

Feedback Workshop

Run Sheet

You will need

- 8 volunteers
- Either a whiteboard or a flipchart
- At least 1 table and 2 chairs (for each pair to play the game at)
- some coloured white, red, yellow, green & blue plastic counters
- A way to time 1 minute intervals
- Game sheets - Available as separate downloads here:
 - [Blank Game Sheet](#) for White Counter Holders
 - [Red](#) Counter Holders game sheet
 - [Yellow](#) Counter Holders game sheet
 - [Green](#) Counter Holders game sheet
 - [Blue](#) Counter Holders game sheet

Prepare in advance

Print off 4 blank game sheets - one each for the white counter holders.

Also print off 1 each of the coloured game sheets.

Set up a results table on a whiteboard or flipchart paper for the following:

Counter Colour	Feedback Style	Feedback Receiver Score ? /5	Feedback Receiver Caption	Feedback Giver Score ? /5	Feedback Giver Caption
Red					
Yellow					
Green					
Blue					

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Prepare 4 pots of coloured counters. Make sure there are at least 5 of each colour in there or they won't be able to finish successfully, even with great feedback!

Introduce your workshop:

(I've included what I say here, just to make it easier for you. Change it to suit you. *Italics* indicate things you should be saying to your attendees)

What do we mean by feedback?

Surely, if feedback were that useful, we'd be using it everywhere already, right?

Well, we ARE using it all over the place, all the time, and in all sorts of different environments.

We just don't notice we are doing so. There is a good reason for that, which hopefully will become apparent as we go through this session.

There are basically 4 different types of feedback, and we are going to play a short game to illustrate them and to see which work best.

Structure of the Game

Ask each one of the 8 volunteers to take one counter each.

Give each person the appropriate game sheet that matches their counter colour.

Ask 1 volunteer to be the scribe (people can take turns at this, or you as the facilitator can do this). The scribe will record the results onto the table.

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Explaining the Game

Coloured counter holders need to pair with a white counter holder.

White counters holders, you are the receiver of feedback, you have a blank game sheet, and are the only one allowed to put counters in the spaces.

Coloured counters holders, you are the giver of feedback, you have the game solution, and a description of the style of feedback you are to use.

The Coloured Counter Holders will 'help' the White Counter Holders to complete a task by giving them feedback as they do it. You may not physically help, but you can help with words, expressions, etc PROVIDED that you obey any constraints you have been given.

Feedback needs to be given in the style indicated by the colour of your counter.

Once you have read about the style of feedback, fold that section up, so no one else can see it.

Only the solution should be visible now, but still don't let your partner see that either!

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I have found it runs best if you play the games in the following order.

Red: (Saboteur)

Yellow: (Cheer-leader)

Green: (No Feedback At All)

Blue: (Helper Feedback)

If your team is resilient already, you could also introduce the Black: Negative Only Feedback, but it isn't necessary for the game's success.

Let's Play

Together you and your partner have 1 minute to complete the grid correctly (or as far as you can in the time). You may only give feedback in the style allocated by your counter colour.

You will play one pair at a time, starting with Red.

(It's best to check everyone is clear what they are doing at this point, and if there are any questions)

After 1 minute, stop the game.

Record the counter colour on the table and ask everyone **except the pair playing:**

1. Observers: what style of feedback were they giving? (Scribe records this)
2. Ask the Feedback Receiver (White Counter Holder):
 1. How did that feel?
 2. How helpful did you find the feedback you got (score out of 5)?

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3. In one phrase, please can you sum up your experience
3. Ask the Feedback Giver (Coloured Counter Holder):
 1. How did you feel giving feedback in that way?
 2. Do you think you helped? (score out of 5)
 3. In one phrase, please can you sum up your experience

Record each of these answers on your table, and repeat the whole game again for the other colour pairs.

Look at the table and discuss whether the results show feedback helped. If it did (who are we kidding, of course it did! ;)) discuss why some forms of feedback are more successful than others.

Here are some prompts to help start the discussions

So lets just review those feedback types:

Red: Saboteur

This is a little unfair as usually people aren't out to trick us! Almost everyone is giving feedback to be helpful. It is worth remembering however, that some people have a different agenda to ours...

Yellow: Cheer-leader

This the one most people go to when they first try to start giving feedback. "Yeay, you're doing great!" might feel good for a short time, but how helpful was it over all? Could the person getting the feedback TELL that it wasn't helping them much?

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Green: No Feedback At All

This is ironically the one most people default to...particularly English people! "yeay, you're doing great!" might feel good for a short time, but how helpful was it to solve the problem?

Blue: Helpful Feedback

Was all the feedback given in this game positive? Sometimes was it corrective? "No, not that one...." ? How did the receiver feel about being told they had not put one of the counters in the correct place? How useful did the player find the feedback compared with the other kinds of feedback.

Helpful Feedback - this is the most common sorts of feedback, but often goes un-noticed. This is the feedback we give and receive when we are teaching or learning a new thing.

Wrap Up

At the end of this Run Sheet I have included all the stuff that never made the blog post. Please feel free to choose whichever bits are most interesting to talk through with your attendees as you wrap up.

I always like to end any kind of training or workshop with some take-away actions. I suggest you challenge your attendees with the following:

- 1) accept that giving & receiving feedback will feel uncomfortable for a while.
- 2) all commit to jointly create an environment that is safe, open and honest.

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3) use a model to give & receive feedback - it makes it easier....we use this one: from [Manager Tools](#).

4) but if that is still a big step right now (and often it is)....start with another game.

Challenge your attendees to leave this room playing the 'sounds like feedback' game.

“Sounds Like Feedback” Mini-Game

We are all giving and receiving feedback everyday. It is very very tiny, and mostly we don't notice it.

Have attendees listen to what each other say day to day with the purpose of spotting those tiny pieces of feedback. When they spot one, a simple, friendly “That sounds like feedback!” comment will help them both recognise a moment when feedback was given AND RECEIVED. The team will quickly see just how much feedback is really offered up everyday.

Good luck :)

Helen Lisowski

If you have enjoyed learning about this workshop and even running it yourself, please feel free to share it with others.

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Some Materials To Help Build Your

Workshop Wrap Up

The results for the 'no feedback' come out consistently worse than any other feedback style! Yet it is what most people resort to doing.

Here are the 2 most common reasons given by the workshop attendees:

1. It was easier to give no feedback than to give negative feedback
2. It was also less emotional to receive no feedback than to receive negative feedback (I'll come back to why in a minute)

Hardly surprising that human beings once again take the path of least resistance.

The other side of this coin is the 'purely positive' feedback (I have called it cheer-leading in the workshop materials). To be honest, this is the feedback equivalent of [fool's gold](#).

It is also where many people go (and stay) when they decide to start giving and receiving feedback.

This is because it feels great to give and to receive this kind of feedback - at first. After a while, compliments wear thin and become cheapened with over use.

It's also really difficult for the person receiving just positive feedback to improve their performance at all. If you are really lucky it's like training a rat to push a lever to receive a reward.

There's a whole lot of rat-NOT-pushing-the-lever, and a whole lot of rat-pushing-the-lever-but-not-understanding-the-relationship-to-the-reward before you get to cause and effect.

Its a s.....l.....o.....w way to learn.

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But we are left then with 2 related problems:

- 1) why do people find it difficult to truly hear feedback?
- 2) why are people so afraid to give quality feedback?

The first question is easier to answer: people have built a nice safe shell around themselves, so all the negative feedback that they usually get given doesn't affect their self-confidence. Who wants to know they are not doing a great job when they are trying hard?

The answer to the second question is that we empathise with the person getting the feedback. We remember all the poor quality feedback we have had over the years, and we feel we aren't perfect either perhaps.

We ask:

- "who am I to tell them they are doing it wrong?"
- "its not my job to tell them, their manager will tell them"
- "someone else will tell them, which is good, because I don't want to have that difficult conversation."
- "I like them, so don't want them to feel bad."
- "I don't know them well enough to tell them something isn't great."

So here is an idea on what we can do about these 2 related problems.

- 1) accept that this is so
- 2) create an environment that is safe, open and honest.
- 3) use a model - it makes it much easier....I like this one from [Manager Tools](#).