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15.277 Special Seminar in Communications: Leadership and Personal Effectiveness Coaching
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TEAM FEEDBACK TO EACH MEMBER ACTIVITY

Many of us are making a transition in our careers. Others want to build on what they learn at MIT to go back to careers already established but move into more challenging positions that might include managing others. Still others will be starting new businesses or going where there are a few people working in teams which may require the ability to do technology jobs and work with clients and/or colleagues.

Most of us recognize how useful it is to learn how others perceive our work, and ask, and offer feedback throughout our working relationships. Nonetheless, we thought it important deliberately to set aside time in the lab. This allows us to share with each other from our own perspectives what we have observed in working together this term.

Keep in mind that that this is about perception. Feedback is not the truth or even close to it. It is simply a slice of reality from a close colleague that might help us learn something about ourselves we did not know before.

Typical Activity Outcomes	Potential “Leadership Connections”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants practice giving and receiving feedback. • Accept feedback as a learning tool. • Appreciate the difficulty of giving feedback • Learn how to phrase feedback to be heard • Improve in ability to ask clarifying questions • Improve ability to listen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve work together in the team • Improve ability to share information with others • Help the team manage the final core project

Activity Materials

- Facilitator Guide
- Participant handout “Language of Effective Feedback”
- paper and pen

Activity Time Frame

Total Time: 55 minutes

Activity Schedule:

- 3 min: Activity Introduction
- 5 min: Review language of feedback
- 40 min: Giving feedback for each person (3 minutes each)
- 3 min: Summary & Next week’s assignment

Setting Up The Activity

Be sure that the group is sitting in the circle.

Safety Considerations

There are no physical safety concerns for this activity.

Facilitation Instructions

Step 1: Introducing the Activity

We practiced giving and receiving feedback early this fall. In doing that, we talked about how much feedback can contribute to collaboration and cooperation in all our relationships.

Everyday we may have had opportunities to give comments within the team. Today we want to focus on what we can learn from each other about our work together that will help us improve our ability to lead and work with others.

From the prior exercise, we learned that the giver of feedback should:

Speak descriptively and specifically

Own his or her feedback (it comes from their observations and their feelings)

The receiver of feedback learned that their role in receiving feedback is to

Understand what was said

Ask clarifying questions if needed

Take it in to think about

Appreciate the giver for the gift

Facilitation Notes

Most teams will be eager to do this activity. However, the few that are not working well together will find this exercise difficult. Setting it up well is delicate.

Stress that it is useful for the individuals and the team to learn from each other. What they will learn is what the team has learned about them during their working together so far this fall. .

*Further, stress that this is all about **perceptions**. This is not the truth. It is how another perceives what happened. Your job as the recipient of feedback is to listen to others' assumptions, understand them, and then consider to what extent it may be relevant to you. (As a rule, think about over time—sleep on it before you decide. In my experience, there is a kernel of relevant material in it if I just figure it out.)*

Remember the importance of language: by following the rules of good feedback we will reduce defensiveness and increase the effectiveness.

Remind them that feedback is a gift.

Your job is to get them to the place where they can hear what each other says. They will arrive at a place where they are focused, concentrating, and listening to each other.

Ask them to suspend or set aside their doubts and to follow the rules.

Step 2: Overview the Activity Schedule

1. First, we will review the language of feedback.
2. Then each person will be asked to participate as the recipient of feedback
3. Give feedback on the exercise
4. Debrief

Exercise

1. Appoint a scribe and have them select one team member to receive feedback first (and then set up an order for the rest of the team).
2. Each individual will have 3 minutes each to receive feedback
3. Every member of the team should in turn **briefly** respond to questions about that team member:

Q-What are they doing within the activities of the team that is working well?

Q-What are they doing that might need improvement?

Q-What position would you imagine they would have when they leave Sloan? (The purpose of this is to reinforce/suggest how their team role may relate to his/her eventual job role).

4. Ensure that every member gets his/her time.
5. The person receiving the feedback should not comment on their feedback or discuss it. They may ask clarifying questions only. If there are issues they want to discuss, they can suggest that they are open to invite the feedback-giver to discuss further another day.

During the feedback exercise, coaches monitor the responses:

Each person should make three statements

Use examples and specifics

Stick to behavior that can be changed

Avoid generalizations and judgments

Step 3: Review the Rules

To make it easier, we are going to follow these rules:

Each person giving feedback will be using these precise language norms:

Giving Feedback

a) Solicit agreement: "I would like to share with you my experience of what I have observed."

b) Describe what you observed: "When you _____ (describe what they said or did).

[Coaching note: Listen carefully for precision. When you hear evaluation, ask for description after indicating where the evaluation comes in. For example, "you were very polite" – evaluation versus "you said, "please."]

c) Tell how it made you feel: “I feel_____.”

[Coaching note: Listen carefully for blame. “you made me feel good” versus “I felt good.” “You tried to trick me” versus “I felt skeptical”.]

[Coaching note: Have the recipient stick to clarifying questions only. If the person wants to talk about what happened from their perspective, or explain, or defend, ask them to hold that for later. Tell them now just to make certain they understand the feedback.)

Receiving Feedback

d) The person receiving feedback should simply acknowledge it and thank the other for it: “I have heard _____ (rephrase what was said) and understand it and know that you feel “_____” about it. (They might add” I am prepared to have a further conversation about it; prepared to open up more conversation with the other. Thank you for that feedback.”)

Follow above protocol until every member of the group has made at least one comment for their team member.

Step 4. Debrief on Giving Feedback

Questions:

Step 5: What did they learn?

Finally, ask what can be learned from the exercise.

I hope that most will say they learned how important language is in managing our relationships.

Meanings to elicit:

1. The team will be more creative and more collaborative the more the team works at sharing their views of reality. Without constant feedback, groupthink sets in—it can happen in groups that are very friendly and in groups that are having difficulty.
2. The team has rich history that can contribute to your understanding of how you work with others.
3. Once hearing your feedback, you may not think it valid for you. But by understanding it and thanking the other for it—after all it is a gift-- and then thinking about it, you will learn something that may have relevance later if not now.

SUMMARY

Feedback will in the meanwhile, help make the experience of the team, or the organization, or partners grounded in reality. It will develop trust and open up more learning.

The point of this exercise is to learn how to use these simple norms to practice managing any interpersonal behavior in their teams or in their other relationships.

Step 6: Prepare them for next week

Remind them next week is Active Listening as preparation for interviewing.

If they did not have time to complete feedback to all members, they will have time next week to complete.