

RADICAL CANDOR

6 WAYS TO  
ENCOURAGE  
FEEDBACK  
BETWEEN OTHERS

# 6 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE FEEDBACK BETWEEN OTHERS

It's a lot easier to lead by example than it is to change other people's behavior. If you want to encourage feedback between the people on your team or at your organization, you're going to have to create an environment where people feel safe and encouraged to give real feedback.

When Kim Scott was at Google, rather than focusing on giving feedback to her team, she encouraged them to tell her when she was wrong.

Kim did everything she could to encourage people to criticize her, or at least simply to talk to her. After a false start, the team started to open up and began to debate openly. Establishing this trust also allowed the team to have more fun together.

If you're the boss, you have to lead by example, so it makes sense to start by soliciting feedback and then to focus on giving it. But real managerial leverage comes when you learn to encourage feedback between others.

As just one person, if all the praise and criticism goes through you, you become a bottleneck. In order to foster a feedback culture and ensure that it scales across the team/company, it's important to make sure that peers give and receive feedback to one another.

In addition to leading by example, here are some things you can do to encourage feedback between team members.

# 1 ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO TALK DIRECTLY

When someone tells you about something great a colleague did, urge them to also share that feedback directly with the colleague who did the great work. This will develop stronger relationships between peers, allow for more praise to be shared (again, you don't want to be a feedback bottleneck), and provide more perspectives on what's going well and why.

When there are issues, if the people involved are peers, insist that people communicate them directly.

Remind them that Radically Candid criticism is kind and clear. It's kinder for them to tell their colleague about the issue that needs to be fixed than to report that issue to the boss. They'll also be able to be more clear than you could, because they have the details and context of the issue.

If the people involved are not peers, eg. one is an individual contributor and the other is a director, it could be uncomfortable for the individual contributor to give upwards feedback. This is an exception to the "talk directly" rule.

The flip side of this is that if people come to you criticizing a colleague, don't give them a chance to bring you into a triangle of complaining, name calling, or backstabbing.

Talking with the person on each side of an issue individually may seem like being a good listener, but it usually means you'll get one-sided, biased and incomplete stories plus hurt feelings. You are not being empathetic, you're just stirring the pot! You are a boss, not a diplomat. Shuttle diplomacy won't work for you.

When you triangulate, you end up creating politics. Each side becomes suspicious that you're talking behind their back (which you are). The two begin to distrust each other and a toxic relationship develops. You can avoid this by simply asking them to talk to each other directly.

As a peer, don't engage in gossip about other people's performance. If you have an issue with one of your peers, talk to that person directly.



- 📖 [What to Do When a Peer's Feedback Annoys You](#)
- 📖 [Kim Scott On How to Give Candid Feedback](#)
- 🔊 [The Peer-to-Peer Feedback Dilemma](#)

# 2 FACILITATE CLEAN ESCALATION

If you're the boss, your job is to offer fair, efficient conflict resolution. Sometimes people on your team will run into a conflict they can't resolve. They may be able to Challenge Directly, but that doesn't mean they can resolve the issue without your involvement. In those cases, provide a way for them to escalate the issue to you together.

Offer to have a three-way conversation to discuss the issue. Each party will tell their side of the story with the other present, avoiding the one-sidedness and exaggeration that may come up in triangulation. You will act as moderator and facilitator.

It's best to do this in person, but a video or phone call will also work. Avoid conducting these discussions over email — an asynchronous conversation makes it difficult for you to spot and react well to emotions that will inevitably arise.

Your role in this meeting is to help the two parties come up with a solution they both can understand and live with. Don't punish them for failing to work it out without your involvement. Your job is to be supportive, not punitive when they can't work it out.

Otherwise, you'll create a culture with no good path to conflict resolution, and people will therefore avoid conflict at all costs. People will be afraid to criticize each other in case it leads to conflict. That's the opposite of encouraging a culture of Radical Candor!

With a supportive clean escalation meeting, however, you'll help build trust between the two parties and show them how sharing criticism leads to a better outcome for everyone.



- 📖 [Practical Ways to Get & Give Feedback](#)
- 📺 [How to Give Good Feedback](#)
- 🎧 [How to Implement Radical Candor](#)

# 3 ESTABLISH A PEER FEEDBACK PROCESS FOR CROSS-FUNCTIONAL PROJECTS

When a group of people from different teams are working on a project together, establish a peer feedback process at the beginning of the project. At McKinsey, teams use a feedback and goal setting process that helps everyone earn, grow and achieve development goals.

According to the article *Intentional learning in practice: A 3x3x3 approach*, this process mirrors the natural arc of learning. McKinsey recommends:

1. Creating a defined number of clear and immediate goals and focus on a few concrete goals at any one time.
2. Establishing a defined period in which to meet those goals. "While the cycle time for meeting a target depends on the nature of the goal itself, our research has found the optimal period should be long enough to establish new behavior and short enough to create a sense of urgency and momentum."
3. Selecting a specific group of people who can support and monitor progress on goals. "People are more likely to achieve goals when they enlist others who can help and hold them accountable."

All feedback should be given following the principles of Radical Candor:

**Get Feedback → Give Feedback → Gauge Feedback → Encourage Feedback**



- 📖 [Intentional Learning In Practice: A 3x3x3 Approach](#)
- 📺 [Radical Candor With Kim Scott: Gauge It, Encourage It](#)
- 🔊 [Gauge the Feedback You're Giving & Getting](#)

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# 4 USE PEER RECOGNITION TO ENCOURAGE FEEDBACK

Many companies have systems in place for peers to recognize and praise each other's work. Google, for example, has a peer bonus system that allows employees to give monetary bonuses to their peers for work well done. Monetary systems like this can be expensive, and not every company can afford to do this. But there are many other recognition systems that require less investment.

At Square, Gokul Rajaram has his team submit kudos about great things they've seen each other do each week. They are submitted to a shared document so others can comment. Gokul reads them all each week and selects a couple of kudos to highlight.

At Qualtrics, Jared Smith built a system on the intranet that allowed employees to give each other virtual appreciation badges for great work. Badges accumulated on a person's profile page on the company intranet, and helped to create a culture of praise.

If your company uses Slack, you can create a #kudos channel (this is great for remote teams). If you use Google Docs, Office 365, or other software with collaborative editing, you can easily create a shared document for shout-outs.

Part of the reason these systems work so well is that they help people overcome a reticence to praise. People worry about their praise feeling patronizing. They wonder if they are really qualified to praise someone else's work. Having a standardized recognition system emphasizes the worth of praise, both to individuals and to the company. The system helps people be more confident that their praise will be appreciated, and therefore makes them more likely to offer it.

Even if your company doesn't have a system like this, you can come up with a low-tech, low-cost version for your own team to encourage more praise between team members.



- 📖 [Tips for Radically Candid Praise](#)
- 📖 [Getting to the Heart of Radical Candor](#)
- 📖 [Relationships, Not Power, Drive You Forward](#)

# 5 INTRODUCE WHOOPS-A-DAISY & THE KILLER WHALE

Dan Woods, who was CTO at a startup where Kim worked in the 1990s, developed a cheap and effective system for encouraging praise and criticism on a team. He used a stuffed whale (sometimes a dog) to encourage praise and a stuffed animal, Kim uses a daisy (or Daisy Duck), to encourage public self-criticism. She admired his system so much she stole it, and it was probably my single most effective management tool at both Juice and Google.

Here's how it worked: At every all-hands meeting, Kim invited people to nominate each other to win the killer whale for a week. The idea was to get people from the team to stand up and talk about some extraordinary work they'd seen somebody else do. The winner of the whale the previous week decided who deserved the whale this week.

Next, people nominated themselves for the stuffed daisy, who they named "Whoops." If anyone screwed up that week they could stand up, tell the story, get automatic forgiveness, and help prevent somebody else from making the same mistake.

When they first started doing this at both Juice and Google, there were crickets. Not knowing what else to do, Kim put \$20 on Whoops's head. The stories started pouring out. Plausible deniability goes a long way — now people could pretend they weren't copping to my corny stuffed animal, they really wanted that \$20!

The stories that the Killer Whale and Whoops elicited were Kim's favorite part of most all-hands meetings. Everyone learned a lot in that 15 minutes, and everyone received a strong message that feedback was encouraged.



# 6 CONDUCT SKIP-LEVEL MEETINGS

One of the most helpful suggestions Kim ever got as a manager came from Roxana Wales, who worked at NASA and then in Learning and Development at Google. She told Kim that one of the most important things any “manager of managers” could do to foster a culture of feedback was to have so-called “skip-level meetings.”

Skip level meetings are conversations you have with teams without their manager in the room to get feedback on how that manager is doing. This is the opposite of clean escalation, and it also has the potential to turn into a gripe session or to disempower the manager. So skip-level meetings must be conducted extremely carefully.

Given these risks, why have these conversations at all? The reason is that when there is a power imbalance, requiring clean escalation is sometimes not realistic. What percentage of people actually tell their boss what they really think? Certainly not the majority. Plus, managers, especially new managers, will consciously or unconsciously seek to repress criticism rather than to encourage it.

Skip-level meetings are a great way to encourage the flow of feedback despite these potential barriers. Learn all about the best way to conduct skip-level meetings by accessing the resources on the right.



- 📖 [Feeling Safe to Speak Truth to Power](#)
- 📖 [The surprising Secret to Being a Good Boss](#)
- 📖 [Skip Level Meetings Quick Start Guide](#)



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