



## ACTIVITY 7

# Leadership Feedback

### 🕒 TIMING

Each individual takes approximately **12 minutes**, with a few minutes for transitions. We allot an hour for small groups of 4.

### ★ EXPERTISE

This session requires a facilitator with a **working knowledge of coaching** who will be unafraid to help groups step into greater intimacy. Ideally, this facilitator can participate in the feedback and step in if a leader is negatively impacted by what they have experienced.

## PURPOSE

To help leaders articulate what propels them toward success and what holds them back.

## USE

This exercise is intended for a group that aspires to greater levels of leadership in their work and life. At NLN we tend to do this after the group has had the opportunity to see one another in action as part of a work group.

## FACILITATION

This exercise is centered on the idea that we can learn a lot about how we show up as leaders from those who have even limited experience working with us. It allows leaders to experience what others see in them: both their strengths and weaknesses. That recognition is often a relief and a motivator.

**What's needed:** This exercise occurs in groups of 3 or 4. Each group will need enough privacy for an intimate conversation: a room closed to interference or outside, where leaders can find a quiet place. It is often helpful to provide the small groups a handout with instructions.

### Instructions:

- 1 Introduce the exercise by talking about how rare it is for leaders to get candid feedback from those who experience that leader day to day. It's important to contrast this with the more typical annual review from an employer.
- 2 Explain that they will be divided into groups of 3–4. Each leader will take turns receiving feedback from the others.
  - Decide who in the group will be the focal person and who will be the timekeeper.
  - Have the focal person sit quietly while the others reflect on two prompts:
    - *Here is where I see you as talented and powerful.*
    - *Here is where I see you get in the way of your own greatness.*

### Instructions (continued):

- Before the focal person receives the feedback, decide whether he/she will record what is said on their phone or in writing. Most leaders will have a hard time absorbing all that is said, especially the praise.
  - In the first round of feedback, each leader takes 1–2 minutes giving the focal person feedback about how they see the leader excelling.
  - In a second round, each leader takes 1–2 minutes giving feedback about where they see them struggle or get in their own way.
  - The focal person has the opportunity to respond and say how they are impacted by hearing the feedback.
  - It is helpful to provide some guiding prompts for this feedback. We typically suggest the following:
    - *Thank you.*
    - *This how your feedback has affected me...*
    - *Here is where I will need your support...*
- 3 Reassure participants that this feedback is happening within a circle of trust and respect, and that most leaders experience relief at being recognized for both good and bad. It is common for the group to feel anxious and to push back on this process. It is also important to flag that most leaders are well versed in their own limitations but actually have a harder time hearing praise.
- 4 After the whole group returns from their conversations, lead a quick debrief. Ask what people learned from one another.
- 5 Follow this exercise with an energizing moment that allows the group dynamic to reset.

## WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

- ✓ This exercise always elicits strong emotions from leaders at the beginning. After hearing the instructions, leaders tend to protest that they don't know one another well enough to give real feedback. But by the end of the exercise, they are often amazed at how well they have been recognized for both their strengths and their weaknesses. Our conclusion: We are all more obvious, and more observant, than we give ourselves credit for.

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