everywoman
NETWORK

advancing women in business

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

EVERYWOMAN are women in business specialists and we work to advance women in business.

Through our work with individuals and companies, we know that giving and receiving feedback can be challenging, but it's imperative when it comes to developing ourselves and supporting the development of those around us. Without it many of us struggle to survive and grow, as we stumble along and keep working hard, and trying to figure out what we can do to improve.

Feedback in the workplace should be a conversation about development with a business outcome. It is your responsibility to get feedback about yourself, and it is up to you as a manager, leader or colleague to feedback to those around you, continually giving information to help people improve.

There are so many different ways people choose to deliver and receive feedback. This workbook aims to show you how to get the most out of any feedback session, formal or informal, done correctly or not. You have probably experienced giving and receiving feedback already, and this workbook will help you explore what has been effective and what might not have worked as well.

Make sure you take time to reflect; there are several exercises to encourage your thinking on specific issues and to get you planning and taking action.

Don't forget our online seminars support this workbook and will give you an opportunity to ask our experts any questions you may have. If you are unable to join the live seminars, you can listen to the recorded versions shortly afterwards when they are posted on the everywoman site.

We look forward to seeing you on the everywomanNetwork and hearing how you have benefited from this workbook.

Good luck!

The everywomanNetwork Team.

SECTION 1.
AN INTRODUCTION
TO FEEDBACK

What is feedback?

FEEDBACK IS AN INTERACTION that should help motivate and develop a person's knowledge, skills and behaviours. It should raise awareness of a person's ability and help them to maximise their potential.

In the absence of feedback we tend to either assume all is okay, or, if we are prone to negative self–talk or lack confidence we may tend to assume everything is not okay. Either way, we are often making false assumptions rather than working on reality.

We live what we learn and for many of us, our starting point for feedback has been through school and our parents. At school we often got a mark and a comment such as 'could try harder…' At home we may have been told we are 'clever, brilliant, can do anything we put our mind to…'although it's nice to hear, still doesn't help us improve.

EXERCISE

Look back at feedback you have received.

What piece of feedback was helpful?

Why?

What piece of feedback wasn't helpful?

Why?

Use this workbook to learn the best practice for giving and receiving feedback.

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO FEEDBACK

2. GIVING FEEDBACK

3. RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Self-assessment

THE FIRST STEP is to be comfortable with giving and receiving feedback. Let's see where you are now. There are many terms used to describe feedback, for the purpose of this workbook we will use

- Positive feedback:
  Denotes behaviours and tasks that are working well/or should be continued
- Developmental feedback:
  Denotes behaviours or tasks which need work, changing or eradicating

EXERCISE

Think about how comfortable you are with feedback – both positive and developmental - and shade the graph below to illustrate this. 1 is extremely uncomfortable and 10 is extremely comfortable.

Giving positive feedback	Giving developmental feedback	Receiving positive feedback	Receiving developmental feedback	Seeking positive feedback	Seeking developmental feedback

(y-axis: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0)

Use this workbook to help increase your comfort level and build confidence with giving and receiving feedback.

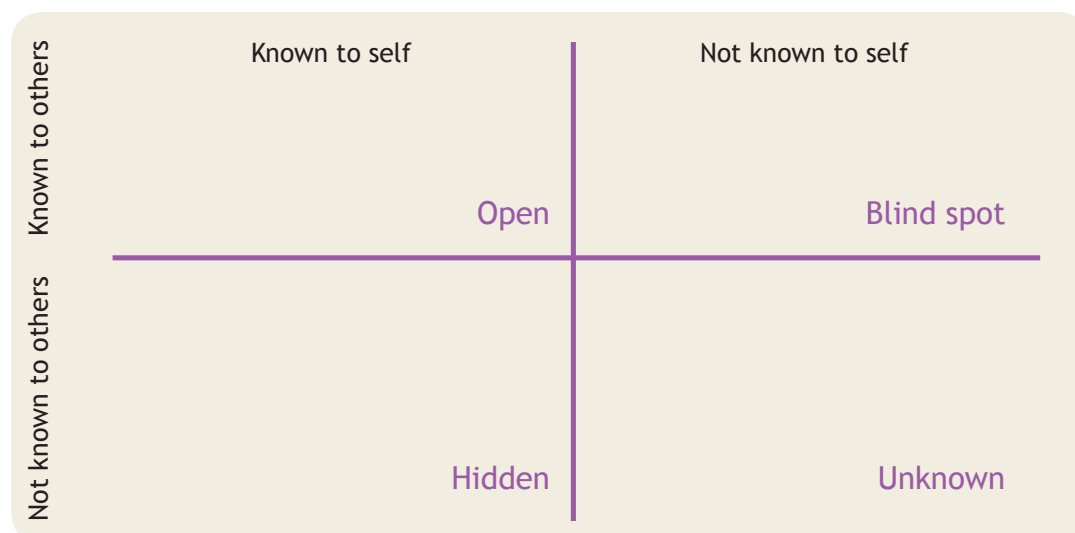You can go directly to the section where you need the most support, or read through each section.

Either way, aim towards being able to rate yourself higher once you have completed this workbook.

Increasing self-awareness and how you interact with others

FEEDBACK IS PARTICULARLY USEFUL as it opens up your blind spots, and these are often the hardest areas to learn about.

When giving feedback we assume people 'must know' the strengths and weaknesses that sit in their blind spot. When we receive feedback, if the feedback is not specific and concrete we might fail to see areas that fall in our blind spot.

The Johari Window is a model to increase self-awareness and your understanding of how you interact with others. When using the model, you list adjectives that describe you and your peers. Pick five or six adjectives that describe you, these adjectives are then mapped onto a grid.

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Open	Blind spot
Not known to others	Hidden	Unknown

Open

This represents what is known by a person about themselves, which others also know about them e.g. I know I speak quickly and so do others.

Blind spot

This represents things a person is not aware of themselves, although these things are known to others e.g. You know I am good at putting people at ease but I don't realise it.

Hidden

This refers to things a person knows about themselves which they do not reveal to others e.g. I used to speak regularly at my old company events and wish I could get more involved in this company.

Unknown

This represents things about a person that are unknown both to themselves and to others. This area is normally left to professional psychologists to deal with because neither party are aware of why the issue has happened and it may often need professional analysis.

Why is this important?

If you ask for feedback from people then the size of the 'Open' pane increases and the 'Blind spot' decreases.

When you volunteer information about yourself, the size of the 'Open' pane increases and the 'Hidden' pane decreases. Using The Johari Window can help you to reflect on how you see yourself in relation to others, and how you communicate with others.

The Johari Window can help a person to increase their self-awareness. They can review their assumptions about the sort of information they disclose or ask for, and whether they are getting useful feedback from others. For instance, in the above example of the 'Hidden' window, the individual should speak to their line manager about how they can become more involved in speaking at company events.

If you're giving feedback to somebody always make sure it's helpful and not simply critical.

If you're receiving feedback try not to take it personally, remember that it has been given in the context of increasing your self-awareness and improving your performance.

When giving feedback, think about what could be in the person's blind spot and use the giving feedback guidelines on page 13 to open up that blind spot e.g. you may think someone can come across sarcastically sometimes, but they don't realise it.

Think of someone you need to give feedback to, or have given feedback to in the past and complete the following exercise.
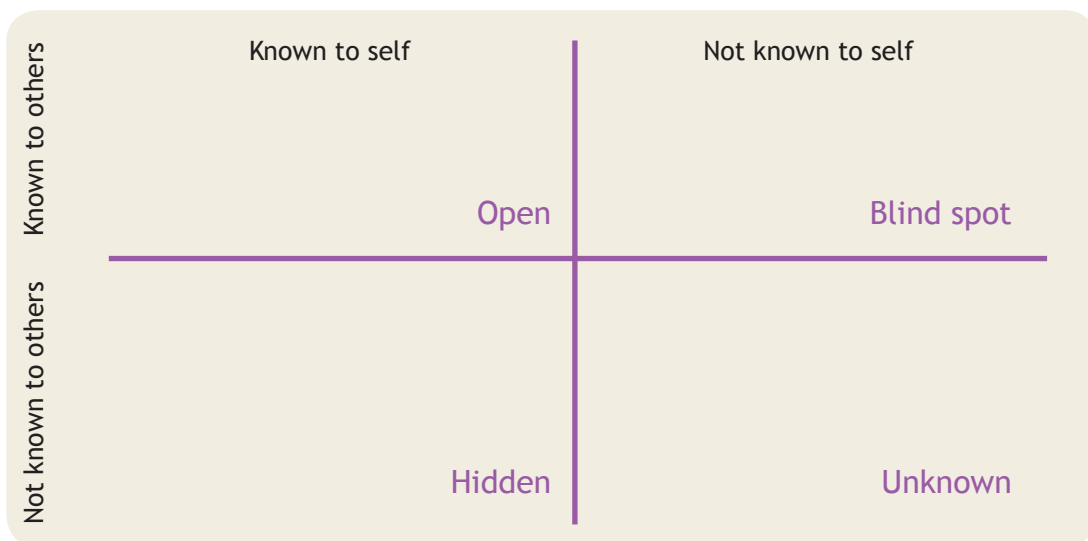
For .... (person's name) I think the following areas could be blind spots I should look to open up in a feedback and development session.

1.
2.
3.

EXERCISE

Use this Johari Window. Write down five or six adjectives which describe you, then get a few colleagues to write down some adjectives which they think describe you (anonymously if they would prefer).

Plot the adjectives onto the Window, and take some time to reflect on what it says about the way you interact with others.

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Open	Blind spot
Not known to others	Hidden	Unknown

Reviewing your Johari Window

Blind spot: is there a mismatch between the view you have of yourself and how others see you?

Hidden: would more disclosure improve trust and relationships? Are there any hidden or undeveloped talents or potential?

SECTION 2.
GIVING FEEDBACK

Giving feedback

FEEDBACK IS GIVEN in order to reinforce great performance or change behaviour.

It is also used to:

- Open up an important blind spot for people
- Help people develop and learn about themselves
- Help people understand the impact they have on others

When giving feedback, ask yourself:

Is this feedback going to do any of the above? If not, question the reason you feel the need to give it. Feedback needs reflection, not a knee-jerk reaction.

"The best minute you spend is the one you invest in people"

BLANCHARD AND JOHNSON, AUTHORS OF ONE MINUTE MANAGER

What to avoid

We want to focus on the 'how' of getting feedback right, but it is important to look at some of the ways feedback can become ineffective. You need to be mindful that it is easy for mixed messages to be received.

Ineffective feedback is:

UNBALANCED	NON-SPECIFIC
UNCLEAR	JUDGING
CONDESCENDING	MANIPULATIVE
USED FOR RETRIBUTION	USED FOR A GRUDGE
BLAMING	TRIVIAL
PUT-DOWNS	PERSONALITY JUDGEMENTS
SHAMING	INFERENCE OF BEHAVIOUR
BEING TOO NICE	DONE IN PUBLIC

EXERCISE

Looking at the ineffective feedback list, write below any that you might currently do when giving feedback.

Use this checklist before your next feedback session as a reminder of what to avoid.

What makes feedback effective?

WHEN WE GIVE FEEDBACK – we need to:

- Tell the person what we are looking for
- Tell them what they are doing well and why that is important
- Tell them what is wrong, and what impact that has
- Suggest actions for improvement

It is important to:

1. Make it specific - Page 14
2. Make sure it has been observed - not based on hearsay - Page 15
3. Make it balanced - Page 16
4. Focus on behaviour, actions and skills - Page 16
5. Focus on business outcomes - Page 17
6. Deliver it in a timely fashion - Page 18
7. Make it actionable and help the person build an action plan of how to develop - Page 18

Consider this example:

You need to give a speech to a panel of judges.

Scenario 1

You give your speech, the judges confer and two score you a 7/10 and other one an 8/10.

Scenario 2

You give your speech; Judge One says overall that was a good presentation. Judge Two says you spoke too quickly and you did not make any pauses. Judge Three shakes her head a few times and says the slides were too busy and there was no flow. Two of the judges score you a 7/10 and other one an 8/10.

Scenario 3

You give your speech. Judge One says you were comfortable with some people in the audience which meant you seemed to only make eye contact with them. Next time you should try to plant your feet so you have everyone in view and it will be easier to look at the whole audience.

Judge Two says you obviously know your topic and your enthusiasm came through with every slide. However, you spoke really quickly which meant they missed some of the key facts and research, and that it can be helpful to find a way to build in some pauses, either using blank slides or perhaps a question to the audience.

Judge Three says you do know your stuff, and the key to a good presentation is to allow the presenter to carry the topic, not the slides. You could put much less on each slide

which would mean the audience was looking at you and engaging with you rather than the screen. If you added an introduction to the slide, they would be able to see quite quickly how all the information and data links together. Two of the judges score you a 7/10 and other one an 8/10.

So you received the same scores from all the judges, but what scenario is going to help you the most going forward?

Scenario One – You have a score, but no idea what it was based on. So therefore, no idea what needs to change, improve or what worked well.

Scenario Two – You know what not to do, but there is no link to how to improve. You have been told the presentation was good, but have no idea what was good about it.

Scenario Three – This feedback will help make your next presentation better. You have been given thoughts about what you did well, ways to improve on your strengths and some specific tips on how to make those improvements.

What scenario most replicates your normal feedback conversation?

Scenario 1 [　　　]   Scenario 2 [　　　]   Scenario 3 [　　　]

When we give feedback it is important to:

1. Make it specific

Vague is easy...but not helpful.

- 'That was a great report.'
- 'You need to be a more effective manager.'
- 'The quality of this budget is poor.'
- 'Your presentation was interesting.'

 Be specific with any example, observation or issue.

'This report was a great summary of everything we discussed in the meeting. You captured individual points of view and pulled together the analysis so that we can now make a decision about what to do next.'

'Every budget needs to go into detail about any cost over £500. Each project needs to have an estimated cost based on previous similar projects. The department heads need to sign off the final estimates and somewhere within the budget there needs to be a place to visually compare estimates to actual figures.'

EXERCISE

Think about a piece of feedback you have to give, positive or developmental. What are the specifics you need to include?

2. GIVING FEEDBACK

1. AN INTRODUCTION   3.RECEIVING FEEDBACK   4. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

2. Make sure it has been observed

Good feedback is specific and observed. Many of us try to be specific but start to infer behaviour rather than discuss what we have observed.

An *observation* is something you have seen yourself.

An *inference* is the way you interpret what you have seen.

> I observed that Susan was in a good mood, I inferred that it was because she had finally finished doing her overdue timesheets.

> I observed that Thomas was late with his deadline and I inferred it was because he spends too much time chatting with his colleagues.

Observations are good and are the starting point for a feedback discussion. If you try and base your discussion on what you infer, and you get it wrong (as you often will) the feedback discussion can become defensive, demotivational and ineffective.

EXERCISE

Think about some feedback you need to give.

What observations did you make to support the feedback?

What inferences have you made that might hinder the feedback discussion?

3. Make it balanced

To give valuable feedback, it needs to be balanced. Balanced feedback is about giving useful and effective positive and developmental feedback.

Most people are more comfortable with one than the other, so tend to give only one type of feedback.

EXERCISE

What type of feedback are you better at giving?

Why do you think this is the case?

4. Focus on behaviour, action and skills

Take the emotions out of giving feedback and focus on what can be changed or worked on. If you use emotionally charged words or phrases such as 'failure, I demand, you claim, always, never etc.' it makes it easy to discount feedback. For example, if you tell someone they always miss deadlines, they may think to themselves - well yesterday I got that email done on time so therefore this feedback is not valid. Even though, chances are, they are often late with deadlines.

Next time you give feedback, listen to the feedback you are giving and reflect on what this might be saying about yourself. Are you bringing anything into the discussion from your own issues? Often, we most despise the behaviours and weaknesses in others that we have ourselves. Be careful to remove this personalisation from the conversation, alternatively, it can be helpful to the conversation to share that it is your weakness too, and what you may be doing to overcome it.

5. Focus on business outcomes

Relate the feedback to moving the business forward.

This will ensure you are stressing the impact of the feedback and the emphasis will be related to the business rather than taken personally.

EXERCISE

Think about some feedback you need to deliver, positive or developmental.

What is the direct link to business outcomes?

6. Deliver it in a timely fashion

Continual performance improvement is key.

Don't store up feedback for an annual appraisal. Feedback should be given as soon as possible. Be aware of the need for privacy for many situations, so you may need to consider logistics.

Remember if your management style and environment is one of development and improvement then both positive and developmental feedback can usually be given in an open and conversation-like forum.

7 . Make it actionable

Depending on the feedback, the person receiving it might be prepared to discuss the 'how to' right away, or they may need time to reflect and come up with their own solutions.

Remember in order for feedback to work, the person needs to know what you are looking for in the first place.

EXERCISE

Think about the feedback you need to give.

What is the desired improvement or change?

What can you do to support the change?

What does the other person need to put in place to action the feedback?

When are you going to review?

This is usually a great coaching opportunity, and you may find using coaching tools from the 'Stepping Into Leadership' workbook very helpful.

Use models to help with feedback

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT MODELS OR FORMATS you can tap into, they will help you stay focused and clear when you are having your feedback conversation.

These models include:

1. General feedback
2. Traffic lights
3. Review feedback
4. Discussion feedback
5. Giving praise

1. General feedback

What worked well…?

Even better if…

This is useful for getting individuals or groups to feedback on their performance or to gather feedback. This works well, for example, at the end of a training course or after a client pitch. It enables the people giving feedback to look at any aspect of the situation. Afterwards, you need to decide what feedback to act on.

For example:

What worked well…?

- You knew the topic
- You met our brief
- The team was enthusiastic
- You gave insight into our issues

Even better if…

- There were handouts
- There was more time for questions
- We had a coffee break

2. Traffic lights

The 'stop, continue, start' model helps to focus feedback and is useful for evaluating the feedback and making an action plan. If you use it often, people will start to solicit or give feedback using this format.

The feedback under each heading can be positive or developmental. For example:
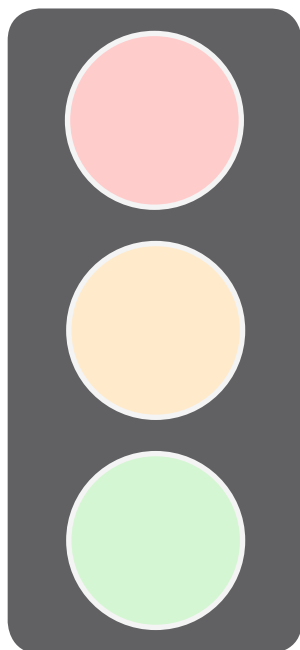
Stop...

"asking me to proof every email because you have a good editing technique of your own and are competent at writing emails"

"saying 'yes' to every request. Stop and think about whether you really have the time before you commit to everything that is asked of you."

Continue...

"asking me for advice with tricky clients. I am happy to help as I know many of them well."

Start...

"planning to get your time sheet done and emailed to me before the weekend so I can consolidate everyone's time per project ready to report to the executive team in my Monday morning meetings."

3. Review feedback

- What worked well?
- What did not work well?
- What could we do differently next time?

This works well when reviewing an event, a project, a product launch, a meeting etc. It allows people to look at strengths and weaknesses without laying blame, and to come up with an action plan of how to approach the situation the next time.

4. Discussion feedback - DISC

D = Describe the situation in observable terms.
I = List the Impacts of "D" on:
- You
- The Other Person
- The Work Unit/Organisation

S = Specify what, in particular, needs to change.

C = Explain the consequences for making changes or failing to change.

- Positives for changing
- Negatives for not changing

This is a great tool to help you stay focused on the issue at hand and avoid being side tracked or waffling because you are uncomfortable. For example:

D = Describe the situation in observable terms.

- You have been late several times in the past few weeks

I = List the Impacts of "D" on (as applicable):

- You - I feel frustrated as I have to cover the phones when I need to be sorting out the daily work schedule
- Others – people think you don't really care about your clients and are frustrated because they manage to get in on time
- The work unit/organisation – other people are frustrated at having to man your phone and take calls from clients with questions which they don't know how to answer

S = Specify what, in particular, needs to change.

- Please make sure you are at your desk and ready to work by 9am

C = Explain the Consequences for making changes or failing to change – as applicable

- Positives for changing – People on the team will be more apt to help and respect you if you have made an effort to be in on time and our clients will get better service
- Negatives for not changing – If you continue being late, you will need to make up lost time at the end of the day or we may need to revisit your schedule, and may be look at reducing your hours

5. Giving praise

Giving praise is vital for motivation and development in any organisation. One issue we are often up against is we say thanks or well done in one breath and then go onto the next project or issue in the next breath, and the thanks gets forgotten very quickly. Once in a while, try and praise someone in isolation. This means thanking them without having any further conversation.

1. Go to the person
2. Thank them

    'Hi Julie, thanks so much for staying last night to finish that report.'
3. Say why it helped or what the impact was

    'It meant that when I came in early this morning I had a chance to digest it before the board meeting.'
4. Listen
5. Thank them again

    'It was really helpful…or I appreciate you making it a priority.'
6. Leave

    Don't add anything else or ask for anything.

EXERCISE

Who should you be praising?

Why?

How will you do it?

When will you do it?

SECTION 3. RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Receiving feedback

IN AN IDEAL WORLD, the person giving you the feedback is competent at doing so. In reality this may not be the case.

An aware individual will be able to take something from feedback given, no matter how it is delivered.

Most of us have experienced getting feedback. Think about a drama coach, a conductor, a sports coach, a driving instructor or a teacher. You may or may not have actually paid someone to give you information that is aimed at making you better at something. The point is you normally welcome the input as your purpose in those situations is to continuously improve. Let's use this mind-set in the workplace, rather than think of it as simply criticism.

EXERCISE

What is your typical reaction to feedback? For example: I am naturally defensive; I focus on negatives; I tune out quickly; I usually manage to take something from each discussion. Be honest with yourself and note here:

Whatever your reaction might be, try and focus each conversation on how the feedback will help you be better at your job.

When receiving feedback:

- Listen, don't interrupt
- Evaluate the feedback before responding
- Ask for specific examples if the feedback isn't clear
- Don't try and justify your position
- Thank the person (even if you don't agree with them)
- Understand that it is up to you what you do with the feedback

"Use feedback analysis to identify your strengths. Then go to work on improving your strengths. Identify and eliminate bad habits that hinder the full development of your strengths. Figure out what you should do and do it. Finally, decide what you should not do."

PETER DRUCKER
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT, EDUCATOR, AND AUTHOR

Most importantly focus on actions and next steps.

Seeking feedback

IT IS HUMAN NATURE TO APPRECIATE AFFIRMATION, and most of us appreciate it if that affirmation is geniune and not just flattery.

Some of us seek feedback from people we know will agree with us or back up our point of view. We often want to speak to people who back up our own thoughts, beliefs and actions rather than those who challenge them.

So the first step to seeking feedback is to decide what you want it for.

If you truly want to improve and get a different and more useful point of view, then follow these guidelines.

Know what you want

What exactly do you need feedback on and how will you use it?

- A project
- Your image
- A skill
- A behaviour

Ask specific questions

Asking a specific question will get you a focused answer

- How could I have improved my presentation?
- When I am in a meeting how would you describe my impact?
- In your opinion, what are 2 or 3 of my most significant strengths? Could you provide an example in which you have observed them?
- What are some examples of activities I should do differently to be more effective?
- What should be my key priority for personal development?
- What specifically am I doing well and what would be even better?

Seek from the right sources:

- Who will be most honest?
- Who will have the most insight?
- Who is the most trustworthy?
- Don't forget to seek upward, peer and lower level feedback

EXERCISE

1. What do you need the feedback for and how will you use it?

2. What questions can you ask to help the feedback stay focused?

3. Who will you ask for feedback?

4. When is your next opportunity to have a discussion with them? (It is a good idea to let them know ahead of time that you will be asking for feedback, so that they can prepare and organise their thoughts).

Turning feedback into action

TAKE TIME TO DIGEST THE FEEDBACK GIVEN. It is important to reflect, put it into perspective and then develop ways to apply it.

This may be part of the feedback conversation already (see section 2 – Giving Feedback).

Evaluate the feedback

- Was it from a trusted source?
- Were there any external factors that related to the feedback? e.g. office politics
- Did you get a complete and accurate picture of the situation?
- Is it a means to an end? Will it help you learn and improve?

Reflect

Ensure that you reflect on both the positive and developmental areas of the feedback. We too often jump onto the developmental feedback and forget to take in and continue working on our strengths.

A good starting point to consider is what feedback was expected and what came as a surprise. This will help link the feedback to what you know already and what areas you need to become more self-aware. The more you can increase your self-awareness, the easier and more productive feedback sessions will be.

EXERCISE

> Think about recent feedback you received and consider what was expected and unexpected (or do this the next time you have a feedback conversation):

Then consider:

Expected
  Positive
    Am I applying this in all areas of my work?
    Could I use this skill or behaviour to help others?
    Do I give myself credit for this? (this is vital for self-confidence and motivation.)

  Developmental
    How can I be more pro-active about this in the future?
    Have I heard this before and what have I done about it?
    What happens if I ignore this feedback?

Unexpected

   Positive

      What was the reason this was unexpected?

      How will this help in others areas of work?

Developmental

      Was this a blind spot?

      Where else in my work life might this impact?

      What can I put in place now to start acting on this feedback?

      Who else can support me?

Now write it down:

Expected

Unexpected

You should now have a good idea of where the feedback will make an impact and what you need to focus on.

Make an action plan

Feedback should be about creating development plans and goals for continual improvement. We know that any goal, objective or change needs a plan to back it up and turn it into action.

Recalling recent feedback, consider:

- Do I need any more information or clarity?
- What can I do today to start applying the feedback?
- How to put feedback into action?
    1. Write down how you would like to apply the feedback.
    2. Write down situations in which the feedback could be put into action.
    3. If possible, schedule those situations so you can start to develop immediately.
    4. Note how effective your new actions are and whether they have made an impact.
    5. Approach the person who gave the feedback and discuss with them where it has been effective (this will encourage them to continue to give you feedback in the future).

For example, you received feedback that you often seem unprepared for client meetings.

1. Write down how you would like to apply the feedback.

- Direct emails from clients into a client folder in your inbox
- The day before the meeting read client notes
- Contact the client 24hrs before, to confirm meeting and have a chat about anything specific they want to discuss

2. Write down situations in which the feedback could be put into action.

- Meeting with x client next Monday
- Monthly update meetings with finance team

3. If possible, schedule those situations so you can start to develop immediately.
4. Note how effective your new actions are and whether they have made an impact.

- Email filing working well
- Left it too late to contact client. Need 48 hours next time
- Meeting with the finance team enabled me to be more precise about what could be achieved within a given period of time at the client meeting, rather than checking with finance after the meeting and then reporting timelines/actions to the client
- Anticipated a few questions from previous notes so had answers ready
- Client emailed after to say thanks for great meeting, which they never have before

5. Approach the person who gave the feedback and discuss how you have used it and where it has been effective (this will encourage them to continue to give you feedback in the future).

- Forwarded email to boss and told her what I had done to make meeting more effective
- Will share with team members next team meeting as think it should be best practice

SECTION 4. PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Pulling it all together

WORKING THROUGH THIS WORKBOOK SHOULD GIVE YOU THE CONFIDENCE
to approach the feedback situations you have been avoiding.

Take what you have learnt and put it into practice.

Giving and receiving feedback should get more comfortable the more you are able to make it work for you.

Take time out to reflect, review and learn on a weekly basis and you will see how the effort will make an impact. Use this workbook as a reminder of the key considerations for feedback.

everywoman's top tips for feedback

- Give feedback often

- Make it a learning conversation

- Focus on business outcomes

- Work hard to get the delivery right

- Turn feedback into action

every
woman

This workbook has been produced and edited by everywoman, with content commissioned from associate expert Sara Parsons. And is part of the everywoman portfolio of resources that have been specially created to support and develop women as they advance their careers and businesses.

everywoman Expert

Sara Parsons has been an everywoman Associate for 10 years and has worked in the field of Personal Development globally for 16 with clients such as; Paramount Pictures, The RSA, Ipsos MORI, RNLI, Oxford University Press. She holds an honours business degree and is a qualified expert in many professional assessments including Belbin and MBTI – the Myers-Briggs profile. Sara is passionate about inspiring and supporting women to reach into the potential they often don't know they possess.

Further reading

- *Feedback Pocketbook* by Mike Pezet
- *Vital Conversations: A practical approach to handling difficult conversations, managing conflict, giving feedback...* by Alec Grimsley
- *Real Coaching and Feedback: How to Help People Improve Their Performance* by JK Smart

Go to everywoman.com/development for more personal development

workbooks, tools and a schedule of our online seminars.