

How to ask for feedback

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Executive coach Joel Garfinkle quotes Peter Drucker as noting that past leaders knew how to tell, while future leaders would know how to ask.

Here's how Garfinkle advises asking others for feedback on your performance:

- √ **Schedule it.** Your colleague needs to be available. You'll need a private place. And plan ahead so the person has time to think.
- √ **Explain what you want.** Say, "I need your take on some of my recent decisions," or "How do I come across to our customers?"
- √ **Don't fish for compliments.** People will hold back if they doubt you want an honest assessment. Say, "I think I may be interrupting people or coming across as a jerk. How do you think I could improve my style?"
- √ **Ask for specifics.** It helps defuse the tension. If they say you *always* do something or other, say, "Wow, I didn't realize I came off that way. I really don't want to give that impression. Can you think of a situation where I've done that recently?"
- √ **Don't be defensive.** This is the hardest part. It's so easy to blurt out questions like, "Why do you say that?" or "What does that mean?"
- √ **Thank them.** Be appreciative. And ask for more feedback.
- √ **Approach others.** Ask the same questions and look for patterns.
- √ **Develop an action plan.** If you've done this right, you should have actionable material. After you've worked on your behavior for a month or two, make the rounds again.

— Adapted from *Getting Ahead*, Joel A. Garfinkle, Wiley.

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