

Feedback is broken and it's time to make a change!

Most organisations and individuals understand the value and power of giving and receiving feedback. We are aware it builds trust and respect between our employees, customers and stakeholders. We know that great conversations lead to better outcomes and therefore productivity and profit. So we send our people to a training program in the hope they will come back a changed person.

Yet we find that our people, and if we are honest... ourselves, still avoid it or handle it poorly.

It's time to move to the future

The concept of 'performance management' was introduced about sixty years ago (yep it's pretty old) as a means to determine the wages of an employee based on their performance. It was used to drive behaviours to generate specific outcomes. When employees were solely driven by financial rewards this tended to work well.

In the late 1980s not all employees felt rewarded, nor motivated by financial gain alone; many were driven by learning and the development of their skills. From here performance management started moving into more frequent monitoring and reviews with a focus on 'regular feedback' outside the formal review process.

As organisations put more regular conversations into the mix there was a notable improvement in productivity and employee engagement, when the conversations were handled well.

We are now seeing an emerging trend in high-performing organisations where all employees, not just the leaders, are being taught how to give great feedback and also how to receive feedback with equal candor and grace. Organisations that do this are in their 'feedback flow'. But there are far too less that are gaining this as their competitive edge.

BRW, who award and recognise the 'Best Places to Work' cite that one of the factors about creating these high performance workplaces is where 'the bosses saw issues from the employee's point of view, gave meaningful feedback and information'. I know this to be true as I work with many of them and they are committed to improving the quality of their conversations. Then they improve collaboration with each other, and their customers, and drive better strategies and relationships. The great companies get it. No wonder they are becoming the places that employees flock to and stay with.

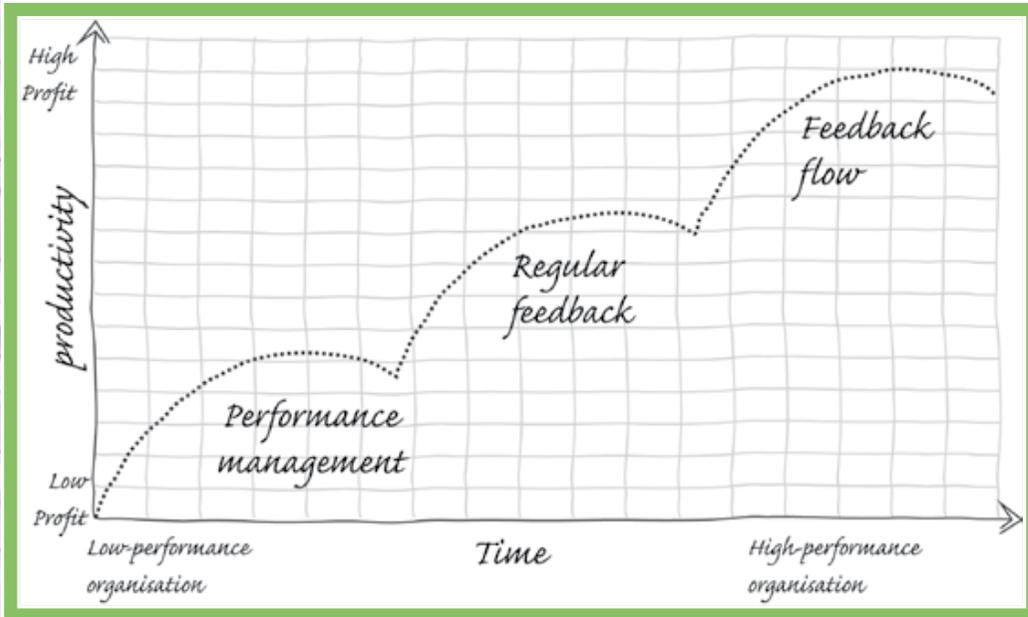


By Georgia Murch

So if we want to remain not only competitive, but ahead of the game, we need to move into the future and have feedback become part of our everyday. Part of how we flow. Creating a feedback flow is how high-performing organisations get things done and create happy, fully engaged employees and customers. It is where we reverse the push of giving feedback and add to it the pull of receiving it, and alter systems to create an even flow.

2. People think the change will be too hard and too disruptive. Creating a cultural shift requires effort, but taking out a layer of processes and systems that use considerable time for little or no result will free up time to focus on actual improvement.
3. We often blame the organisation and its leaders for failures in feedback and get stuck in what I call 'the blame trap'. Getting stuck in the blame trap means we blame others, organisations

- * They highlight the crap. It is typically a focus on the gaps and therefore can become quite discouraging.
- * They are too focused on box ticking and scoring.
- * They are way too time consuming. For those preparing and receiving (when they do take the time to do it)
- * They are stiff and boring and often lack the inspiration they are meant to induce.



In fact, the CEB Corporate Leadership Council tells us that when informal feedback, that is outside the formal review process, is delivered well it can improve productivity by nearly 40%. Now that's pretty compelling.

Increasingly the progressive companies are recognising this and ditching the performance reviews in place of feedback cultures and regular 'check ins'. Adobe led the way, soon followed by Juniper, Accenture, Microsoft, Deloitte, Zappos, Expedia, Dell and GE. It's no surprise these are the ones that attract the best and brightest as they are receiving the feedback they need and deserve and improving themselves and productivity as a result.

Fixing feedback

We need to make the changes to not only get ahead but to stay there. Fixing feedback is about creating a cultural cadence. It's more than feedback training. It's about creating a self-sustaining flow that feeds itself and becomes effortless. The onus is on both parties: one to deliver the feedback, in real time, and the other to receive it well, in the moment. The outcomes of this:

- * eliminate dependence on performance management systems
- * significantly improve productivity
- * create a culture of accountability and commitment
- * evolve authentic transparency and openness
- * allow individuals to own their own development

When we create a frequency of accountability that feeds itself, giving and receiving becomes an inevitable part of the way you do business. You and the organisation are in your flow. You and your people become remarkable and no one can stop talking about it.

Why don't we implement powerful feedback cultures?

There are four main reasons that get in the way of leaders and organisations creating these cultures:

1. Organisations don't muster the courage to invest in their people and culture. They are stuck in the 1940s and they just don't get it. As a result, these are not high-performing companies. Even for those that value and encourage feedback it is still not translating into action, or the actions are often damaging. The intent may be good, but intent is not seen or measured. We are still avoiding conversations or handling them poorly, no matter how much training we receive.

and leaders and do not take any responsibility ourselves. It's not a healthy space, and nor does it allow anyone to move forward.

4. We think that 'robust' six monthly or annual performance reviews will be enough. It won't. There are so many reasons why performance reviews are old school;
 - * The feedback is delivered poorly and the gold is hidden as we are not comfortable, or skilled, at being candid.
 - * They are full of surprises and not the good kind. The feedback is now stale and has the opposite impact.
 - * There is little room to explore both perspectives. What I call the 'real truth' which is a combination of what both people know to be true.



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Georgia Murch is an expert in teaching individuals how to have the tough conversations and organisations how to create feedback cultures. She has over 20 years experience with private and public industry and is well known for helping 'great places to work' become even better. Georgia puts passion on the podium. A remarkable communicator in her own right, she is an inspiring speaker.

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