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Productive Leaders

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How to Lead For Helpful Feedback



Are poor performance evaluations killing your teams? Are your people giving and accepting feedback effectively? Is your productivity suffering because of it?

One of the executives I coach recently lamented:

“We want better teamwork, happier employees, and more effort in the workplace.”

“We’ve been using the same performance forms for 10 years. We have a low turnover rate. We pay bonuses twice a year. What else can we do?”

GREAT question from a company that is doing SO many things right.

They are constantly trying to improve. Here is a crazy idea that actually works.

Stop using performance evaluations as a report card and instead treat them as an opportunity to motivate and encourage people who are doing their job with energy, enthusiasm, and effectiveness.

Performance evaluations should be the paperwork that sums up the series (yes, series) of discussions between the leader and the team members. If the ONLY time the leader tells the employee they are making mistakes is at the performance evaluation, then there is a huge communication problem.

Leaders need to be constantly providing feedback, or, as Marshall Goldsmith terms it, feed forward, to their people. Think about it. Are you really going to let someone go for 364 days before you let them know if what they are doing is correct? Doesn't that seem to be a mammoth waste of their time for those 363 days when they have no idea if they are heading in the right direction?

Why don't more managers and leaders provide effective and frequent feedback?

1. They think it has to be a formal process every time they talk with employees..
2. They are afraid of saying something wrong and possibly being sued. HR and a team of lawyers have them so scared that if they correct someone, they feel they need a team of witnesses.
3. They don't know how to provide feedback in a helpful, not confrontational, manner, so they expect the employee to respond defensively and angrily.
4. They have never been taught how to use feedback to coalesce a team.
5. They don't take feedback well themselves so they expect others not to accept it either.
6. Some (insecure and poor) leaders use feedback as a means of blaming others for team failures.

Managers need to be more involved in what is going on at work.

A few years ago managers dismissed the MBWA – Management By Walking Around idea. However, with the surge on online capabilities, I find more managers holed up in their offices. It is easier than ever for leaders to sequester themselves, only emerging to lead the mandatory meetings where no one participates.

What can a manager do?

1. Walk around. Get out from behind the desk and assess the mood of the team. There is no substitute for "boots on the ground" and talking with people face to face. Yes, I love technology for communication, but that should augment in-person conversations, not completely replace them.

2. Ask questions and wait for the answers. Questions like, "How are you?" and "How are things going?" elicit one word answers. "Fine." "Good."

Ask open ended questions such as,

"What are you doing that is wasting your time?"

"Is there anything we are doing that we don't need to do?"

"How can we improve this project or production?"

"What would help you do your job better?"

The premise is that the employee wants to do a good job, knows their job, and wants to be even better.

3. Be accessible. Yes, you have a lot of meetings. One of my Marine friends was enlisted and then got commissioned. He was increasingly frustrated in his new role because, "The troops are all out there doing what I love doing – training, conducting military exercises, and doing what we do to be effective Marines. I'm stuck inside at meetings and in the office for 10 hours a day doing all of the budgets, personnel processing, and reports that make it all happen. So I'm not doing what I love to do, AND my troops now view me as distant and cold and arrogant because I am not out where they are."

Yes. Welcome to leadership. One challenge is making sure your team knows that your job has shifted, but that you are still accessible.

Employees need to know the boss understands what they do, and is around if there is a problem.

4. Stay informed. If you aren't around, your people won't share information with you. If you aren't around, how can they tell you what's really going on?

5. Show up to show you care. Employees who feel that you are not around generally believe that you don't care about them or the job they are doing. Some will be relieved that you aren't around to conduct the informal quality assurance checks that happen naturally when you are present. Others will throw in the towel and resort to doing the minimal job necessary. They believe that if you aren't around, you simply don't care. That is translated as, "If the boss doesn't care, why should I care?"

So get up, walk around, ask questions, listen to the answers, and be accessible.

Please share your feedback on this article on [my blog](#).

Mary's New Book, *Why Leaders Fail*, Update

**The new book is being printed!
Hardcover books take longer than
softcover books. We are now taking
pre-orders AND we have amazing
bonuses!**

My amazing friends wanted to help me with this launch by giving people who buy the book a bonus. So far it looks like over \$1,100 of business and leadership researches! I know! How awesome is that? For a \$19.95 book!

We are so excited about the new book, ***Why Leaders Fail!*** There will be some extra notifications around the launch time of the book, and [pre-orders are happening here and now for just \\$19.95 off the \\$27.95 full price](#).

Bonuses will be delivered by email as soon as the books arrive!

Mary's Book of the Month

[Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products](#)

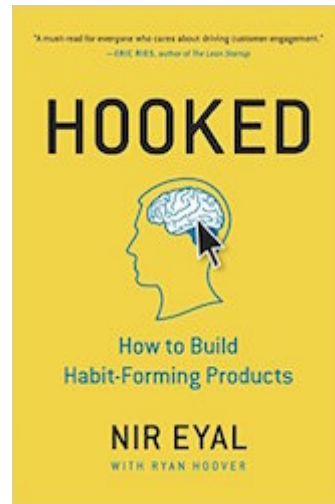
by Nir Eyal

How do people with a great idea get customers who are willing to try the product, get excited about the product, and ultimately, promote the product?

This book came out at the end of 2014 and I wish I had read it a year ago. It discusses the "hook model" which shows how to get customers involved early in the developmental and other stages of the product cycle. The stages are Trigger, Action, Variable, and Investment.

One of the most interesting aspects is the variable. The variable means that rewards should not always be predictable, encouraging users to check back with the seller often.

This book is a really interesting approach to consumer behavior and the psychology of buying behavior. A great read for anyone with an idea about a new business, product, or service.



What Does Mary Do?

We don't assume, so here is a brief list of what Mary does:

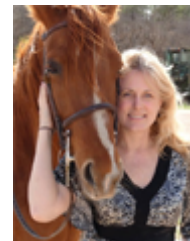
1. Motivational leadership keynote and breakout speaking for conferences, conventions, banquets, and events
2. Leadership events, particularly in the real estate, housing, insurance, medical, and financial sectors
3. Executive coaching
4. Strategic business planning

Call Mary at 719-357-7360 or email at Mary@ProductiveLeaders.com.

Thank You Being Part of Our Community

Do you know anyone planning a conference who needs a motivational leadership speaker, or a business that needs a push forward? Please [contact me](#). I sincerely appreciate your referrals!

Mary C. Kelly



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