The Good Game: Developing Feedback Skills through Action Learning

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Abstract. Students, especially those from recent generations, typically encounter difficulties providing and receiving feedback. Hence approaches to teach students feedback skills are valuable. This article explores perspectives related to learning feedback by (a) examining the process of feedback, (b) showing how Action Learning as a pedagogical component is supportive of developing feedback skills, (c) explaining a student-led game, "The Good Game," as a tool for learning feedback, and (d) discussing issues and factors related to developing feedback skills among recent generations.

Feedback is generally defined as "knowledge of results" (Neubert, 1998). Providing and receiving effective feedback is well established as a valuable skill for improving behavior and performance. Even with this knowledge, it is still challenging for many individuals to be comfortable with providing and receiving negative or constructive feedback (O'Malley & Gregory, 2011). Since learners have been acculturated to value "being right" on tests and in front of their peers, they can have a negative emotional response to negative feedback; therefore, they may experience shame and feelings of inadequacy or dismiss the feedback altogether when it points out failures or errors (Trope & Netter, 1994). Overcoming this learned behavior can be a challenge, but it is essential in preparing individuals for the world of work.

For the past 16 years, the University of Central Missouri's (UCM) undergraduate Management program has focused on developing self-sufficient learners through action learning. Management faculty intentionally adopted learner-centered course designs that incorporate learner-centered attitudes and learner-centered relationships (Wohlfarth et al., 2008). Course designs are based on Kolb's (1984) work on action learning as a framework for learner development; thus, classrooms have moved from focusing on the instructor to focus on the learner.

UCM's Leadership course employs a workshop-based, action learning format that asks students to integrate knowledge and skills from a broad variety of previous course work and professional experience. In this learner-centric class, students are asked to design and deliver training activities focused on developing leadership skills

in terms of behaviors. They are encouraged to apply action learning principles in their designs, leading to organically created "games". These games and activities are based on students' perceptions of workplace problems; thus, new games are constantly created in the class space. One example, "The Good Game," provides a glimpse into the experience of only receiving positive feedback and serves as a starting point for a comprehensive dialogue on feedback. In recent years, The Good Game is run more frequently, evidence that the newest generation may place higher value on feedback.

This paper explores perspectives related to learning feedback by (a) examining the process of feedback, (b) showing how Action Learning as a part of pedagogy is supportive of feedback, (c) explaining The Good Game as a tool for learning feedback, and (d) discussing issues and factors related to developing feedback skills among newer generations.

Feedback

Decades of research indicate that performance improvement is unlikely without knowledge of the results of one's actions. For example, Ammons (1956) stated that "knowledge of performance affects the rate of learning and level reached by learning," so that, when it is present, learning is "almost universally" improved (p. 283). Feedback of some form appears critical to improving performance. Latham and Locke (1991) view performance improvement as a reaction to the evaluation of and reaction to the difference between an outcome and a personally valued goal. Thus, both the presence of a goal and the knowledge of results contribute to performance.

Feedback can take several forms. It can be gained through the personal investigation of potential discrepancies between goals and outcomes due to the nature of the task itself, by actively seeking others' reactions, and so forth. Additionally, feedback can be gained through information supplied by others as part of an effort to improve job performance. Many factors can influence the effectiveness of feedback provided by others: personality characteristics, attributes of the person giving the feedback, the relationship between the feedback giver and receiver, affective reactions, and so forth (for a detailed overview, see the Kluger & DeNisi, 1996, meta-analysis). Although positive feedback may increase motivation by signaling a commitment to goals, negative feedback increases motivation by creating awareness of the lack of progress toward achieving goals. In either case, feedback helps people self-regulate their behavior, improving performance (Finkelstein et al., 2016).

The distinction between the effects of positive and negative feedback has been a topic of research for at least fifty years. The *feedback sign* (positive or negative) impacts the perception of the person accepting the feedback, known as *selection response* (Levy, 1989). Feedback with positive sign is often recalled more accurately than feedback with negative sign (Feather, 1968; Ilgen, 1971; Ilgen & Hamstra, 1972; Shrauger & Rosenberg, 1970). Since most feedback is provided to elicit a behavioral response, sign becomes important in regulating goal and task behavior for self-regulation and organization-wide changes (Podsakoff & Farh, 1989). However, both positive and negative signs have desired effects (Arvey et al., 1984), so organizations need to incorporate both signs (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). However, managers on the front lines of giving and receiving feedback may delay, distort, or avoid giving negative feedback (Fried et al.,

1992) in situations where they have a low-trust relationship with subordinates or feel the subordinate might challenge or resent the feedback.

In the classroom, learners may be reluctant to provide negative feedback to their peers for several reasons. First, they may feel a less personal stake in their peers' performance than co-workers' since success is closely related to co-workers' performance in a work setting. Second, learners may not feel equipped to manage others' emotional responses, so they may act to protect themselves from the discomfort of those reactions by sugar-coating or soft-pedaling any errors or faults that they see in peer performance (Murch, 2016). Third, since peer evaluation is often a component of team-based activities, they may fear that openly surfacing negative assessments might lead to recrimination in the form of lower peer evaluations of their performance and lower grades (Jackman & Strober, 2003; Murch, 2016). Together, these create a shared stigma around negative or critical feedback (Trope & Netter, 1994). Additionally, the history of negative feedback in learners' lives might also impact their perspectives on the value of peer feedback. In both classrooms and the workplace, individuals may find that a lack of experience in providing feedback may make the task seem difficult.

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Team members' reluctance to provide detailed critical feedback is a group phenomenon (Fried et al., 1992). Instead of individually resolving the issue, one approach is to work at a group level to help learners see the value of critical feedback. The Good Game activity surfaces the shortcomings and difficulties associated with purely positive feedback, providing a shared experience for undergraduates to reflect upon and refer to when tasked with giving feedback to peers. As with many human interaction skills, giving and receiving feedback are skills that can be learned (Jackman & Strober, 2003; London, 1995; London, 2003) and seem particularly suited to the action learning tenet that experience generates knowledge.

Action Learning

Marsick and O'Neil (1999) define *action learning* by examining three underlying theoretical practices originating from the Scientific School, the Experiential School, and the Critical Reflection School. The Scientific School is based on questioning as a means of problem solving. The quality of the questions in the problem-solving process is at the core of action science (Argyris et al., 1985). Through the Experiential School, learners follow a pattern of attempting an action, reflecting on the outcomes with those involved, and attempting another action considering the changes discussed. The Critical Reflection School is essential in action learning because it moves the learner beyond fundamental reflection and blindly trying another action. Through critical reflection, learners look more closely at their perceptions, analyze them for flaws, and adjust accordingly (Marsick & O'Neil, 1999).

Students at UCM engage in the scientific school of active learning by making games, creating discussions, and engaging in topics that examine traditional education's role in their development. In this model, instructors provide broad topics for discussion and intentional problems for students to solve. Students are then responsible for finding/selecting games and creating/delivering those games (Revans,

2011). Inviting students to help choose, create, or develop class topics and activities is a form of collaborative learning and power-sharing (Ares, 2008; Revans, 2011). When students design activities like The Good Game, they participate in experiential learning, increase their self-awareness through debate, controversy, or conflict, and make choices about the content. Developing activities like The Good Game leads to higher content outcomes (Bright et al., 2016). When students are responsible for leading and designing the curriculum, they develop self-awareness and better understand content (Ares, 2008; Bright et al., 2016). Additionally, leading peers through games leads to higher self-efficacy and greater self-awareness (Bright et al., 2016).

Critical skills like self-efficacy and self-awareness are needed when reflecting on one's actions or when giving and receiving feedback from others (Bipp & Kleingeld, 2018). UCM faculty intentionally develop learning opportunities that push learners to apply knowledge through action in a way that best makes sense to them. Through frameworks provided by the Experiential School and the Critical Reflection School, students become their own guides and build self-sufficiency as learners. They demonstrate their growth in these areas through projects such as the Leadership Development Plan (LDP; Appendix A). For example, one student's LDP referred to feedback he had received about difficulties he had when responding quickly to pressing, ambiguous situations (Appendix B). He recognized that this issue annoyed customers at his workplace and did not reflect well upon the company. He devised a plan to ask mentors to help him with this issue by presenting him with novel problems and demanding a quick response. Another student found his lack of offering feedback was causing him to take on responsibilities that were not his own (Appendix C). He also realized he was not seriously considering feedback from others. Both students participated in The Good Game in their respective classes; one acted as facilitator and the other acted as participant. The Good Game has been reliable resource for students to teach themselves and their peers about feedback.

The Good Game

The Good Game activity was introduced in 2005 by students in the MGT 4320 Leadership course. Instructors do not design, select, nor deliver learning activities in the course; however, The Good Game, or a parallel activity, has been given more attention in the past five years with students selecting and running the activity at least yearly (see Generational Differences in Feedback). During The Good Game, students take on one of three roles: learner, facilitator, or participant. Learners begin by selecting a participant (by volunteer or other means) and sending them out of the room. It is critical that the participant not hear the ensuing discussion. Facilitators communicate that the audience is to select an action-based task the participant must perform, for example, picking up a trash can or writing something on the board. The task can be made more difficult by involving repetition such as completing seven push-ups. While learners decide the task, the facilitator steps out of the room to communicate to the participant that they will need to perform an action-based task. Ideally, the facilitator does not know the task and reenters the room with the participant when the learners indicate they are ready.

During this exercise, the only word learners may say is "good," so the feedback sign is exclusively positive. The participant will start the game confused, looking for what they must do, and begin with simple actions. When they are headed in the right direction, learners simply say "good." If the participant is moving away from the objective, learners say nothing. After some time, the participant realizes that symbolically this silence is negative feedback (Jackman & Strober, 2003; London, 2003; Murch, 2016). However, due to the lack of overt negative feedback, the participant and the learners often experience frustration and agitation. Facilitators should encourage the participant to complete the objective, but we have seen participants give up and sit down with learners.

Upon completing the task, the facilitator must decide if learners need exposure to another round to solidify their experience or if they are ready to move into a discussion of key takeaways. The decision on the group's next learning experience is usually based on time constraints and learners' developmental levels. Learners with some experience in giving/receiving feedback generally are ready to debrief and discuss the questions after one round. With less-experienced learners, or with plenty of time remaining, another participant could take part in a second round of The Good Game.

In that second round, we recommend allowing learners to use the word "bad" for participant actions that stray from the objective. The use of the word "bad" as an overt negative feedback sign helps less experienced learners see that the first round's uncomfortable silence acted as negative feedback. Although the participant already knows the game's basis, the task objective changes, leaving a significant challenge. However, re-running the game clearly shows learners that both forms of feedback are crucial to achieving the task quickly and with less frustration, providing an excellent segue into the discussion questions.

At UCM, we require facilitators to create their discussion questions and map these questions to the learning objectives they plan to cover through the game (Appendix D). We recommend potential adopters take a similar approach: mapping discussion questions to meet their specific content or learning goals. Historically, UCM students have used the activity primarily to discuss Kouzes and Posner's (2017) exemplary leadership practices, but the activity is suitable for any situation where individuals learn to give and receive feedback. Following the activity and discussion, facilitators hold a debriefing session to evaluate how they ran the game, whether the game met objectives, and what the class would change in the future. These components give facilitators and students a chance to examine why they chose the game and how their discussion questions, in conjunction with the activity, helped their peers meet learning objectives (see Appendix D).

The nature of The Good Game generates discussion around feedback principles. Participants consider the need for providing a balanced, authentic view of a person's skill set (O'Malley & Gregory, 2011). Although many people in the newest generations seek praise for tasks completed (Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Olson, 2009), it is essential for them to learn the damage that is caused by providing exclusively positive feedback (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004) and to understand that negative feedback has a place in increasing effort toward performance-based goals (Podsakoff & Farh, 1989; Bipp & Kleingeld, 2018).

Discussion

While UCM students experience feedback in multiple courses throughout their major, the Leadership course forces students to reflect on their ability to give and receive feedback in high impact/high stakes situations such as team-based Fishbowl Feedback recordings (Appendix E) and the individual LDP (Appendix A). These reflections follow The Good Game and each comprises 15% of the class grade. As action-learning teachers, we came to realize that four aspects of feedback are salient to learning from The Good Game: the perception of the recipient of feedback, the feedback source, generational differences in feedback, and silence as a form of feedback.

Perceptions of the Feedback Recipient

It is possible that the emphasis on evaluation encountered by millennials and neighboring generations through initiatives like No Child Left Behind might trigger discomfort with negative feedback (Whitney & Candelaria, 2017). As a response, many universities provide goal-setting support through offices such as Accessibility Services, the Counseling Center, Advising, Learning Commons/Tutoring, and so forth. These services can help reduce academic anxiety and discomfort with feedback and can help students understand their motivations and perceptions of feedback. O'Keefe et al. (2013) distinguish between "mastery" and "performance" motivations toward achieving learning goals. Mastery motivation is characterized by an internally focused interest in learning for the sake of learning due to an intrinsic interest in the subject matter. On the other hand, performance motivation results from externally focused interests such as a desire to do better than others, to gain a good grade, or to avoid a poor grade.

An example of mastery motivation/internally focused interests occurs in UCM's Integrative Business Experience (IBE) course developed by Larry Michaelsen (2006). In IBE, students develop a product concept, operate a company, sell the product, and donate all proceeds to charity. This course provides many students their first experience with 360-degree feedback. Students realize the importance of feedback early and use the feedback to foster success in structuring the organization, selling the product, and achieving charitable ends rather than focusing on a "good" grade. Performance motivated/externally focused orientations tend to be adopted when students perceive the classroom to have a strong evaluation focus. In contrast, mastery orientations tend to be adopted when the material is engaging, an evaluation focus is present, yet harsh evaluations are absent (Church et al., 2001).

The perception of feedback as a form of evaluation, with negative feedback seen as harsh evaluation, impacts students' emotional state (Värlander, 2008; VanSchenkhof et al., 2018). While feedback is traditionally defined in the literature as "knowledge of results," the way that knowledge is received can affect the response and future performance of the person receiving the feedback. Feedback preparation activities, like The Good Game, help students become more amenable to the role of feedback as a developmental process (Värlander, 2008).

The Good Game helps students actively reflect on their emotions behind positive and negative feedback through overt feedback signs: the word "good" and the

use of silence (see Discussion). The sign of the feedback (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004), that is whether it indicates success or failure, impacts future effort through individuals' regulatory focus. Through practice across classes such as IBE and Leadership, students become less sensitive to providing and receiving negative feedback, evidenced by Appendix B and C. Students practice Feedback Seeking Behavior (FSB) (London & Smither, 2002) by giving and receiving feedback, becoming more comfortable with it (Värlander, 2008).

One issue complicating the effect of feedback is that the positive or negative sign of feedback may be seen as praise or criticism, both of which could have potentially problematic impacts on performance (Kohn, 1993/2018; Waples, 2015). The receiver's likelihood to engage in FSB decreases after a negative feedback sign (London & Smither, 2002), especially if the receiver is driven by performance motivation (Waples, 2015). Thus, feedback receptivity is based on sign (Ashford & Cummings, 1983) as well as specificity (Waples, 2015). Participants who end up quitting the Good Game, sitting down, or just refusing to complete the task exhibit a performance-based reaction to silence as a negative feedback sign and a lack of specificity. The participant quitting, or ending FSB, is a negative feedback sign telling learners, or feedback providers, they are doing a bad job.

The Feedback Source

Manuel London (1995) uses "constructive" and "destructive" as descriptors of feedback that highlight the relationship between feedback provider's and receiver's roles in determining outcomes. Feedback can be perceived as constructive or destructive depending on the attributes of the feedback and the relationship between the feedback provider and receiver. For example, while managers may see feedback as "knowledge of results," they may fail to see/understand that it can be seen as praise or criticism, both of which could have potentially problematic impacts on long-term performance (Butler, 1987; Harackiewicz et al., 1987). A more "judgment-free" form of feedback, which consists solely of an auditory signal, can be used to trigger significant improvements in learning various skills (Pančocha, 2018). Teaching with Acoustical Guidance (TAG) consists of purely objective positive sign feedback by providing a "click" or another auditory signal when behavior approximating that desired is exhibited. The "click" is only provided as the behavior becomes progressively closer to what is desired (Arnall, et al., 2019; Schenk & Miltenberger, 2019).

A key attribute of effective feedback is its specificity, that is, how narrowly it focuses on a particular action (Waples, 2015). TAG provides a clear focus on a specific action by providing guidance when the action occurs. The approach is similar to the Good Game, where a particular action is highlighted with the word "good." However, the acoustic guidance in TAG is also coupled with a follow-up verbal explanation and behavioral modeling, which helps the receiver direct and sharpen behavior toward the desired objective.

Also, there is often an inherent assumption that the feedback being provided is accurate. The feedback source is attributed with possessing special knowledge or skill, enabling them to provide incontrovertibly true input (London, 1995). However, this "infallibility assumption" is not necessarily the case (Ilgen et al., 1993), as appraisal

ratings used for feedback are fallible. London (2003) exhibits that social and situational factors from both the giver and receiver of feedback greatly influence accuracy. In addition, the image or impression one tries to create for themselves or the recollection of observed behavior causes major biases that skew feedback (London, 2003). Factors such as subjectivity in the selection of data forming the basis for feedback, incomplete knowledge due to access or self-censorship in the reporting process, bias due to the perspective of the feedback giver, and other factors can reduce feedback validity.

A potentially useful approach to manage feedback source fallibility is to frame the act of giving feedback as "testing perceptions" rather than providing unassailable knowledge of results. Testing perceptions reduces the implicit voice of authority inherent in providing feedback and further signals that information disconfirming the feedback is being sought. Instead of investigating the effects of "feedback," instructors should follow the lead of Argyris et al.'s (1985) theory of action science and research testing perceptions. Testing perceptions are defined as a scientific process of observational analysis coupled with an invitation for the receiver to provide disconfirmation and alternative perspectives; testing perceptions might provide insights into the feedback process and potential avenues for increasing its effectiveness. Additional research could investigate the effects of framing on the person providing feedback. It seems possible that individuals tasked with providing feedback would be more likely to identify their perspective as infallible than those tasked with testing perceptions.

Because The Good Game provides participants with only limited information from the feedback source, either "good" or silence, testing perceptions is not included in the game, so the receiver may be inadvertently led astray by erroneous guidance. To work through the meaning of this fallible feedback, facilitators pose discussion questions that often address the participant's inability to test perceptions (Appendix D). Using this experience, students can investigate giving feedback to their peers in the Fishbowl activity (Appendix E) and research the validity and reliability of feedback provided during the LDP process (Appendix A).

Generational Differences in Feedback

Students in our classes find or custom-design learning activities without instructor guidance. As action-learning teachers, we intentionally present real-world problems, or conditions, that they need to solve in order to learn from each other (Revans, 2011). Any activity could be used to discuss feedback: The Good Game is one example and debuted in 2005. From 2005 to 2015, The Good Game was run 5 times over 27 class iterations. More recently, from 2015 to 2021, it was run 5 times in 11 iterations, which leads the authors to ask (Revans, 2011): Why is The Good Game being applied more frequently?

There appears to be a significant difference in how the newer generations of millennials and post-millennials accept feedback compared to previous generations of Boomer and Gen X (Zemke et al., 2013). Millennial and post-millennial generations exhibit a high level of *entitlement* or "A stable tendency toward highly favorable self-perceptions and a tendency to feel deserving of high levels of praise and reward, regardless of actual performance levels" (Laird, 2015, p. 89; see Table 1). Consequently,

the newer generations are more predisposed to receiving positive feedback even when negative feedback may be more applicable to the situation.

Current generations seem to struggle with negative feedback more than those in the past (Zemke et al., 2013). For instance, Donohue explains that Generation X, with their can-do attitude, appreciates negative feedback so long as they have the freedom to explore the solution themselves (TEDx Talks, 2016). However, newer generations struggle with acting on negative feedback, but they enjoy receiving feedback due to their defining principle of wanting to pursue change (Anderson et al., 2016; Rubin Postaer & Associates, 2018). Presenting negative feedback in a manner that shows how a change in actions can be beneficial to the recipient or the organization is often better received by newer generations (Anderson et al., 2016). Millennial and post-millennial generations would rather have a coach or friend (Jenkins, 2019; Pasko, 2017) than a boss or manager (See Table 1).

In delivering negative feedback, Brown et al. (2016) posits the "emotive tactic" as most effective to address the emotions and feelings surrounding negative feedback. Essentially, the manager becomes a helper by asking the employee how they feel they performed over the last quarter and how they feel they can adapt to overcome challenges. Given the characteristics of the newest generations, emotive tactics can ameliorate tensions for managers.

Like their Generation X counterparts, millennials want some form of evidence tied into their feedback. Brown et al.'s (2016) "evidence and emotive tactic" may work best since millennials want their leader to become a friend, build trust, talk them through their performance, show them statistics to back claims, and work with them to find a solution. Millennials prefer feedback in real-time. Small feedback sessions or daily feedback briefings go a long way in helping millennials develop their skills and change workplace behaviors to better themselves and the company overall (Adkins & Rigoni, 2016; see Table 1).

Generation Z simply prefers the emotive tactic. Generation Z has an inherent trust aspect and will believe what experts or supervisors say but prefer that they, and everyone around them, are treated with the utmost respect and regard (Rubin Postaer and Associates, 2018). While millennials prefer feedback of any variety as fast as possible (Zemke et al., 2013), Generation Z prefers constant, formative feedback from a peer in the workplace. Generation Z does not resist authority relationships but requires human connection, "[m]eaning that Generation Z could only work for superiors who manage to develop a strong working relationship with their subordinates" (Iorgulescu, 2016, p. 49; see Table 1).

Millennial and post-millennial generations need to understand that negative feedback is vital for performance improvement (Anderson et al., 2016). While millennials are often perceived as a generation with little taste for negative feedback, they are open to critique if it is framed around company or personal goals (Anderson et al., 2016). Generation Z may be even more sensitive in their approach to negative feedback, as this technology-based generation prefers their feedback delivered in-person (Jenkins, 2019). As an action-learning activity, The Good Game provides helpful visual stimuli for Generation Z to grasp the importance of negative feedback. In addition, this game responds to the newer generations' desire for frequent feedback with immediate answers of "good" or silence.

Table 1

Generational Differences in Feedback-related Work Characteristics

Characteristic	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
Work Values	Success Oriented, Loyal to Career	Seek Work/Life Balance	Self-Reliant and Team Oriented	Work Hard and Grow Fast
Work Motivators	Appreciation	Autonomy	Making a Difference	Social Connection
This Generation Works Best When Pursuing	Personal Achievement	Team-Oriented Goals	Career Advancement, Working in Teams	Personal Image
Feedback Preference	Annually, Well-Documented	Frequent	Instant	Constant, Formative & Peer

Note. Adapted from "Work Values and Preferences by Generation" by N. Sutton Bell and H. F. Griffin, 2013, as cited in R. P. Pasko, 2017, *Work-Related Attributes and Retention: Comparing Millenials and Other Generations*, p. 41 [Doctoral dissertation, University of Dallas]. Copyright 2017 by UDigital Commons. https://digitalcommons.udallas.edu/edt/5

Silence as a Form of Feedback

Feedback is essential to improving performance; however, since the process is traditionally initiated by supervisors, it is often thought of as active or proactive. Silence is not consistently recognized as a mechanism of performance feedback (Kingsley Westerman & Smith, 2015). However, realizing that silence is a form of feedback can help an individual seek clarification and possibly resolve an unspoken issue. During a presentation, listeners may be silent because they do not understand, or something is not resonating with them. Encountering silence, the presenter can test perceptions or clarity by asking, "Let me check, I'm not hearing any feedback. Unless I hear otherwise, I'm assuming that this means there are no questions or issues. Am I wrong?". Unfortunately, the lack of protest is not often seen as a form of negative feedback, rather a confirmation that everything is going well (Murch, 2016). Acquiescence is the reluctant acceptance of something without protest. Quiescent silence, or self-censorship, is not acquiescence. Both reluctant acceptance and silent non-acceptance are issues which can result from the fear of repercussions, the avoidance of conflict, the perception feedback is not welcome, the assumption only experts or authority figures can provide feedback, or even the feeling of frustration because of the belief that speaking up will not make a difference (Kingsley Westerman & Smith, 2015; London, 2003; Michaelsen et al, 2004; Murch, 2016).

Many managers see providing negative feedback as difficult, so they avoid it (London, 2003). As a result, managers may self-censor their negative reactions and

remain silent. The absence of negative feedback can be seen by the "receiver" as evidence for good performance, thus removing the need for further feedback, even though the opposite may be true. Reducing the avoidance of negative feedback in an organization can improve productivity and enhance learning (London, 2003). Murch (2016) recounted the story of a manager who asked for feedback on a report during a meeting. Since no one commented, he assumed the meeting was successful, and everyone was on the same page. Predictably, when constituents later discussed their thoughts about the meeting, they felt the presenter provided little room for input. An acquiescent agreement can result from the desire to avoid conflict, possibly because of a perception of a lack of safety (Kingsley Westerman & Smith, 2015). Self-censorship can also result from personal emotions, such as fear or anger (Jackman & Strober, 2003; Murch, 2016; Van Dyne et al., 2003).

In The Good Game, learners come to recognize their peers' silence as negative feedback, teaching that they are not correct in the base assumption that silence means approval. However, with no guidance on how to correct their actions, the participant becomes frustrated, similar to employees' feelings in the workplace. In either setting, the role of silence in the feedback process is not well-explored.

Fresh Questions

Learners exploring the value and meanings associated with feedback could build a dialogic learning space (Matusov, 2009), creating a place where the perceptions and meanings held by all learners are valuable, and generational differences provide fodder for thoughtful rumination. As interdisciplinary teachers and experts, we must follow the pursuit through exploratory insight (Revans, 2011); we must test our perceptions and check for disconfirmation (Argyris et al., 1985). Thus, action learning leads to action research towards Revans' (2011) set of "Fresh Questions." Our experiences with the Good Game suggest several Fresh Questions on feedback:

- What does the word "good" mean? In guiding others, constituents must develop a shared understanding of the symbolic usage of positive "sign". UCM students cite their use of gratuitous praise with peers as an attempt to foster good relationships as opposed to providing specific, actionable feedback (Appendix D & E).
- Why is The Good Game being run more frequently in our classes by our millennial and post-millennial students? Current UCM students and the popular literature (Jenkins, 2019) indicate that millennials and post-millennials prefer a relationship where managers act more as coaches and friends than bosses, suggesting a different approach to feedback is needed.
- How might educators help students see mistakes as not being crimes to be punished? Helping others to understand and manage emotional reactions toward feedback could point toward alternate developmental approaches. UCM students report that they tend to receive "constructive" (negative signed) criticism with a negative emotional response, limiting their learning (Appendix C).

- What is the role of silence as a mechanism for feedback? Supervisors use silence to get their point across, as do subordinates. However, the intentional use of silence is not well-understood (Kingsley Westerman, & Smith, 2015). Learners need training to recognize silence as a form of feedback to understand why everyone is quiet to determine what others are NOT saying.
- Why is this task/game so hard? What are the barriers and obstacles toward feedback as perceived by the receiver? Feedback orientation refers to an individual's receptivity toward feedback and consists of many factors (London & Smither, 2002): the propensity to seek feedback, propensity to process feedback mindfully, sensitivity to others' views, belief in the value of feedback, and a feeling accountable to use the feedback. While the Good Game serves as a starting point to foster receptivity, it is unclear which elements of feedback orientation the newest generations most need to develop, welcome, and appreciate.

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Appendix A

Leadership Development Plan (LDP) Instructions & Example

Overview

The purpose of this assignment is for you to look ahead at your career, or at least your next job, and make choices around specific leadership skills that you want to improve on. How will you make these improvements? Make a plan!

Step 1: Three Skills on BlackBoard

Post the following on the "Leadership Skill Ideas" discussion thread on Blackboard:

1. Three leadership practices (behaviors) you believe you need to work on. (Please use the terminology from Kouzes and Posner.)
2. A brief statement on why you think each of these skills needs development.

Step 2: Comment on Each Other's BB Posts

1. Read each other's posts. Comment on them, be constructive.
2. Give examples of how you have seen the leader struggle with that skill/behavior.
3. If someone posted something that you don't feel they need to work on, say so and give an example of how they do it well, or how it does not impact others.

Step 3: Select at least Three Constituents

1. Select three sources of information to give you open, honest feedback on your developmental skills from "LDP Ideas".
    a. Who are you asking for feedback on your leadership skills?
    b. Why are these people ideal?
    c. Aim for at least 3 different sources, so 3 or more people who know you in different venues of leading.
2. Sources people have used in the past: Interviewing their current manager, past manager, teammates. A short survey of clients, co-workers, managers. Phone calls with past managers, current managers, regional managers. Emails with HR, direct managers, co-workers. Video chats with leaders in different positions who knew the student as an employee. Request for a formal performance review (which never really happens in small businesses). etc...
3. The key is to ask about those 2 or 3 leadership behaviors you honed down to in the LDP Ideas discussion board. Do not let the information flow wander, stay focused on those developmental behaviors you want feedback on.
4. Put your ideas for sources of information and how you will collect data, information, feedback from at least 3 sources in the discussion board entitled "LDP Constituents."
    a. How will you ask, survey, interview, phone call, etc.?
5. Comment on each other's ideas to help with gathering information.

Step 4: Constituent Feedback

1. Restate the names of the people you contacted and the questions you asked them.
2. What did they have to say about your developmental skills?
3. Post to the discussion board entitled "Constituent Feedback".
4. This step is a check-off for me to see you are making progress.

Step 5: The Leadership Development Plan (1-page maximum)

1. The Leading Behavior: You are now down to 1 or 2 leadership skills/behaviors you would like to work on
    - Things you can do something about
    - Use SOME ideas/words from the book
2. Proof: Who says this is an issue/problem/lack/etc?
    - Facebook Message
    - Interviews
    - Survey of Co-workers Family
    - Classmates, but not MGT majors
    - Performance Reviews
    - Immediate superior at work
    - Coach
    - Scouting
    - Church
    - Personality test
    - MGT Majors not in this class as one source
    - Subordinates
    - Owners
    - Regular Customers see the consistent behavior
    - Irregular for new ideas
3. Listen closely to see what people are saying
    - Observe the effects of things you are trying
    - Reflect on the feedback your constituents gave you
    - Plan how your will change your skills
4. Accountability - Hold yourself accountable! SMART format, right?
    - Pick someone to give you honest feedback, mentor not coach
    - Journal, professional
    - Swear jar thingy
    - Make time for self-reflection
    - Google calendar or other organizers
    - Share the messages with others, find an accountability partner
    - Professional groups/ Toastmasters
        - Formal one-on-ones with your manager
        - Make it MEASURABLE

Appendix B

Leadership Development Plan (LDP) Student 1 Example

Strengths

1. Leading by example (or Modeling the way)
2. Communicating clearly and effectively
3. Honesty and Open to Criticism or opposition to my ideas or decisions

Goals

1. Improve upon encouraging others and enabling them to achieve their goals and tasks. When in leadership positions I have received feedback that it is something I need to improve on, rather than taking things on myself.
2. Improve upon critical thinking speed in difficult situations with reason. I can usually make a good decision with enough time to slow down and think about why, but leaders and managers need to be able to do so quickly.

Proof

Issue 1: Peer Feedback (anonymous) from IBE class in Fall 2018. I was in charge of my company's finances and was good at it, but it was by far the most demanding position. I had a couple of people who would occasionally help me out, but I did not reach out to them or encourage them to be more involved or help more. On my peer review, I had two reviews stating that I should have reached out for help and encouraged others to help more. I had similar feedback when I was in charge of "Control" in XB class the semester after IBE.

Issue 2: When working at Dick's Sporting Goods I found myself in difficult situations where I did not know what to do and would have to reach out for help on the radio, which could take 5+ minutes to get an answer at times. This got better as time went on and I got more familiar with things but it would still happen on occasion. Not having answers and standing around reaching out for help does not make customers happy and hurts reputation (both mine and the company).

Issue 2: Making snap decisions is the name of the game in officiating sports. While I believe that I am decent for a first-year official, I know I have lots of room for growth. I have gotten very clear and immediate feedback from a coach a couple of months ago. We also have a rating system that comes out at the end of the season, and I scored a 6/10.

Resources/Possible Evaluation Team

1. Sedalia Referees Association- Members and leadership
   -Experience and wisdom to share from a large number of members
2. Lorin Walker- Mentor and Class Professor

-Large variety of job experience and career development advice

3. Organizational Policy Team

-Working on a large group project together throughout the semester

Accountability

- I plan on acquiring a large dry erase calendar (or making my own), so I can better schedule what I need to do and see it every day.
- (Issue 2) Have someone give me a difficult or odd scenario that I have to respond to quickly and accurately (referee situation or work situation).
- (Issue 1) Have close contact with my class organizational policy team and work on encouraging others or enabling them to participate. I would then have them send feedback to Lorin Walker (instructor and my mentor) for him to interpret and give me advice.
- Make time daily for self-reflection and think about what I could have done better/improve on.
- (Issue 2) Get into contact with Dennis Hagadorn (ref association) and have him interpret my evaluations and give any advice.

Appendix C

Leadership Development Plan (LDP) Student 2 Example

Date: 12/02/2020

Re: Leadership Development Plan

The three leadership skills I honed down at the beginning of class were delegation, creativity, and feedback. Our classmates then responded if they agreed or disagreed. After reading the comments and thinking about their motivations, I determined that I really did not have any problem being creative. But, all my peers agreed that delegation and feedback were two weaknesses. I find myself not delegating work that should or could be delegated. It's not because I am selfish, but because I want to see that everything is completed on time. I know that if I do it, it will get done. Giving feedback was another thing I could work on, I am afraid to express my feelings. I do not like to give negative feedback. I like to keep people happy, so I do not want to be the one who brings up the negatives. But I know it is important that people receive feedback as this is the only way they know how they are doing on the job.

I decided to interview my former boss, my current manager, and a teacher. In all three interviews, I started by discussing the objectives of the interview. We began our dialog by covering the skills I was good at, then we focused on things I could improve on. I asked all three the same question before telling them the two leadership skills I had selected: "What are two leadership skills that you think I could work on"? To my amazement, all three of them said "I think you could work on making others take responsibility and I think you could let others know how you feel". As I analyzed those identical responses, I thought to myself "making others take responsibility"? That sounds a lot like delegating. "Letting others know how you feel" sounds a lot like giving feedback. I then told them what my classmates had said I needed to improve on and they all said, "that is exactly what we are talking about." These constituents from different aspects of my life agreed that I was holding back. They could tell that I wanted to say more, but I didn't. My former manager said "Levi, you speak brilliantly, when you speak" and "You always know what to say". My current manager said, "Levi, I never told you this, but always felt bad because you were doing three employees' worth of work for one employee's paycheck". There were often times when I needed to just step back, take a break, and allow others to do their job. But, I wanted to ensure it got done and just did it myself. My three interviewees agreed that I was not a selfish person but maybe lacked trust in others. My former manager said "And I wish you would've just had trust in them and let them fail even if you knew they were going to. We see what really happens, you don't have to try and cover it up." Failure is not blind to all.

After reviewing the three interviews a couple of times (I recorded them all with permission), I concluded that I needed to improve on delegating and giving back feedback. To hold myself accountable for these two things I will make myself give feedback and delegate. When I work with someone, I will give feedback to the person I am working with regularly. I will address what I think is going well or they are doing well with. But I will also address what I think could be improved or what they need to change (in my opinion). I am going to ask them if I can give them feedback and if they agree, I will do it. I will not be offensive or negative. Just truly explaining my observations with evidence. This way they know exactly how I am thinking. With delegation, I plan on having more trust in people. I plan to do exactly what I am asked of and let others do what they are supposed to do. If they do not finish something, I will not let it bother me. I will simply focus on myself more, and let others deal with their consequences. If I see that I have overloaded myself, I will ask others to help. Vise versa as well, if others need help, I will help them. I will let others do more of what they are hired to do. I will allow others to do what they are delegated to do and delegate things that are not entirely my responsibility. Focusing on delegation and giving back feedback will allow me to become a better leader. This change will show others that I trust them and that I will speak my mind. I will not only give feedback, but I will ask for feedback in return.

Appendix D

Mapping Discussion Questions to Concepts

Name of the Activity: The "Good" Game

Activity Objective: Being able to give and receive feedback despite potential restrictions

Instructions:

- Select one member to stand in the front of the room and DO something (participant).
- The facilitator walks the participant into the hallway where they cannot hear.
- The facilitator quickly tells learners to decide on an action that they want the participant to take: for example, do 7 push-ups. Be realistic, please.
- The facilitator goes back into the hallway to tells the participant that they will come back into the room to take some action, without telling them the required action.
- The participant may not speak and must try to figure out what their objective is by moving around and taking advice.
- The facilitator and participant wait for a cue from learners that they have made an action/task choice and are ready.
- Facilitator ducks into the classroom and explains to the learners that they can only say "GOOD" when the participant makes a correct motion. No other words or non-verbal cues are allowed.
- The participant enters the room and the game begins.
- Once the participant has accomplished the task completely, we are finished!

Intended Discussion Purposes:

Initiate incremental steps and small wins to overcome big challenges
Conducting pre- and postmortems with your projects
Learn from your mistakes
Foster hardiness in self and others

Discussion Questions:

- What was your biggest challenge in this activity?
- What types of communication did you use other than words?
  - Which type of communication was most effective?
  - In what ways did noise impact your efforts?
- How did you initiate incremental steps and small wins?
  - How did you build off those small wins?
  - In what ways were those small wins beneficial?
- To the member in front, what did you try that did not work and how did you learn from these attempts?
- To the member in front, what was most helpful from your team members?
- Life is not always about positive feedback, how do we (as leaders) deliver corrective feedback?

    - What is our obligation as leaders when the system provides poor feedback (blank stares and "good")?
    - How did negative feedback affect your understanding of the task?
- Looking back on the struggle of completing the task and knowing this game is not a competition, what do you think could have gone better?

DISCUSSION QUESTION	RELATION	LEADERSHIP PRACTICE
What was your biggest challenge in this activity?	Personal-best leadership experiences always involve some challenge. Leaders take charge of change	Challenge the Process Search for Opportunities Foster Hardiness
What types of communication did you use other than words? Which type of communication was most effective? In what ways did noise impact your efforts?	Listen deeply, discover and appeal to a common purpose, and give life to their vision by communicating expressively.	Inspire a Shared Vision Enlist Others Develop a Shared Source of Destiny
How did you initiate incremental steps and small wins?	The three essentials of experimenting and taking risks are initiating incremental steps and small wins, learning from mistakes, and promoting psychological hardiness.	Challenge the Process Experiment and Take Risk
How did you build off of those small wins? In what ways were those small wins beneficial?	Small wins build people's confidence and reinforce their desire to feel successful.	Challenge the Process Experiment and Take Risk Initiate Incremental Steps and Small Wins
To the member in front, what did you try that did not work and how did you learn from these attempts?	They provide a stable foundation that preserves gains and makes it harder to return to the way things were.	Challenge the Process Experiment and Take Risk Initiate Incremental Steps and Small Wins
To the member in front, what was most helpful	Small wins help leaders build constituents' commitment to a course	Challenge the Process

from your team members?	of action by starting with actions that are within their control, tangible, and doable	Experiment and Take Risk Initiate Incremental Steps and Small Wins
Looking back on the struggle of completing the task and knowing this game is not a competition, what do you think could have gone better?	According to Dick Nettell, "In today's environment, if you want to be successful, doing things the same way won't get it done…. if we're not willing to be innovative and do things differently, we are going to have the competition pass us like we're still sitting on the freeway."	Challenge the Process Search for Opportunities **The Leadership Challenge* Instructor's Guide
Life is not always about positive feedback, how do we (as leaders) deliver corrective feedback? What is our obligation as leaders when the system provides poor feedback (blank stares and "good")? How did negative feedback affect your understanding of the task?	Seize the Initiative Exercise Outsight "As long as you believe what you're doing is meaningful, you can cut through fear and exhaustion and take the next step." Push to give employees the opportunity to change, without forcing it. Giving the opportunity to take initiative results in unexpected positive changes.	Conducting pre and post-mortems (the activity debrief itself is a postmortem). Foster hardiness in others
If a second round: Why was the second round easier than the first? How did negative feedback affect your understanding of the task? Give an example of a time when negative feedback helped you in your career or schoolwork.	"If you can think of ways to improve the process, you should take it." This means you have to stop simply "going through the motions" when it comes to doing your job. It's a lesson all leaders need to learn."	Challenge the Process Innovate Solutions Inspire a Shared Vision

Appendix E

Fishbowl Feedback Instructions

Fishbowl Leadership Feedback

Peer feedback will consist of 3 sections: Giving feedback, Responding to feedback, and Improving feedback skills. For your Fishbowl Feedback, you will need to use Google Meet to set up a real-time feedback session with your partner(s). For help with Google Meet, click here.

Each person will get a chance to be in the "hot seat," so it doesn't matter who goes first. Work together to find a time that works best for all members of your team and ideally Nelson or Andi as well. Once you have a time set, task one person with setting up the meeting and inviting everyone else.

Giving Feedback:
To save us all from having to sift through a long video, please create a new video for each person receiving feedback. For example, if person 1 is receiving feedback first, person 2 and 3 should both give feedback to person 1 in a single video. Then stop that recording and start a new one before moving on to person 2, etc. This group should have at least 3 videos. These can be done one right after the other, or at different times or days depending on group availability.

- Consider both suggested improvements or opportunities to grow as well as positive feedback
- Be sure to use Leadership terminology
- Be sure to use real examples when possible

Responding to Feedback:
Each person that receives feedback will also be expected to reflect and respond to that feedback. You have two options of when you can do your responding to feedback video. You can either do it at the end of the same video you received the feedback or you can schedule a follow-up video with your peers instead.

- Do you agree or disagree with the feedback given?
- Do you see yourself making changes in future teams?
- If you wait for a second recording to respond to your feedback, you might rewatch your feedback video

Improving Feedback Skills:
Here is where the points come into play! See the document attached for instructions.

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Garrett Giles *received both his MBA and his BSBA from the University of Central Missouri (UCM) within the last five years and is currently scouting programs nationwide for an Organizational Behavior doctoral program that excels in experiential learning. Throughout his time at the UCM, Garrett has attended multiple academic conferences presenting management theory concepts through easy-to-learn classroom games, including the Good Game. During this time in conferences, Garrett developed a love of teaching these concepts as well as various heutagogy learning concepts. He has begun working towards a full-time career in academia.*

"…teaching future faculty about SoTL is both a way to prepare future faculty to integrate SoTL into their careers, but it is also a way to help future faculty understand and value the roles of faculty members who focus on teaching within research-intensive institutions." (p. 11)

Reano, D., Masta, S., & Harbor, J. (2019). Changing future faculty's conceptions of SoTL. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *13*(2), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2019.130203