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# Upward Feedback: from Fear to Trust

If managers are the problem (as per Karpin), how can they be expected to tell those reporting to them how to perform better? Even with training, downward feedback (performance appraisal) hasn't worked very well because managers often **don't know** what's happening in their teams. Research shows that bosses can be quite out of kilter with requirements at the coal face.

If organisations really want learning on the job and from interaction with others (Karpin again), and an open and positive environment, then a way must be used that builds trust between manager and team. In our society, people can find every reason not to ask for honest feedback. ("It's painful, embarrassing, damages relationships, and **they** don't know anyway".) Nor do they like to give it ("it's painful, embarrassing, damages relationships, could hurt your career, I'd be victimised, and you wouldn't listen anyway").

Overcoming these very real and prevalent feelings requires a well designed process:

- Feedback has to be non-judgemental, yet relevant and useable.
- It must be given in confidence, yet provide sufficient detail.
- It has to come **first** from the

people who know most - the ones being managed - and only then from the boss.

- There should be enough scope to comment on both leadership and management behaviours of the manager.
- It should be useable in a "multicultural" society

It must lead to a coming together of manager and team to develop action plans for all.

Upward Feedback, researched and developed over more than two decades by Peter Farey (Senior HR Manager with British Airways during its period of major change) gives feedback to managers on the full range of their behaviours. He has achieved this by integrating the research findings on leadership and management to design an Instrument that incorporates both.

Most managers are apprehensive at the thought of how they will be perceived. However, the Upward Feedback approach of being asked for more or less of something, as opposed to being judged "good" or "bad" reduces the fear (even in strongly hierarchical cultures),

while leaving the accurate information from which they can improve.

Ultimately, development depends on facilitating manager and team through the full process of Upward Feedback, and should be part of an organisation initiative aimed at a trust based, open and learning culture.

**Dr. Ron Forbes is Managing Partner of Leaderskill Group**

