



Speed Mentoring Using Feed Forward By Ann Rolfe

Feed forward is a dynamic technique that can expand your thinking and open up infinite possibilities for the future.

Marshall Goldsmith in *Try Feed Forward* describes the concept and practice. Using his technique here's how I facilitate a group feed forward experience or "Speed Mentoring":

1. Ask participants to pick a behaviour they'd like to change that would make a significant positive difference for them;
2. Have them describe that behaviour simply: eg "I want to be a better listener" or "I want to be heard in meetings";
3. Assemble the group and get them to work in pairs for a few minutes before moving on to form a new pair
4. One person asks for feed forward from their partner - 2 suggestions for the future that might help them achieve the change they seek (no comments about the past just focus on the future);
5. The asker then listens attentively and writes notes of their partner's suggestions;
6. There is no critique, discussion or feedback, the asker simply thanks their partner;
7. Then the situation is reversed. They ask the other person what they would like to change and provide feed forward;
8. Each person says: "you're welcome" when thanked and when both have received feed forward they move into a new pairing.

The key to feed forward is no critique and no judgment. People are simply more likely to listen to feed forward because it is positive it is focused on performance and it is not critiqued – you're not allowed to say anything but thank you.

Feed forward can come from anyone who has knowledge, experience or imagination. It is quick and easy to ask people for feed forward and people are attracted to the positivity of it because it avoids the resistance, defense and denial often triggered by corrective feedback.

Henry Ford said: "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right". Feedback can often reinforce a self-image as a failure – a person who can't. Feed forward assumes you can and may create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

People are empowered by feed forward. Not only does it give them concrete strategies to achieve their goal, it also gives them the freedom to choose from a range of possibilities. It's a great team building activity and mentoring training exercise.