

# 4. There is more to people than problems.

## Feedback isn't about fixing.



Plenty of managers think their job is to point out all the ways their team gets things wrong. They think of themselves as “the fixer,” which can result in a suffocating atmosphere of criticism. On the other extreme, some managers are so hesitant to conduct these sensitive conversations that they avoid feedback entirely. Problems persist, and their team is deprived of the opportunity to grow and learn.

Effective feedback is about unleashing potential. The intent is to help develop skills and address blind spots in a high-trust atmosphere. Great leaders create this culture through modeling: they continually seek feedback to build on strengths and correct weaknesses. A culture of feedback begins with the leader.

### Insight Exercise

Identify a team member who can give you feedback on a specific issue. Plan your conversation with the following framework:

#### 1. Declare your intent

Let the person know why you want the feedback, typically to learn, develop, and get better as a leader. “I’ve noticed that I could work on my communication skills, so I’m asking a few team members to help me identify ways to improve.”

#### 2. Ask for specific feedback

General questions won’t yield many insights, so be clear. “In our next meeting, could you jot down what you notice about how I could better lead the conversation?”

#### 3. Listen empathically

Feeling defensive about feedback is natural, but counterproductive. Seek to understand, not to explain yourself. “So what you’ve noticed is…”

#### 4. Acknowledge the feedback

*“Thanks for the feedback. Let me think about how I can apply it.”*

#### 5. Evaluate the feedback

Use good judgment to determine what to do with the feedback.

#### 6. Commit to action

Make commitments carefully and keep them.