

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION - 101

Do the unthinkable; ask a follower for feedback!

Over the last several decades, at *Excelsior Leadership Partners*, we have observed and worked with hundreds of leaders. One of the behaviors we observed has to do with their orientation toward feedback. When it comes to feedback, we have learned that there are different approaches to receiving feedback. These observations seem to apply across industries, geography and different settings.

Leaders seem to welcome feedback in one of three ways:

1. The first, and the worst, is the defensive orientation. A leader with this orientation never solicits feedback directly. They hunker down, and they don't get better. People eventually stop giving any feedback at all and predictably, these leaders get worse.
2. The next level leader has what we call, a passive, but welcoming feedback orientation. These leaders never ask for feedback and are rarely proactive about exploring ways to get better. But when they do get constructive, yet unsolicited feedback, they may get a little defensive at first, but they eventually tend to embrace it; and they get better from it.
3. The most advanced orientation toward feedback comes from those that proactively ask for it. We call them **Feedback Seekers**. These leaders play offense and are frequently asking intrusive questions about their performance and behaviors. These leaders accept every piece of feedback as a unique opportunity to learn and improve. Of course, this demands appropriate amounts of humility and confidence.

So, here's our Leadership-In-Action assignment for you. Sometime this week, approach two team members that you lead, and ask them for two things that you could do differently or better to be even more effective. They may be shocked; especially if you have never done this before. Or, worse, they may not feel safe giving you the feedback. We encourage you to press while ensuring their safety. So, don't let them off the hook. They can email it to you, tell you to your face, and you can even give them time to think and reflect. Try not to torture them but press a bit to get them to offer some feedback. After they offer you feedback, say *THANK YOU* and mean it.

Just as leaders need to build the habit of *receiving* feedback, equally important is *developing* the skill in our subordinates to *deliver* feedback.

If you would like to engage in a 30-minute (no fee) session to learn more about how to ask for feedback with some specific tactics, and even engage in some role plays, please contact *Excelsior Leadership Partners*: robin@elpadvantage.com today.