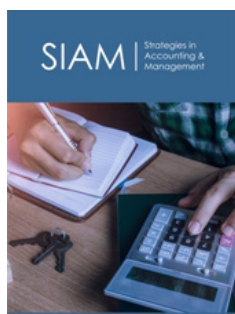# The Effect of Culture on Feedback

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Abstract

No one likes to receive negative feedback, whether it is "constructive criticism", the loss of a client, or that revenue is down. Negative feedback affects individuals in a very personal way. How well received the feedback is will vary depending on the culture within the organization, level of trust with those relaying the feedback, and the cultural history of the individual(s) receiving the feedback. For feedback to be received effectively, leaders need to establish a high level of trust. Trust enables leader to guide individual behavior and organizations through the bumpy times and help them achieve new goals.

The Effect of Culture on Feedback

Organizational culture can be described as the representation of the collective values, beliefs, and mental assumptions which that lead to actions and interpretations regarding proper behavior [1]. It can also include the management style, marketing philosophy, and key strategies of an organization [2]. While organizations develop polices on how to run an organization, the effectiveness of those polices depends on the relationships developed between the leaders and employees within the organization. Leaders have the ability motivate or demoralize employees with their actions and comments.

Individual culture and values can affect how a person perceives information. Culture can be defined as such as the beliefs, social practices, traditions, language as well as place of origin [3]. Culture as a value, can been characterized as a shared value system that guide social actors with implicit or explicit customs, norms, and practices [4]. One's individual cultural can significantly impact an individual's personal values-system and their decision making process [5-10]. Values are the core principles that guide an individual's choices throughout life. They are not goals. Goals are ambitions individuals aim to achieve. Goals and values are different from needs in that needs are more commonly associated with physical or emotional survival [11]. Glasser [12] argued that individuals had five basic needs: survival, love, belonging, power, freedom, and fun. While all five needs are universal to everyone, the degree that an individual pursues each need differs. Values help to define which need an individual will emphasis. The more an individual understands their individual value-system, the better they will be able to understand their needs and how to achieve them [11]. Hofstede [13] found that work-related values such as ambition, equality, freedom, harmony, independence, recognition, self-respect, etc. Rokeach [14] can vary significantly based on an individual's background. Effective leaders recognize that organizations are comprised of individuals with differing value systems. A positive work culture is one that affirms key work-related values while still effectively pursuing organizational goals.

Effective leaders understand the need to establish a culture of trust and respect within the organization. Without trust and respect, negative encounters undermine and damage the effectiveness of the collegial relationships (The World of Work Project, n.d.). Practices that promote trust and respect include empathy, integrity, listening, and respectfulness (The World of Work Project, n.d.). Fernandez [15] further argue that leaders who want to build positive work cultures need model compassion. The act of compassion begins with self-compassion. Self-compassion is the act of being kind to yourself and being non-judgmental. Self-compassionate individuals do not find it important to put other down in order to improve their own self-image Tesser [16] or elevate themselves. Self-compassion recognizes that

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imperfection is part of the human experience and it is the basis for compassion for others [17]. Compassion within the workplace fosters psychological safety and has been found to increase engagement and performance [15].

Be A Leader Who Leads

Effective leaders understand that conflicts, negative feedback, and setbacks are inevitable in business. They work to turn these events into something positive by coming alongside an individual and guiding them. Also, trust takes a long time to create. Organizational culture will either exacerbate the negative connotations expressed or help to tame them. To ensure that feedback is well received leaders should use a constructive approach.

A. Supervisor or administrator should recognize that there is always a power dynamic at play when providing feedback. Negative feedback from supervisors creates a sense of fear and concern whether it is directed at the organization or the individual. It can stir-up emotions of fear, frustration, and disappointment which can distress core values such as a sense of accomplishment, security, or intellect and create sense of disquietedness. It is imperative that supervisors provide assurances and are understanding of the physical and emotional responses that occur as individual(s) adjust to the feedback.

B. Provide ample positive feedback on the individual's the contributions to the organization before discussing items of improvement. This will build goodwill, acknowledge and recognize how they are a valuable the individual is within the organization. It will also build confidence within the individual and their position.

C. Create a clear path for improvement. When addressing items that need improvement focus how to improve future performance. Allow for a two-way dialogue in the creation of achievable goals and the setting of reasonable timelines. Work together to create concrete actionable tasks that achieve targets with regular feedback.

D. Avoid inadvertent negative comments. Comments that do not relate directly to the individual's performance or tasks will only add to the individual's stress level and create distrust in the process. By focusing on a few relevant items immediately instead of overwhelming an individual, will allow the individual to make gradual improvement. More items can be added at a later date as progress improves. The improve will not be successfully if it is undermined by negativity or undue pressure.

E. Meet frequently. Provide regular guidance and positive feedback. This demonstrates that you have a genuine interest in assisting the individual develop and progress positively. It will also help to build trust in the process and you as a leader. This also provides the opportunity to guide early any areas of learning that are needed.

F. Keep it private. Negative feedback needs to be provided appropriately and privately. If it addresses the organization, it must be given to a leader with whom a trust relationship has been established and disseminated through the appropriate channels as needed. If the feedback is for an individual, the information must be given privately without harsh tones or sarcasm. Confidentially is an important part of building and maintaining trust. If this is not maintained the feedback will not be well received and the trust will be broken. It will cause the individual(s) to lose faith in leadership and the organization. It can shake the individual(s) core value-systems which can lead one to withdraw, lower performance, and become less loyalty to the organization [18].

Conclusion

Leaders need to remember that the individuals receiving feedback work hard daily to produce quality work for their organizations. New employees take time to understand the organizational culture and to transition into the organizational practices. Employees need encouragement and guidance. Tenured employees need inspiration to try new things and limit complacency. The goal of feedback is to improve the quality of the work over the long haul while smoothing out the bumps along the way. As leaders, you do not want to undermine this process by imposing unrealistic goals, using harsh criticism, or implying an individual or department has no future within the organization. Focus on creating trust in the process and in you as a leader. Employees are more motivated to support organizational goals when they trust leadership and when their individual value-systems are supported.

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