

Make Feedback Useful

Useful feedback helps people grow through trusted relationships, specific observations, honest conversations, and a clear next step.

Invite people who can help you see

Every leader has something they cannot see clearly on their own. We know what we intended. Other people can help us understand what they actually experienced. That difference is one reason feedback matters.

Think about the people who have permission to speak honestly into your leadership. Do they know the work? Do they care about your growth? Will they tell you something difficult with the desire to help? Trusted people can give us perspective we would otherwise miss.

It also helps to hear from people who experience the team differently. Someone who has served for years may notice a pattern. Someone new may notice a confusing step everyone else has learned to work around. Ask a clear question, and give people room to answer without having to manage your reaction.

Make the conversation specific

When we give feedback, we are helping a person understand something they can work on. Vague praise leaves them guessing about what to repeat. Vague criticism leaves them guessing about what to change.

Describe what you observed and why it mattered. “You noticed that new volunteer and explained what would happen next. That helped them participate with confidence.” Or, “The plan arrived after the team had already started. Next time, we need it early enough for people to prepare.” Specific language gives the conversation a useful starting point.

Ask for their perspective too. You may be missing information. Choose an appropriate time and place, especially when the conversation involves correction. Speak directly to the person who can respond. Hard conversations become more helpful when people understand the issue and know you are invested in their development.

Turn what you hear into growth

Receiving feedback takes humility. Our first instinct may be to explain ourselves before we have understood the concern. Slow down. Ask a question. Repeat what you think you heard so the other person can clarify it.

You will need to consider the feedback carefully. Some observations reveal a pattern. Others describe one person's preference or an unusual moment. Look for what is true and useful, and take

responsibility for the part that belongs to you.

Then identify a next step. A good conversation should help somebody move forward. What will change? What support would help? When will you check in? Following through shows that the conversation was worth having. It also helps people trust that speaking honestly can lead to something constructive.

Lead this week

Ask one trusted person, “What is one thing I could do that would help our team work better?” Listen all the way through. Thank them for being direct, choose a useful action, and let them know what you are doing with what they shared.

Talk it through

How do people experience your response to correction? What would make your next feedback conversation more specific and useful?

One next step

Ask for one observation, act on what is useful, and follow up with the person who gave it.