

Understanding Feedback

During the months leading up to the new year, positions open up at a plethora of companies. Companies are looking to fill these positions before the start of the next calendar year, and more importantly, a new budgeting season. Additionally, this is the time that the formal talent review process is completed, which means companies will know *exactly* what they are looking for in their new hires. As a person in transition, it is your responsibility to show these companies how you will complement or augment their current employees. To do this, you must fully understand your skills, as well as your areas for growth. It can often be difficult to pinpoint these exact areas in ourselves, so it is crucial to be able to ask for and receive feedback from others. During transition, make sure to ask the correct questions to the right people, so that you can completely understand the things that you are not as proficient in while perfecting what you are already great at.

As we enter into this “career-transition season,” Group 360 would like to offer you three pieces of advice on the best ways to receive and utilize feedback:

1. Ask for the correct type of feedback:

Instead of asking countless people to read your already finalized resume, try asking for feedback on how you look as a candidate or what the current job market is like. To have the best transition outcomes, you do not want to alter your resume significantly after the transition process has begun. Finalize your resume after getting feedback from one person who knows you well, someone who is a more distant peer, and a professional in your field. Then, only change your resume after you land a new job.

Additionally, asking for feedback on how you look as a candidate or the current state of the job market are easier questions to ask when communicating with your network. For example, asking someone for an interview or if they know of anyone else who is interviewing can be very intimidating, but the questions Group 360 previously suggested may lead to the same outcome and are very helpful questions when trying to present yourself in the best light to hiring managers. It will help you determine what markets your skills would fit best and allow you to be introduced to different career paths, which is why these questions are important to all people in transition, anyone from a college student to the CEO of a Fortune 500 company.

2. Take the time needed to correctly process feedback:

Do not be afraid of the feedback you receive or believe that it is a value judgment of your character. Most people who give feedback will only do so if they believe it will help you present yourself as a better candidate to employers who barely know you. Typically, the person giving you feedback knows you on a more personal level, and they are just trying to help you put your best foot forward. Additionally, during the process of transition, the person transitioning will most likely be the one initiating the request for

feedback. More often than not, this feedback will be positive and help boost your confidence because others will notice more positives about how you present yourself to employers than things you need to change or improve upon.

3. Put the feedback you receive to action:

Processing feedback is not enough. You must go through the steps to put the feedback into action. Ajit Nawalkha, life coach and author for Forbes, asks people to “look for gold” in the feedback they receive. She continues by saying, “one key trait that separates successful people from everyone else is that they find helpful information hidden in harsh criticism and use it to boost their performance” (Nawalkha). Do not let someone's words bring you down; instead, look for the kernel of knowledge or advice that can be derived from their words. She continues by saying that you must “get curious” (Nawalkha). Think about *how* someone's critique could help improve your appearance to an employer. Then, think about *what* you need to do to achieve this. Do you need to highlight your past responsibilities in more detail? Should you speak about your role on your children's school board despite not having a traditional job in years? Understanding how feedback could be used to your advantage is not beneficial unless you take action.

Additionally, you must remember that as feedback changes, the way you should present yourself should also change. For example, you may receive different feedback based on what field and career path you are currently pursuing. The image put forth when applying to a leadership position at a company that sells children's toys may look vastly different than the image put forth when applying to a health foods company.

Furthermore, one day, you will most likely find yourself in the position of being the person to give feedback rather than receive it. You will find that being able to give good feedback is just as important as being able to take it. To do this, first, take the time to understand the complete professional background of the person asking for feedback. Knowing what a person in transition did at a single job is not enough; instead, you must understand their complete educational and professional background. Second, give comprehensive feedback by trying to offer specific ideas on how a person in transition can improve how their appearance comes across to new employers. Third, give both positive and constructive feedback. Providing only negative feedback to a person in transition could damage their confidence and overall transition process. Some people will be overly confident in their resume and interview skills, while others, especially women, will not be. During the uncertain process of career transition, the role of someone giving feedback is only to help improve a person's landing outcome, not harm it.

Nawalkha, Ajit. “Six Ways to Handle Tough Feedback Like a Pro.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 22 Oct. 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/10/22/six-ways-to-handle-tough-feedback-like-a-pro/?sh=1f75036131e9>.