Conversation Starter: Asking others for more feedback

Step 1: Decide what Behavior you want feedback on the most

Pick one, maybe two areas for which you want feedback.

Step 2: Pick your Feedback Providers

Pick two to three feedback providers. Try to pick at least one individual with whom you have a professional but not overly friendly relationship.

Step 3: Schedule the conversation

Explain the purpose of the meeting

Schedule 10 minutes for this conversation —that's all the time you'll need. Find a place that you are comfortable with. We recommend staying away from meeting rooms and opting for a less formal environment like a coffee shop. Explain clearly that you want to understand how you can improve, NOT what you've done wrong. Talk about your goal to be a better coworker, peer, or direct report.

Positive Example (do this)	Negative Example (Don't do this)
"I'd like to meet with you to understand how I can be a better partner during this project."	"I want to finally understand why you are giving me this negative feedback."
"I'd like to ask you a few questions about how I can improve."	"I want to understand what I did wrong."
"The purpose of this conversation is to get your thoughts on where I can improve."	"I am getting all this negative feedback, and I want to ask you what it is that I did wrong."
"I have received pretty negative feedback and would like to ask for your advice on what I can do better in the future."	"I really want to get to the bottom of why my feedback score is so low. I hope you can help me."

When stating the purpose, be clear that this conversation is about your future behavior and not about rehashing the past.

Step 4: Prepare behavior-specific questions

Similar to the purpose of the conversation, frame your questions about the behaviors in question in a *future-facing* fashion. Avoid sounding like you have an axe to grind or a bone to pick at all costs.

Example Behavior	Positive Example (do this)	Negative Example (Don't do this)
When explaining something, uses easy to follow language.	"My feedback suggests that I am sometimes hard to understand. Can you give me some advice about how I could be clearer in the future?"	"You are giving me feedback that I am hard to understand. Please give me an example of something I said that was hard to understand."
When managing a project, gives others clear objectives and timelines.	"It looks like I don't always give clear objectives and timelines. Can you help me understand what would work better for you in the future?"	"So, can you tell me what is not clear about my project plan? I don't understand."
Actively creates learning opportunities or stretch goals for people on his/her team.	"The team has shared with me that I am not creating the opportunity to stretch and develop. What kind of opportunities could I provide in the future to make this better?"	"It sounds like the team is saying that in the past I haven't given them the opportunity to develop. What was something that you wanted to do?"

Step 5: Look for triggers

Your conversation will allow you to explore *under what circumstances* you are not showing the behaviors in question. For example:

- Are there certain situations in which I am not showing a behavior?
- Are there certain tasks or processes which seem to be difficult for me?
- Are there certain people, teams, or departments with whom I have trouble interacting?

Understanding these triggers or circumstances will be helpful to step in front of them and to proactively counteract them. For example, maybe in stressful situations you tend to stop communicating with your team. Next time you are feeling stressed out you might be able to proactively staying connected to your team.

In short, try to understand if you are just not showing the behavior, or if there are *situations* in which you are not showing the behavior.

Step 6: Make a plan

A plan coming out of the meeting can be as simple as a writing down in which situations you want to act differently or what you generally want to do differently in the future. A simple example: if you get low feedback on "Responds quickly to calls and emails" maybe a step is to clean out your email inbox and from now on, try to respond to all emails before close of business. Set yourself a goal.

Make sure that your goals are *actionable.* Here is an actionable goal: "I will scan my inbox everyday before I leave in the evening and schedule 15 minutes for this task." Not actionable: "I need to get the email thing under control." Ensure that your goal is a clear instruction on what to do differently and how to do it.

Step 7: Tell others and ask for help

Not everybody is comfortable with this step, but maybe you can give it a try. We recommend telling your feedback providers (or at least some of them) that you want to improve your score and what you plan to do differently. A simple: "I am trying to get better at responding to email quickly. Please give me Rhabit feedback if I am successful" can alert your feedback providers that you are working on this.

Prep Sheet

Preparation

Conversation Partner: _____

Targeted Behavior: _____

Purpose of this conversation: _____

(Check: is it future facing, is it targeted to improve?)

Your Questions

1.   _____

2.   _____

3.   _____

(Check: are these questions targeting improvement in the future, do they put the conversation partner on the spot (avoid), do they not ask about events in the past)

Triggers / Circumstances

Situations in which I don't show desired behaviors:

1.   _____

2.   _____

3.   _____

Next Steps

Actions I can take:

1.   _____

2.   _____

3.   _____

(Check: Are the next steps clear and will you understand them in a week or even a month? Are they actionable, not aspirational?)