



# The Value of Feedback

## The Best Leaders Ask and Act

When you wonder how something went – perhaps an all-employee meeting, a presentation or a report you gave to your boss – how can you really know how it was received? A surprising number of leaders never find out, which results in numerous and costly missed opportunities.

There are many assumptions made in the course of a business day. Some assumptions are absolutely accurate and many of them are not. Messages are sent and some of them are received. These messages are based on what is said and not said, and also (listen up) to what is heard. What is heard is often not what is said, or the message may be ambiguous.

As a leader, how can you know if your message was heard the way you intended? I recommend asking.

Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, relates the story in her 2013 book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, of being interviewed by NBC's Tom Brokaw. After the interview, she asked Tom how she could have done the interview better. Tom responded to her that in all of his years conducting interviews, she was only the second person to ask that question. Only the second – stunning.

There are many reasons why we tend not to ask for feedback. Here are some:

- We might not like the feedback we receive.
- If we ask, and get honest feedback, some of it may not be positive.

- We might feel embarrassed to ask for or receive feedback.
- The person we ask may be uncomfortable and may not share candid feedback.
- We may be concerned that asking for feedback will cause people to focus on our negatives.
- Some may feel that asking for feedback shows weakness, uncertainty or lack of confidence.
- We may feel an obligation to act on what we learn.

Let's focus on that last one for a moment. Why bother to ask for feedback if there is no intention of accepting and acting on the feedback we receive? This may be the real key. Significant evidence exists that there is a strong correlation between self-awareness and success. Asking for feedback is an excellent way to become more self-aware.

I suggest an experiment. I challenge you to ask for feedback at least once in the next 24 hours. Whatever you learn, please just say, "Thank you, I really appreciate your insights." Then give that feedback some serious thought. If there is something you should clarify or if your message was not understood the way you intended, take action and address the problem.

Anyone who is willing to share a quick story on this can post to [The Treer Group's Facebook page](#). I invite you to LIKE us while you are there.

*For more information about asking for feedback and self-awareness, contact Janet Treer at 717-653-6118 or [janet@thetreergroup.com](mailto:janet@thetreergroup.com).*



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