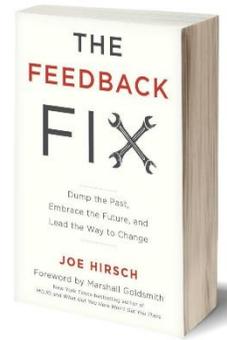# Book Discussion Guide – 20 Questions for Leaders

Based on *The Feedback Fix: Dump the Past, Embrace the Future, and Lead the Way to Change*

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Rowman & Littlefield

FOR LEADERS

1. Complete the sentence: "Feedback makes me feel/think of _____." Now ask another person on your team to do the same. How do your responses stack up? What does that tell you about the associations we make with giving and receiving feedback?
2. Who in your life gives you the most feedback?
3. Kevin Ochsner, a Columbia University psychologist, estimates that people only apply about 30% of the feedback they receive. The rest of the time, they reject or ignore it. Does that surprise you? What do you think holds us back from putting feedback to work?
4. Do you consider yourself more of feedback giver or receiver? Does your position change depending on the setting you're in?
5. Do people on your team share feedback with one another freely? If not, what is holding them back?
6. Marshall Goldsmith, one of the world's most admired leadership coaches, points out that feedback that is focused on the future is more likely to receive buy-in from recipients. He writes: *"While they don't particularly like hearing criticism, successful people love getting ideas for the future. That's because successful people have a high need for self-determination and are more likely to accept ideas that they 'own,' not those that feel forced upon them."* Do you agree with Goldsmith? Is buy-in the key to better feedback?
7. Companies like Deloitte have moved away from traditional feedback because of its lack of frequency, judgmental tone, endless documentation, and uncompromising emphasis on past performance. How closely does this describe the feedback culture in your workplace?
8. Can you remember a time when you fell victim to the "idiosyncratic rater effect" – the tendency of people to give subjective feedback based on their own biases and not actual performance data?
9. Employees under the age of twenty-five rate professional development as their number one driver of engagement, and it remains a top consideration all the way up to the age of thirty-five. How can feedforward help attract and retain millennial talent at a time when short-term gigs are becoming the new career?
10. More experienced workers actually prefer to receive negative feedback, as long as it's constructive, while less experienced workers benefit from more positive communication. Does your feedback style make allowances for the different needs of your team members?
11. What are the risks and rewards for adopting "creative abrasion" in teams or divisional units?
12. It has been said that organizations promote innovation but punish failure. To what extent is that true in your workplace? As a leader, what's your true comfort level with risk and experimentation?
13. The best leaders manage from a point of 'detached connection' – close enough to matter, but too far to meddle. Where would you place yourself on the mattering-meddling scale?
14. Can you define what 'success' and 'personal best' look like among your team? What does your team or company stand for? What are your larger purposes and priorities?

15. Researchers discovered that "social cueing" – the facial expressions we show when we communicate – can tell a much different story than the one we're trying to share. Giving positive feedback with negative social cues (a frown, for example) can make the message actually seem darker. When you're giving feedback to a colleague, how aware are you of the feedback you're *showing*?

16. Leaders who laugh with their teams build social capital and can even produce greater productivity. How often do you laugh with your team? Would your reports describe you as someone with whom they'd feel comfortable sharing a laugh?

17. Psychological safety – the feeling that we can be ourselves, without judgement or social repercussion – plays a key role in how teams behave and perform. On a scale of 1-10 (10 highest), how "safe" is your workplace environment? To what extent does your culture of feedback affect the psychological safety of the workplace?

18. When giving feedback to another person, do you find yourself prescribing solutions or describing possibilities? Does the person receiving feedback from you have an opportunity to shape the outcome or have you already shaped it?

19. Is your feedback tailored to a specific message? Is it communicated in plain and concrete language that offers a call to action?

20. In which of the REPAIR steps are you strongest? Weakest? If you could make any of these steps your company's top growth priority, which would it be?

Additional questions or comments: