offers executive coaching, leadership development programmes, short and public workshops. Deb has over 20 years experience in executive leadership positions where she has managed very large teams of more than 3,000 people for some of Australia's best known and highly regarded companies, including Vodafone, Bupa, and OPSM. Deb holds a BA in psychology and a master's of organisational coaching from Sydney University. Deb's clients span the retail and wholesale property management, banking, legal, technology, transport and motoring, and telecommunications industries. I will now pass you over to Deb to commence today's presentation.

Deborah Assheton:

Hi, everyone. I'm really looking forward to working with you today. I'll just set up my screen, and we can get underway. So, Susannah, just confirming that you can see my screen?

CCH Learning:

Yes, we can.

Deborah Assheton:

Excellent. Okay. So our topic today is the world of feedback and how it... or what we're going to be talking about today is how feedback directly boosts performance and also engagement. So what we're going to be doing is myth-busting a bit of the current approach and the current views or historical views around feedback and look at what happens when feedback is done really well and actually, how simple it is to do feedback well. So I'm not saying it's easy, but it's actually not that hard if our mindset is right around feedback and we create the right kind of culture around it.

So what we'll be looking at today is what feedback is and what it's not. We'll be looking at the purpose of feedback for individuals and for teams, and then we'll draw the line and create line of sight around how feedback directly boosts performance and engagement. We'll look at how to give and receive high-quality feedback and how to prepare for that because it's quite different to how we might have traditionally prepared to do a feedback conversation. We've got a case study that I'll review, and we've got some Q&A time as well today because this is obviously quite a big topic, but where I thought we'd start today is with a couple of polls. So there's two polls, and Susannah, if you wouldn't mind opening the first while I frame this up.

CCH Learning:

Okay.

Deborah Assheton:

We've got two polls. The first poll, which is the one that's on screen now, is asking you when was the last time you received a valuable piece of feedback from someone you work with? Now, that could be your manager, could be a peer, could be somebody who reports to you, could even be a client. So when was the last time you received a valuable piece of feedback? This week, last week, more than two weeks ago, more than a month ago, or never? So you might've received feedback, but it's not feedback that you found valuable. I'm going to come back to that when we talk about valuable in a few moments. So you've got a few options there. If you've never, then obviously, it's E. If it's somewhere in between, then it's somewhere between A and D. So when that's completed, Susannah, if you could just share the results, that would be great.

CCH Learning:

Yeah, so I'll just... Yeah.

Deborah Assheton:

Yeah. We're going to have another poll in a moment. So what were the results there, Susannah?

CCH Learning:

Okay. So the results there were 50% said more than a month ago, 25% said more than two weeks ago, and 25% said last week.

Deborah Assheton:

Okay. Excellent. All right. Let's open up the next poll, and then we'll talk about the results of both. So this is the second poll that's up now, and the question here this time is, when was the last time you gave a valuable piece of feedback to someone you work with? So, again, same options, A, B, C, and D or E. "I've actually never given a colleague or someone I work with valuable feedback." So if you guys could respond to that, that'd be fantastic. So, this time around, we're asking when you gave feedback, and when that's completed. Susannah, if you could just share the results, that would be terrific.

CCH Learning:

Okay. So I'm just going to close that vote, and let's have a little look. Okay. So 40% said more than two weeks ago. Then, we had 20% said this week, 20% said more than a month ago, and 20% said, "I have never given a colleague any valuable feedback." Back to you, Deb.

Deborah Assheton:

Thanks, Susannah. All right. So let's just have a chat about the two results. So, first of all, the first poll where we had 25% of people had received a valuable piece of feedback last week, 25% more than a month ago... Sorry. 25% last week, 25% more than two weeks ago, and 50% more than a month ago, and we had nobody say never. So that's good that nobody said never. For those of you that are more than a month ago, ideally, we're in a world where you should be receiving valuable feedback every fortnight or every week. In the highest performing environment, it's weekly if not more often than that. It is a constant stream of feedback that helps you get better at what you're doing. So when it comes to regularity, it's important, and ideally, we're in a world where we are receiving feedback fortnightly is what I would say, valuable feedback fortnightly. Now, I'm going to come back to the word "valuable" as we work through the workshop.

Poll number two, when was the last time you gave feedback? So 20% said this week, 40% said more than two weeks ago, 20% more than a month, and 20%, "I've never given valuable feedback." So one of the things I'm going to ask you to think about in this workshop is, how much feedback you give to colleagues, to peers, to people who report to you, even, with care, potentially, to clients? I'm going to talk more about that, but obviously, if you want to receive feedback, a good place to start is to start giving it. Again, we'll come back to this because what we want to is what's called a 360-degree feedback environment. So this is where we are giving and receiving valuable feedback from multiple sources that are different. So a client's perception of you is different to a peer's perception of you which is different to, say, a manager or a direct report's perception of you. They come from different angles, and those different angles all help to create a valuable picture for you.

So let's have a look at what feedback is, and then we'll come back to some of these topics. So when we talk about feedback, the definition is actually really technical and a little bit boring, but it takes us back to the heart of feedback which often gets lost in corporate and organisational environments. So feedback is, first of all, a process. It is not an event. It is a process in which a system regulates itself by monitoring itself basically. It monitors its output, and the outcome of the monitoring is considered feedback, and the purpose of the monitoring is performance improvement.

Now, that's very dry, that definition, that actually feedback is at the heart of evolution. It is one of the core processes of evolution. It is how nature gets better at being itself, and surviving, and thriving. That is also true for organisations. Now, we have a lot of... When I say we, I'm talking socially. We have a lot of emotional baggage around feedback. So sometimes the worst thing that you could ever hear is, "I've got some feedback for you," and that tends to send people into a mild panic or can do. Not everyone, obviously, but for many people, it certainly puts them on edge. Actually, that's not what we want to have happen.

The principles of high-quality feedback are actually pretty simple, and what we're going to do in this workshop is look at how do we bring those to life. How do we create an environment where we're able to use feedback from multiple sources to get better at what we do while steering clear of feedback that doesn't add value or feedback that creates fear in the culture or judgement in the culture?

So the principles of high-quality feedback are that we must learn from the information or experience. So if we don't learn, then it hasn't achieved its purpose of helping us improve, that feedback is happening regularly and hopefully systemically. So we're getting feedback from multiple sources and that the feedback discussions we have are in service of achieving our stated goals. They might be team goals or they might be organisational goals, but the feedback helps us to hit the target, whatever the target is, and that could be, the target could be to get promoted, or it could be an organisational goal or to win a client, or it could be to create a new product or innovate.

So the target can really be anything that the individual, or the organisation, or team desires, but the target is what helps create a frame of reference. So, actually, organisational structures and team structures are fantastic for creating environments of feedback because we are trying to do something together so they actually really facilitate growth, professional and personal growth. So the workplace is a really good environment for doing feedback very, very well, and that's what we're going to talk about today.

So let's have a look at what feedback is and isn't. Feedback exists on a spectrum. This is the feedback spectrum. So I'm going to break it down and look at four aspects of what is often called feedback, but not all of them... Actually, only two of them, really, are feedback. So let's have a look at the first one. So if I said to you, "Deb, I love having you as part of my team. I think you're amazing," is that feedback? Well, the answer to that question is no. It's praise, not feedback, and there's a difference between them.

So if I say to you, "You're amazing," "I love having you as part of my team. You do great work. Thanks for coming in this week," all of that kind of positive compliments or positive comments are purely positive comments. That's what they are. I don't learn from them. So whilst they're wonderful, they're very affirming, they create a sense of belonging, praise helps to build kindness and warmth, and it's very abundant to say, "I love having you as part of my team," and so there's lots of benefits to praise. It does not meet the criteria for feedback.

So praise is important, but I don't learn from it. So if you think about a manager or a leader who consistently praises, but doesn't offer you anything deeper or more substantial than that, then that praise often feels quite superficial. Of course, if all I ever say is, "I love having you as part of my team. You do amazing work," what I'm really saying to you is that having you makes me happy. So it's about me, not about you. So praise is great, but it's not what we want to live on, and we wouldn't want to call that feedback from a manager point of view.

Let's have a look at the other end of the spectrum. So if I say to you, "Deb, that job was terrible. I'm appalled. I cannot believe that you thought that was acceptable and you delivered that quality of work," I wouldn't even use the word "quality." So that is not feedback either. That is criticism. Purely negative comments are not feedback. That actually makes the definition of criticism. Criticism is demotivating. It damages relationships. It's highly assumptive. It's usually not based on facts at all. It's reactive. It's very stressful. For those of you that have been criticised, which research will show is actually more than 70% of you, will have been on the receiving end of critical feedback, critical. It's actually not feedback. It's just criticism, and it's unacceptable in the workplace. So it has a devastating impact on both performance and engagement. So we never want to be the person delivering this kind of feedback because it's not feedback.

So let's have a look at what happens in the middle. I'm going to just open up a scenario and share it with you as we go here. So let's say that we're on our way to see a client, and I'm the manager, and I've got one of my direct reports with me, and we are presenting to the client. The direct report is going to do the presentation, and I'm in the room. So, on the way to the client, we agree what we're doing. We're all clear. Let's say now we're walking back from the client's meeting, and we're going to our office because luckily, for us, our client lives that close. I say to my employee whose name is Deb, I say, "Deb, love to hear your thoughts on how that meeting went. I feel like it went really well, and what I noticed was when you delivered, when you talked about slide 8, which had all the numbers on it, there's something about the way you delivered the numbers. I saw them sit forward in their chairs. They sparked up. They started to pay attention. Whatever it was that you said really grabbed them, and the way you presented the numbers seems to, I think, have been what got them over the line. What are your thoughts?"

So I'm going to stop the scenario there. So if you think about this scenario, what I'm doing is talking to Deb about what she did well from my perspective in the meeting. I'm actually giving her feedback on the way she presented slide 8, and I'm saying there was something about the way she presented it that sparked the client. So if you think about the way I framed it there, the positive, it's positive comments. It's framed within the context of the goal.

The goal is to win the client. The examples that I'm sharing with her are very specific. They sat forward in the chairs, saw them spark up, they started to ask questions. So what I'm doing here is giving positive feedback.

Now, positive feedback is not designed to make people feel good. It is designed to help people understand what they're good at. It helps them cement their strengths, and I'm saying to Deb, "One of your strengths is putting together and presenting numbers." Now, Deb might say, "Yeah, I noticed that too. When I put together the numbers this time, I thought about it this way." So, all of a sudden, she and I are having a feedback conversation without ever using the word "feedback," and what we are talking about is how do we present numbers that win clients. Now, if this was something that Deb was good at, I might then go and suggest to her that she should talk to Tony because Tony is doing a presentation to a really tough client next Tuesday and maybe Deb can help. That's how we share strengths and competence. So positive feedback is about helping people, helping me, helping you understand what you are good at, and then sharing it across the organisation.

Let's imagine the same scenario. We're walking back from the client, and I say to Deb, "I'm feeling a little nervous about how slide 8 went. When you presented the numbers and started to talk to them, I feel like we lost them. I saw them sit back in their chairs. A few of them, their eyes glazed over. They stopped asking questions. What did you feel when you were presenting slide 8? What did you notice?" So stop the scenario there. So, now, we are in a space where I am giving constructive feedback, and what constructive feedback is that it's helping people to identify and close their gaps. Same scenario. Same level of specificity. Again, I didn't mention the word "feedback." What I'm talking about is how the client saw it or how I perceive the client saw it and what were Deb's thoughts.

So, again, I'm being very specific. I'm very observant. I'm sharing what I think didn't go well or I'm sharing what I thought went well and noticing. The way I'm opening it up is through the client's eyes, and I finish my statement by asking Deb what she thought in both scenarios. So Deb can come back and say, "Yeah, I feel like I lost them, and I don't feel like the meeting recovered. I think I'm really bad at presenting numbers or maybe I need to do some work on that," or, "Actually, I thought it was okay, but I would do X, Y, Z." So what we're doing here is we're stimulating a discussion about either what's working or where the gaps are. No one is saying it's terrible, and it's a two-way discussion.

This is the realm of feedback. Actually, the benchmark for high-quality feedback is that it generates awareness, it provokes reflection, and it encourages responsibility. So if you think about those two scenarios, either way, we should be generating awareness on what I do well and how I can fan that up and maybe have the organisation benefit from it or where I've got gaps that I need to close and how am I going to do that. So the responsibility sits primarily with me. It's obviously not all with me. There might be things that my manager does, or that we need to do differently, or we need to prepare differently. There could be a we, but there's a responsibility that I'm taking. I'm not saying, "Well, you need to brief me differently. You need to do this. You need to do that."

So, ideally, there's a lack of defensiveness here that enables openness, and when we get this right, we help shift the level of performance in an environment. Now, high-performing environments are actually pretty well-documented, and feedback is one of the things that directly contributes to them. I'm actually just going to put this whole slide up, and then I'll talk to this. So, in traditional team orientations, there's often an invisible structure or a dynamic where team member A, B, and C report through to the leader manager, and the leader manager is the one who's aiming for the goal, and person A, B, and C feed through the manager, but the manager is the single point of the goal.

In high-performing environments, it looks very different, and you can see on the right-hand side here. You've still got team member A, B, and C, and you've still got your leader manager, but what they are all doing is working toward the goal. They're aimed at the goal, they're not aimed at keeping a leader or a manager happy. So that's a very different environment in this space that's in the circle, and feedback is one of the characteristics that is much higher on the right-hand side than environments of the left because the environments on the left-hand side do not encourage feedback between members and/or the leader manager. Whereas when we're trying to achieve a goal, whether we're a high-ranking tennis player, whether we're a sporting team, whether we're a team within an accounting or a law firm, it doesn't matter. When we work together to achieve a goal, we open up a much greater degree of performance. All of us are smarter than any one of us, and our collective thinking and our collective feedback is what helps us to get faster at getting towards that goal or to do it more smoothly, more effectively.

So feedback is much higher in environments where we are aimed at a goal because the goal provides an organising principle. It helps us understand and create context for our gaps and also our strengths. Without a goal, it's really hard for us to organise our thinking around anything. When we get feedback right, the benefits are there, but actually, we've got decades, almost five decades of really solid research on feedback. That's just in organisational context. That's outside the world of nature where, obviously, feedback is one of the core processes in evolution as it is a core process in organisations.

A couple of highlights to just pull out on feedback. Your highest-performers are the ones that crave feedback the most, and they want feedback that is both intellectually and emotionally stimulating. So I don't just want to know how to put the numbers together for a client. I want to know how I should present them and what are the nuances. "Give me gritty stuff that I can chase down and get better at," is how high-performance think, nuances, and to be involved in the discussion of your own development is very empowering for a high-performer.

They don't just want to be told, "You are excellent at delivering the numbers." They don't just want to be told, "You've got to close that gap." They want to be involved in "Why am I excellent? What is it that I bring and do, and how could I share that?" or, "What's the error of the gap I need to close? Give me something gritty that I can chase down." So feedback is great, and the better you get at giving and receiving feedback in your team and organisation, the more you're going to enjoy both the performance and the engagement benefits. So you can think of feedback as fuel for your goal, your most important goals. When it's done well, it delivers to both engagement levels or particularly of the people you really want to keep and also to performance.

So let's talk about how do we give great high-quality feedback consistently, and there's two dimensions that we can work on. One is fluid feedback, which is what I just went through in the client scenario, and then there's formal or structured feedback. Neither of these have traditionally been done well in organisations. Fluid feedback tends to only be given when somebody's done something terribly wrong, and therefore, we have this whole connotation around, "I've got some feedback for you." Most people assume negative feedback, even though it may not be. Formal or structured feedback has not got a history of being done well. It's often delivered in a really sanitised way with feedback that is months, sometimes I've heard years out of date that's not well-articulated, and so we haven't traditionally leveraged either of these for learning and goal achievement and engagement. So let's talk about what these look like when they're done well.

So fluid feedback should be very regular at relevant moments where there's a learning opportunity. So, like we said earlier, fortnightly is a great way to think about this. How can you give feedback to your most important people fortnightly? So one of the best ways to look at this is just to open the calendar, your calendar, and look at what your person is doing. So are they delivering a presentation? Are they hosting a meeting or a debate? Are they working with a really difficult client? What are they doing that you can observe, you might already be part of it, and what feedback can you give them? Constructive, positive.

For the moment, stay away from praise and criticism. Just think about those two dynamics. It's live, so like we said in the scenario, straight after the meeting, as a phone call that afternoon, a coffee the next day. It's got to be within the live thinking, relevant time period. So don't sit down two weeks later. Try and give feedback, constructive or positive, within 48 to 72 hours. Within the same week is ideal. Share insights and ask questions. Think of this as being dynamic. Feedback is not or should not be a one-way street. Your great people have views on what they're good at and the gaps they need to close.

By sharing those views as you do... sorry, as you share yours, we open up this dynamic, and two heads are better than one. It helps us to also think about different levels. So think about not just the situation, but also the issue. So, in that scenario I just gave, if somebody presented the numbers poorly, the issue might have been that they didn't have time to prepare, or the issue might have been they didn't understand the numbers, or the issue might have been that the numbers were inaccurate. So think about what you see, which situation, which is usually what's presenting itself. But before jumping in to give feedback around that, consider the issue. Think of it like symptoms and causes, right?

Issues are often where the aha moment is for a person, or for you, or for both of you. An example with the numbers might be, "Actually, the numbers were fine. The brief was off." That's an aha moment. That's a big one. So, yeah. So think about situation and issue. Ask for feedback about your own performance as well. You want fluid feedback. So you might be giving a client presentation, and you ask someone or someone who's already there, you ask someone to attend or somebody who's already there. You say, "Deb, I'm presenting to this client on Thursday. Could you please give me some feedback on how I present the numbers?" Make it specific for them. Don't just say, "Give me some feedback on how I'm going," because the feedback you're likely to get was, "I thought you did great." Ask for specifics so that you get positive and constructive feedback.

You want to balance your positive and constructive feedback with some praise. There's a very well-researched ratio that some of you might've heard of. Actually, it's marriage research, but it actually applies to all relationships. So it's positive to negative conversation ratio, and the best relationships have a five-to-one ratio. That's five positive interactions for every negative interactions, and it's interactions, not just conversations. So praise can be in your five, but all five cannot be praise. So positive, constructive are still positive conversations. So four of those and one praise.

Give feedback at both a team and an individual level, and never get defensive. I'm going to come back to never getting defensive. Do not get defensive is the number one rule of any leadership and specifically, the number one rule of receiving feedback. I'll come back to that towards the end of the workshop. So you can give feedback at a team level. I think you can be giving valuable feedback to your team again fortnightly and asking them for their feedback on the team as well. 360-degree feedback is better than one-dimensional feedback.

For formal or structured feedback, we want to make sure that we prepare well for the entire conversation, and there's a planner in the notes that you will have that I'll come to. When we prepare for a feedback conversation, we often just prepare the examples, and that's a bit of a rookie error. It's much better. You need your examples, obviously, but it's much better to prepare how you're going to open the conversation. How are you going to frame this feedback, which I'll come to in a moment? What is the situation versus what are the possible issues? You actually want to think how you're going to approach the conversation as much as the examples in the conversation. So I'm going to talk more about that, but we want to be sincere and direct.

We do not want to ramble, and we do not want to do the old feedback sandwich where we say one nice thing, one critical thing, and then another nice thing. That is not okay. It's almost a form of gaslighting. We'd never want to do that. You're much better to say to your person, and we've got a case study coming up. You're much better to be honest with your person and say to them, "I want to talk to you about the feedback I have," or, "I want to

talk to you about this behaviour and understand your perspective." Just be honest, but beautifully honest, not brutally honest. Be prepared to listen and compromise. So I'll come back to some of that.

When I'm talking about framing and creating a common goal for the conversation, these are really important skills, and they're very critical for feedback conversations. So the worst way you can open a conversation about feedback is to say, "I've got some feedback for you." First of all, you're framing it as an I, "I've got some feedback for you," so it already sounds judgmental. It can create, in most people, a rigidity where they're preparing for the worst. There's just no need to do it that way. It's a little bit lazy.

A better way to frame is... Well, it's called framing, and I've got it in the case study coming up, but this is where you might say, "Deb, I love the work that you put into... and on the whole, love the way that you put in..." Sorry. Let me start again. "Deb, I love the work that you put into the client presentation and on the whole, the way that you presented it, and I want to talk to you about the numbers you used and specifically, what happened or the way that you presented slide 8. Does that sound okay to you?" So just stopping there. So what I'm doing there is I'm framing for the truth which is on the whole, "It went fine, and I know you put a lot of work in," and, "We've got to talk about slide 8," and, "Does that sound okay to you?" So that is called framing, and then the "Does that sound okay to you?" is setting a common goal.

Now, when we talk about setting a common goal or saying, "Does that sound okay to you?" or, "Have you got time to talk about that now?" you are not asking for permission. It's not a permission thing. You don't need somebody's permission to talk to them and give them feedback. It's an inclusion thing. It's a way of inviting someone in to talk about what happened with slide 8 or how we get better at doing slide 8. So by saying, "Does that sound okay to you?" what you're doing is two things. You're confirming that they understand what we're talking about, so clarity is really important, and number two, that they're in, they're buying in.

When you get a yes, which invariably you will because you're a good person, and you're a good leader, and your people trust you, when you get a yes, you are a long way into the conversation already. If I say, "Yes, let's talk about that," I am bought in, so you're much less likely to get defensiveness from me because I feel psychologically safer, at least I feel more psychologically safe. So you can frame a feedback conversation without ever using the word "feedback," and that's often a really great way to start.

There might be instances where you do use the word "feedback," but again, I can't think of one where you have to use it, and I suggest that you start practising framing that doesn't use it. It's not that you're trying to sneak up on people. It's just the word itself is often not helpful, and it assumes that the feedback is absolute. So, yeah, you can open up discussions about behaviour and events without using the word "feedback," and it often sets you up for more success.

So when you're planning feedback conversations, you can use this little planner to help prompt your thinking. So what's the situation, and what is the issue, or what might be the issue? What's your goal for the feedback conversation? What do you actually want to happen rather than, "My goal is just to hit Deb with feedback that I got yesterday," right? The goal is that we get better at delivering slide 8 or that Deb shares her skills at delivering the numbers with Tony who definitely needs some help. So you've got to think about the goal being what we learn or how we improve rather than just the goal being, "I share the feedback."

How will you frame? You want to frame in a way that builds relationship rather than damages relationships. That doesn't mean that you say, "Oh, Deb, I love having you as part of my team," and it gets all into this fairy floss world. That's actually not genuine and often sets people feel at ease because they feel like something negative is coming. "Oh, I love your work, but..." Right? That's not how we set up a really solid feedback conversation, but you can be genuine. "So I know you put a lot of work into the presentation, and on the whole, I thought it went

well. Can we have a chat specifically about slide 8?" So you want to be genuine, and you want to be building relationships. Ideally, our relationship is stronger after the feedback conversation than before it.

What will be the feedback goal that you'll suggest to the other person? So is it, "Do you have time to talk about that?" or is it, "Have you given that some thought? Can you share your thoughts with me?" So you just want to prep what you're going to say, make it smoother. What are the key issues that you see and will need to discuss? So you might think, "Well, actually, we need to talk about whether the numbers were briefed properly, whether we had the right numbers, whether it was the delivery of the numbers, whether it was the slide." So there might be a few aspects that you want to talk through.

What outcomes are important? Again, the outcome should be the goal about getting better or creating learning or both, and what do you need to consider in advance? So you might need to consider that they only got the numbers 45 minutes before the presentation, or that it's the first time they've ever presented those numbers, or that the client is a really difficult client. So you think about what else is going on in the ecosystem or in the environment that you need to consider. So you can use this planner to just help flesh out your thinking as well as then the specifics so it helps to build the relationship and performance aspects of the specific example.

All right. I want to move on now and just talk about how do you receive feedback. So this is a really important point for leaders and managers. It's often overlooked, but if I worked for you, how would I know that you're open to feedback? Now, lots of leaders and managers say, "Oh, of course, I'm open to feedback. My team give me feedback all the time." Okay. Great. What do you do with the feedback? If I worked for you, how would I know that you're open to feedback?

Actually receiving feedback for leaders and managers needs to be an active process. So think about some of these examples. Have you asked for feedback recently? Have you said, "Deb, I know you've been in my team meeting for the last 30 meetings. What's your feedback on the meeting? Can you please give me some feedback on this, this, this, and this?" Have you publicly shared feedback that you've received? So have you said to your team, "Susannah gave me some feedback last week about how I brief the client or how much time I give you guys to do something, and I've really reflected on that feedback and decided to do things this way going forward."

So you're sharing that, A, someone's given you feedback, B, you've reflected on it, and C, you've made a change, which brings us to the final question there. Have you changed something in response to receiving feedback? The only way that your team will know that you are open to feedback is if you demonstrate acting on it. You can declare it all you like and wave big flags saying, "Oh, please give me feedback." But until you demonstrate that you'll do something with it, it's not really, "I know Deb will take my feedback on board or Deb will at least listen to my feedback." So think about how open you are.

The number one rule of receiving feedback is do not get defensive. Even if somebody is criticising you, especially if somebody's criticising, you must not get defensive. The worst thing you can do in a feedback situation is get into the argy-bargy of criticism. "What do you mean? That was just unfair." When you're in that space, you're down at the same level as the person who's criticising you, and it gives them more fuel to criticise you. So the moment you get defensive, you give them more ammunition, so to speak, and that's what we don't want to do. We do not want to escalate the situation or put more fuel on fire. So what do you do if you find yourself being criticised or you are hearing feedback that you absolutely do not agree with? Well, you breathe. Okay. You do not overreact. You do not react at all. You just breathe and notice. Just notice what's going on, and stay calm.

So some tips for you if you're being criticised is instead of defending yourself, ask questions. Now, you must stay calm to do that. That's why I say breathe, right? Breathing and calmness, like this, they go hand in hand. So when you breathe just for a couple of seconds at a time, slow your breathing down, you bring your central nervous system down, and that means that your brain is working better. So instead of getting defensive, you want to ask

questions, so you say to Deb who's criticising you, "Can you give me some concrete or recent examples?" If the person doesn't have any, say, "Well, could we stop this conversation now and maybe you gather the facts, and then we come back together, and you share them with me?" That actually enables you to get out of the room as well and buys you some time to process a bit of space.

If somebody is mixing up criticism with some examples, then what you can do is say, "Deb, I hear that you're really upset, and I know that you're angry. Can you just share with me the facts of the situation so that I can understand what's happened? Then, we can talk about the impact that that's had on you." So, again, you want to frame and ask questions. Can you stick to the facts? Can you give me some examples that hold the person as much as possible to account for giving you specifics if they're criticising you, but also mean that you do not get defensive? Then, what you can do is say, "Okay. Can you just give me some time to reflect on these? That's the first I've heard of them. Could we come back together in a couple of hours?"

One of the things that you can do to help you if you receive feedback that you don't agree with, whether it's critical feedback or constructive feedback, is once you understand what the feedback is with a calm mind, even though you might be raging on the inside, a calm mind is to look for the 1% that's true. So cutting back through everything you see in front of you, it may be terribly articulated, it may be off-base, it may be out of date, it may be fourth hand, but is there 1% that you know in your heart is right? You may have already known that about yourself. Usually, we will. It's very rare for us to get feedback that's completely out of the blue. So, particularly if you've been around for a while. So look for the 1% that's true, and look for the 10% that's true. Find the amount that's true and decide what you want to do with that, and then discard the rest.

So if you think that 50% of it is true, say, "Okay. I'm going to take on board this 50%. The rest, I'm letting go. I'm not engaging with it." You don't have to take on board every single piece of feedback you receive, and that actually wouldn't necessarily be wise. You want to process feedback, reflect on it, think about what you can learn from it, and then take responsibility for embedding the learning, not just the feedback. That would be robotic. So take the 1%, even if it's only 1%, take the 1% that's true. That way, you can go back to the person who gave you the feedback with completely in integrity and say, "Look, I've reflected on the feedback you gave me. I'm going to implement this and this change," or, "I have genuinely and deeply reflected on the feedback that you gave me, and this aspect, I really want to work on."

You may decide to give feedback about how that feedback was given to you or you may not, but what we want to do always is keep you in integrity so you don't get defensive and add fuel to the fire when feedback is being delivered badly. Equally, you don't take on board feedback that you don't genuinely believe in or is rubbish feedback that's not valuable for you. So we want to keep you in integrity always.

Where you receive positive feedback, don't deflect it. So if I say to you, "You are really fantastic at delivering the numbers. You've got a real gift," you don't say, "Oh, thank you, but I know that client really well," or, "I had a heads-up," or, "I've done it a hundred times." Don't deflect it or, "My team put together the slide. It wasn't me." Don't deflect it. You can just say, "Thank you." Then, if you want to, you say, "Oh, my team were also really involved." If there is credit to be given, then give the credit, but don't deflect the feedback, so, "Thank you." Just absorb it. You don't have to deflect it.

The problem with deflecting feedback is that it demonstrates low openness, and it's a bit of a rejection of the person who is giving you feedback. Now, if you want constructive feedback, you also have to be open to positive feedback and praise. You can't pick and choose. So if you want to demonstrate openness, you've got to be open to the positive feedback as well and just take it. Say, "Thank you." If you want to compliment your team or add them, you can, but don't do the "Thank you, but..." Don't deflect.

All right. So let's have a look at this little case study now about Sally. You guys have got this in front of you, but basically, Sally is a solid performer. She delivers well, good level of quality. You're in a flexible working environment that's hybrid, so three days at home, two days in the office. Everyone's agreed to that, but you've noticed on the office days that Sally is coming in really late, leaving early. Last week while you were on leave, she just didn't show up for an office day at all, and that's having some broader impacts on the team's ability to discuss matters with her, but also attendance at project and client meetings which are built around the assumption that people will be in the office that day.

Now, you know she's got family commitments, and she's a good person who we want to keep, but there's also an issue that you do need to have a discussion with her on, and you're getting feedback that it's not working from other members of the team. So you absolutely need to deal with this issue as quickly as possible. I would probably book a formal conversation for this one rather than trying to do it in an informal way. Now, it might seem on the surface to be a flexible working issue, but actually, at the issue level, it's behavioural.

So some frame and common goal examples might be, "Sally, thanks for making the time to meet with me today. I want to share with you some impacts I'm seeing from you not fully attending the office days, and I want to talk through the issues and options as I know flexibility is really important to you. Does that sound okay to you?" So we're bringing up impact, we're bringing up flexibility is really important, and, "Does that sound okay to you?" So we're framing, and we're setting common goals, but not using the word "feedback."

In this conversation, the priority is actually to get Sally back to the office for the full day in the office days so that the rest of the team can function properly, but it's also in a way that works for Sally. So whilst you can offer suggestions, it's not up to you to fix this for Sally. She has to take responsibility for how she does that, and she may say to you, "Look, I can't for these reasons," and so you may suggest a trial or a phased approach, but actually, we need to get her back into the office.

What you can say around the feedback piece is rather than saying, "Look, I've had feedback from team members about you not being there," you can say, "Look, I'm concerned that you not being in the office is affecting the rest of the team's ability to work. For example, there was a client meeting last week that wasn't as effective because you weren't in the room." So you don't need to overload it with the word "feedback." You can use the examples and be specific about the gaps or what's great in the instance of constructive as a positive feedback without necessarily using the word "feedback" because it tends to add a bit of a load. So this is an example of how to frame and set common goal, and then have a discussion about how we get back on track without necessarily using the word "feedback."

Some guidelines for feedback conversations. Obviously, and again, this is a little bit feedback 101, but I'll go through it anyway so we can forget, but where and when we say what we need to say in a formal discussion is really important. Appropriate location and time. Do not choose the fishbowl office that's glass in the middle of everybody else on the day when everyone comes into the office, and equally, tread with care about a coffee shop as well. Coffee shops are fine if you know your person and the conversation is not terribly controversial. We want to try and do this in person as much as possible. It's just more impactful. Particularly for constructive feedback, in-person is desirable. If not, do it virtually, and the same rules apply. Where you are matters, where they are matters, and allow enough time. We want to be interruption-free.

How we say it. We've covered quite a lot of that. So be well-prepared for message and delivery. Frame well. Frame well means establishing a positive, open client... sorry, climate. Separate positive for constructive. Don't try and weave them all in together. Listen and give opportunities for questions. Slow the conversation down. Get clarity every step of the way. Of course, we want to be specific and factual, objective, honest, descriptive, and we want to have a conversation that's actionable. We don't want to ever be in the criticism space, and equally, too much praise actually diminishes specificity, facts, objectivity, and actionability. So the right balance of praise, 5%,

10%, 90% positive and constructive feedback is where we create an environment of high-quality feedback that contributes to both performance and engagement. That's it from me today, Susannah. Very happy to take some questions.

CCH Learning:

Thank you very much for that, Deb. We will be spending the next few minutes taking questions, so please type them into the questions pane. To give you some time to type those up, I will mention our upcoming webinars. So, coming up, we've got our Tax Technical Update for the month of March. We'll also be looking at our next session in our FBT 2024 series looking at car parking essentials for success. We'll be looking on the 26th of March at the AML Phase 2. That's Anti-Money Laundering Phase 2: What They've Learned from New Zealand and the International Market, and How to Prepare.

We'll also be looking at Initial Meeting to Profitable Client on the 26th. We'll also be discussing Practical Issues with the Main Residence Exemption on the 27th of March, and in early April, we'll have our April Cyber Security Update for 2024. If you're interested in any of those, please head to our website. Have a look and see if they would be right for you. So let's have a little look at our questions. So I do have a question from Mary. Mary was asking, "Can I have a feedback discussion with a whole team?"

Deborah Assheton:

Yeah, you can, Mary. So, absolutely. Look, I wouldn't if your team... Actually, let me take that back. Yes, as long as your team is not 95 people. So if you've got a small team anywhere up to 8 or 10 people, absolutely, you can have feedback discussions with the team as a whole. So you might want to look at how the group or the team did some kind of activity that engaged you all or involved you all. So meeting of a deadline, end of month, works with a client. If you've got an enormous team or just a really big team, it's a little bit harder to do feedback with the group as a whole. You might want to break everyone into small groups and get feedback that way, but absolutely, working with a team and getting feedback is great because it gives us diversity of thought. So it's a very powerful way to give and receive feedback. The same sort of setup and framing applies. So exactly the same principles apply for a team environment as they do for an individual. Thanks, Mary.

CCH Learning:

Thank you for that, Deb, and I hope that helps you, Mary. I also had a question from James. James was asking, "How should I handle it if my boss is giving lots of feedback, but I don't find any of it valuable?"

Deborah Assheton:

Nice question, James. So I would not recommend that you give your boss feedback on the quality or calibre of her or his feedback. What I'd suggest that you do in that instance is acknowledge. So what I do is I'd say to your boss something like, "Look, it's wonderful that you give me feedback. I really, really value that you care enough to give me feedback. Would it be possible for you to give me feedback on A, B, or C?" So what you do is you steer your boss in the right direction for what you want feedback on and help your boss to become more specific. So you might say, "Look, could you watch me in this presentation on Thursday and give me feedback on how I present the numbers, or how I answer questions, or my presentation skills?" So ask your boss for something specific, and acknowledge that the intention is already there and already good.

CCH Learning:

Thank you very much for that, Deb. I hope that helps you there, James. Well, that brings us to the end of our questions for today, but if anybody has any further questions, Deb's details are there on the screen. So please reach out, and I'm sure that Deb will be able to help you. So, in terms of next steps, I would like to remind you all to please take a moment to provide your feedback when exiting. There we go. We need some feedback from you as well. We've asked you a couple of questions about today's webinar, so it's really important for us to hear your opinions.

It's also a reminder that shortly, after today's session, you will be emailed when enrolled into the e-learning recording which can be watched multiple times, and you have access to the PowerPoint, transcript, and of course, your CPD certificate. I would very much like to thank Deb for her session today and to you, the audience, for joining us. We do hope to see you back online for another CCH Learning webinar very soon. Please enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you very much.