

LEARNING TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK: A BIG WIN FOR U.S. GROCERY CHAIN

Zenger Folkman's FUEL Workshop teaches leaders how to better provide positive, redirective feedback.

THE CHALLENGE

Feedback—both positive and re-directive—is one of the most important vehicles for growth and development. When leaders provide any type of feedback, their employees are more likely to feel committed, valued, and engaged in their work environments with a strong motivation to grow.

When a US food retailer with approximately 1,600 stores conducted an engagement survey, the results showed that while employees rated the opportunity for development as very important to them, the organization was only doing an adequate job providing it. In addition, its business leaders were rated high on driving for results and stretch goals, which while positive overall, has potential drawbacks.

Having successfully participated in various leadership development programs over the years, the executive team decided the next step was to help its mid-level managers and leaders improve and become more comfortable in giving employees effective, in-the-moment feedback.

THE SOLUTION

Fortunately, Zenger Folkman, the leadership development company the grocer had used with great success for other development initiatives, had a quality feedback training approach built on extensive research: FUEL for Feedback (part of Zenger Folkman's *Extraordinary Coach* program). Working closely with Zenger Folkman, the organization tailored FUEL to create a custom four-hour feedback workshop. They launched a pilot program that included 125 leaders and planned to put more than 5,000 additional leaders through the development experience within the next two years.

The custom feedback experience was consistent with the training company's 360-degree *Extraordinary Leader* assessment initiative that many of the organization's leaders had already gone through. The process was designed to help their leaders improve team productivity and develop others by:

- Understanding how consistent, specific feedback pays off
- Learning how great leaders use feedback to enhance team performance
- Learning how to hold powerful feedback conversations that drive action

AT A GLANCE

The Challenge

- With significant emphasis placed on reaching stretch goals, leaders were missing opportunities to provide effective, in-the-moment feedback. As a result, employees felt less valued and engaged in their work environments.

The Solution

- This U.S. Grocery Chain decided to implement a positive and productive feedback development experience based on Zenger Folkman's FUEL model. This development experience taught leaders how to better provide positive, re-directive feedback.

The Results

- Overwhelmingly positive response, vast improvements in providing positive and redirecting feedback.
- Over 5,550 employees participated in the program.



“When our executives push results and stretch goals, they get focused on only rewarding those who go above and beyond and forget to give that confident feedback when employees reach original goals, make improvement, etc. We needed to teach our leaders to provide this positive feedback anytime it was warranted.”

U.S. Grocery Chain's Development Manager

- Practicing how to provide positive/developmental feedback in real-world situations from the grocer's work environment

Before launching the first feedback initiative, three of the organization's training and development managers participated in a three-day certification program, enabling them to facilitate the program internally.

During the program, participants role-played both positive and re-directive feedback across the four components of FUEL:

- Frame the Conversation
- Understand the Current State
- Explore the Desired State
- Layout a Success Plan

THE RESULTS

Since this new feedback approach, more than 550 additional employees have participated in the learning and applying this model. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Participants praised the approach and provided highly positive feedback on the evaluation form:

"For me, the most valuable aspect of the workshop was the understanding of how to phrase or frame the feedback and how to get the employee to engage with the solutions or options."

"It was a very effective workshop that brought out a few challenges that I have had in the past. Now I have the tools to work with those challenges. Thank you."

"I thought I did a good job—even excellent job—of providing positive feedback. I'm quickly learning I was mistaken!"

"What you learn in this workshop has the potential to improve your relations across every aspect of your life."

Those who were certified to facilitate the feedback workshop also observed significant results. The trainers voted the FUEL program as their favorite workshop to deliver. One facilitator commented:

"When you have participants, even at the VP level, shocked that the four hours have already gone by, that's a good thing. When we deliver a workshop and get calls from our executives saying they want to have a conversation with a direct report, that's a win. We are definitely poised to reach our business goals with this program. We can't wait to see the positive changes in our entire organization over the next two years."

The true gauge for the success of the feedback workshop comes from speaking directly to high-level leaders to see if they are noticing improvements.

These leaders saw vast improvements in providing positive and re-directive feedback, and the program became an invaluable resource for the entire organization.

GROUNDING IN RESEARCH. BUILT ON STRENGTHS.

Zenger Folkman's approach makes more of people development, transforming the process into a new, strengths-focused lifestyle that brings science to the art of leadership.