



The Future of Feedback:

# The Cooperation Mindset

## Overview

Feedback is critical to everything we do. It informs our understanding of the world around us, our decision-making, and our interactions with one another. Debate continues surrounding effective workplace feedback and how best to drive employee improvement. In this short note, we examine some of the latest theories and set out our own vision for effective workplace feedback, team performance, and organizational competitiveness.

## Schools of Thought

There are a wide range of contrasting theories regarding 'effective feedback' and how to boost performance. Among the most notable are:

### Radical Transparency

Developed by hedge-fund mogul, Ray Dalio, at its heart 'Radical Transparency' is the belief in taking things people would typically hide, particularly mistakes, problems and weaknesses - warts and all - and putting them on the table to be openly and collectively scrutinised. The concept is intended to translate to the adoption of actions and approaches that 'radically' increase the openness of organisational processes, data and, ultimately, improved decision-making.

### Radical Candor

Proclaimed as the step-by-step guide to making you a 'kickass boss' and management luminary, 'Radical Candor' is a new school of management thinking that encourages leaders to learn to challenge more directly while also communicating empathy. The brainchild of executive coach and ex-Google operations lead, Kim Scott, it's difficult to argue with the sentiment. Radical Candor places individual self-improvement at the cornerstone of its strategy.

## Fixed & Growth Mindset

Academic Carol Dweck's Fixed & Growth Mindset approach is based on the belief that people have one of two mindsets. Those with a 'fixed mindset' perceive their basic abilities and talents to be fixed traits. Born with these rigid set of abilities they focus their efforts on looking smart all the time and never appearing dumb. With a 'growth mindset' the opposite is the case. Individuals believe that their talents and abilities can be developed and enhanced through hard work and learning. Dweck argues we should all aspire to the 'growth mindset' and sets out a programme to adapt our thinking accordingly.

## Buckingham & Goodall

In their recent book 'Nine Lies About Work': A Freethinking Leader's Guide to the Real World', leadership coaches Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall argue subjective feedback is so riven with bias toward the particular individual that it becomes worthless. This subjectivity is incapable of being averaged out even when crowdsourced and so instead just becomes a systemic bias. Their solution is for teams to abandon delivery of negative subjective criticism and instead focus delivery on positive feedback.

## The 'Cooperation Mindset'

All of these approaches are riven with flaws. 'Radical Candor' and Carol Dweck's growth mindset theory, for example, are too focussed on the cult of the individual and self-improvement.

For feedback to be effective it must be framed within the context of the team and organisational performance as a whole rather than the individual. Businesses exist to provide a product or service to their clients or customers.

To deliver this effectively, performance must be optimised in the three key areas, dubbed the 'holy trinity': **productivity growth, employee engagement, and client satisfaction**. Self-improvement isn't the central factor driving each of these - effective cooperation is.

Effective cooperation requires realtime feedback to inform understanding both of the teams' needs internally and customers' needs externally. Irrespective of who the end recipient may be, the output should be considered as part of the broader organisational function rather than in the isolated context of an individual's own self-improvement. With this '**cooperation mindset**' in place, having the ability to gauge your performance, either individually or as part of a team, is critical.

## Actionable Objective Feedback

The nature of the feedback delivered is also important. Empathetic or not, direct feedback is useless if it's subjective and unactionable.

Buckingham and Goodall correctly identify the subjectivity dilemma, but their prescribed remedy is simply for individuals to abandon delivery of any negative subjective criticism. They deny managers the ability to express what they need from their staff for them to fulfil their obligations to the wider team and organisational function.

While this may be positive for perceived self-improvement, it offers little hope for fostering cooperation. If the customer is never asked for feedback on what they're looking for and is instead asked to talk exclusively about the virtues of an individual's performance then this offers a very narrow form of feedback and fails to drive toward the overall organisational function of maximising productivity.

## The Ultimate Objective

The ultimate goal is the provision of a solution that fosters a cooperative mindset where managers and co-workers don't have to shy away from negative feedback, but that instead distils all feedback, including negative subjective feedback, into quantifiable actionable information for the target individual or teams. Such a solution will deliver the feedback necessary to drive cooperation and organisational performance by optimising productivity growth, employee engagement, and client satisfaction.

Technology offers a solution. Similar to the two-way feedback function on apps like Airbnb and Uber, dynamic feedback platforms allow users to give and receive real-time online feedback on performance from multiple stakeholders, both internal and external to their organization.

Crucially, any feedback submitted must be constructive, actionable, and easy to interpret. To achieve this, quantitative score-based solutions are complemented with the option to supplement ratings with additional text feedback.

To maintain focus on intra- and inter-team cooperation, rather than just the individual, more sophisticated systems can frame feedback within the context of a team as a whole through an easy to interpret real-time score based upon ratings and feedback from any of the team's key stakeholders - team members, other teams internally, and client/supplier teams externally. This '**team score**' helps to remove silos, encourage transparency and foster cooperation.

The concept can be extended even further to offer feedback to organisations as a whole to assess client perceptions of service delivery compared to competitors or even an industry as a whole.

collective cooperation we can improve not just our individual, but also our team and overall organisational performance. Competitor service-level tracking reinforces this by providing the vigilance necessary for sustained performance and indeed survival in a rapidly changing global business environment.

## Team- and Organisation-focused Cooperation, Cognitive Diversity, and Competitor Service-level Tracking

Adopting a more holistic, organisation-wide approach offers wider benefits too. It allows leaders to build up a much clearer understanding both of an individual team's ability to engage and cooperate with other teams as well as with clients, but also for the organisation's capacity as a whole to meet different challenges facing it, both internally from an employee engagement perspective as well as externally by comparing how competitor firms' service-levels are perceived.

Cognitive diversity and variations in the way we solve problems are essential to ensuring teams function effectively. Groupthink stifles creativity and decision making. By mapping each individual team member and their behavioural traits, organisations can build up a map of every team's strengths and weaknesses, and suitability for the task at hand.

Ultimately, organisations can assess how creative or curious a team is and gauge levels of drive, resilience, risk aversion, ambition and other traits among its members. This knowledge is invaluable to an organisation. It can be used to build a mosaic of the skillsets and behavioural traits to maximise the chances of success by choosing the optimal traits for any given project in advance.

This approach can also be used to determine how well-equipped and resilient an

organisation is to confront challenges and make effective decisions, especially in the light of how well competitor firms' service levels are regarded by top clients. Deficiencies can be identified ahead of time and new members recruited to extend an organisation's range of capabilities and fill any gaps. By abandoning self-obsession and taking a team and organisation centred approach, focusing on cooperation within and between teams as well as with clients, we can improve performance and decision-making for the benefit of the organisation, the customer, and the individual.

## About ViewsHub

The Loop is brought to you by ViewsHub, a workplace feedback platform used by teams to measure and improve cooperation with clients and coworkers - the key driver of profit growth, employee engagement and superior client service. The platform empowers teams to track their effectiveness using TeamScore, a dynamic, real time metric to measure performance effectiveness and improve it through stakeholder feedback.

ViewsHub also enables organisations to map cognitive diversity among teams automatically, helping them to develop a comprehensive mosaic of skillsets and behavioural traits within that organisation to maximise the chances of success by choosing the optimal traits for any given project in advance.

It also draws on an organisation's client feedback to allow it to benchmark its performance relative to its competitors further optimizing organizational performance.

## Contact us

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