Feedback = Forward Progress
By MCG Partners

Whether we like it or not, feedback is the key ingredient to our self-development. Some people cannot get enough of it, while others don't want it at all. For most of us, we understand the importance of outside perspective to gain a better view of ourselves and put a certain emphasis on self-development through feedback.

Feedback is probably the single most important channel to our reaching our maximum peak performance, yet, it is somewhat of a conundrum. If you listen to and act on every piece of feedback, you will likely morph into an unrecognizable shadow of yourself. How do you handle all the feedback provided and remain authentic to who you are?

The key in feedback is a balanced approach based on the type and importance of the feedback given and by whom. Below are tips to help you balance and apply feedback in a constructive way to make small but apparent steps toward your own development.

1. **Ask for Feedback.** Don't wait for feedback to come to you. The first step is to ask for it. Actively solicit feedback from people whose opinion you value. Don't just ask your direct reports or your friendly colleagues. Ask a good cross section of reports, peers and bosses to gain a more well-rounded perspective. Give them permission to be brutally honest with you. Ask for both positive feedback as well as areas for improvement. This makes it easier for the person providing feedback to leverage positive aspects into the conversation.

2. **Be Specific.** Be clear about the about type of feedback you are asking for. "How did I do?" is a generic question that will commonly receive a generic, "Great." A better approach is asking more specific questions around the feedback you are looking for. For example, "How did I do overcoming objections during the presentation?" will generate a richer response.

3. **Be Open to Feedback.** Don't react negatively when someone has done what you asked them to do. Regardless if you agree or not, feedback is a gift and one person's perspective is their reality. It may be just a slight distortion but at its heart, there may be some level of truth in the feedback provided. Look for the truth, however small.

4. **Look for Trends.** When one person provides potentially negative feedback that you whole-heartedly feel is inaccurate, consider the source. Do you value this person's opinion? Do they have firsthand knowledge of what you are asking? There is always the option to ignore and move on, however, do not ignore if this feedback is within an area you have heard before. Look for common threads throughout the feedback you receive. If people are suggesting similar types of behavior through different situations, you should pay attention to that. Trending feedback is probably one of the more important areas to focus on. If you are defending yourself against multiple people's comparable feedback, just stop. It's too late. Accept it and work on it.

5. **Focus on Key Areas for Development.** Development is a journey that happens over time. Pick one or two important and impactful areas of feedback you have received and work on those first. Pay particular attention to your behavior during stressful times. Natural behaviors tend to be triggered by demanding circumstances that require us to react quickly under pressure. Asking for feedback from these situations will be a good indicator on how you are progressing in targeted areas of improvement.

For more information on creating a high performance culture through feedback in your organization, please email erinne.tripp@mcgpartners.net.