

HOW 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 model behavior so people feel safe and encouraged to give real feedback.

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 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. 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.

FACILITATE CLEAN ESCALATION

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. In these 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.

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."
4. All feedback should be given following the principles of [Compassionate Candor: Get Feedback -> Give Feedback -> Gauge Feedback -> Encourage Feedback](#).

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.

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.

INTRODUCE WHOOPS-A-DAISY & THE KILLER WHALE

Dan Woods, CTO at a startup where Kim worked in the 90s, used a stuffed whale 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.

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. You can also include a \$20 reward along with Whoops.

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.

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 disempower the manager. So skip-level meetings must be conducted extremely carefully.

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 the best way to [conduct skip-level meetings](#).