

LCLD Fellows Webinar: Using Feedback to Achieve Excellence

Exercise #1: Leadership Interviews

The following is a recommended exercise for LCLD Fellows to complete before August 14, 2019 (the date of the second of the three webinars).

Objective: To increase your effectiveness by enhancing your understanding of how others see you

- (1) Chose 5-10 people who like and respect you.^{*}
 - a. You can choose friends, family, community members, work colleagues, bosses, subordinates, etc.
 - b. The ratio of personal to professional relationships is a personal decision.
 - c. As a general rule of thumb, choose 60% personal and 40% professional relationships.
 - d. Any interview will be valuable. So, don't worry about choosing the "right" people.
 - e. The most important thing is to choose people who like and respect you, at least to start.
 - f. If you feel ambitious, once you get comfortable with the process you can branch out and interview other people with whom you have a more complicated relationship.
 - g. If you feel nervous about having these conversations, start with the people who feel easiest.

^{*} Please note that this same basic interview format can be used to gather feedback from clients, address challenges with difficult people, or other situations. However, since those situations can be more delicate, the next webinar will provide additional guidance on how to prepare for those conversations as well as additional questions to ask.



(2) Logistics

- a. Conduct the interviews by phone, video conference or in person.
- b. Do not do the interviews by email or text.
- c. Interviews can be introduced and conducted in the same conversation or scheduled in advance.
- d. Many of the interviews can be conducted in 15 minutes. However, you should schedule 30 minutes to be safe. That way, if you get into a more in-depth discussion you won't need to cut it short.
- e. Be flexible. If the interviewee wants to discuss it over coffee, go have coffee. If the person wants you to send them the questions in advance, send them the questions. If the person wants to do it right there, on the spot, you can do so. A lot of people find it difficult to provide feedback to others, so do everything you can to make them comfortable.
- f. If the interviewee gets stuck or doesn't want to answer a particular question, don't worry about it. Just move on to the next question.

(3) Laying the foundation for the conversation

- a. Make sure that they know that this conversation is about you gaining a greater understanding of yourself, not a test of their love, a job requirement, or anything like that. Make sure they understand that you are asking for their feedback because they know you well, you respect them, you think they are smart, insightful, etc. (Use genuine reasons tailored to the particular person.)
- b. Make sure they know that this conversation is in service of a larger goal, for example, to become a leader in your organization, to become a rainmaker at your firm, to be a more effective manager, to make a difference in your organization or community, or simply to enhance your leadership skills. The specific goal you identify doesn't matter that much. The important part is that people understand that you are using their feedback for a purpose.
- c. Make sure that they know that you genuinely want to hear what they think and that anything they say, positive or constructive will be a real contribution to you and your growth.
- d. Example:

“I am participating in a leadership program and I’m doing a self-evaluation exercise. The idea is that in order to be an effective leader I need to understand how people see me. So, I’d like to ask you some questions to help me understand what you think works well and what isn’t as effective about how I operate in the world and interact with others. The reason I’m asking you is that we work closely together and I think of you as a very insightful person. Would you be willing to spend about 15 minutes answering some questions?”



At the beginning of the actual interview, again, set the stage:

“Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. I know it’s not always comfortable to offer feedback, especially constructive feedback. But I am really looking at expanding my leadership, and so everything you say, the positive comments, the constructive feedback, all of it will be helpful to me.”

- e. Saying simply, *“Could I interview you? I’m supposed to interview four people from work?”* could leave the interviewee with the impression that you are just doing a work assignment and they might be uncertain whether you are genuinely interested in what they have to say.

(4) Recommended questions

- a. Basic questions
 1. *What do you see as my strengths?*
 2. *What do you see as potential growth areas or things I could work on?*
 3. *What kind of first impression do I give?*
 4. *What does everyone know about me?*
 5. *What can I always be counted on for?*
 6. *What can I never be counted on for?*
 7. *What would be missing in our community if I were gone?*
 8. *If I were a food, what kind of food would I be, and why?*
 9. *Anything else you forgot to say or that I didn’t ask about that you wish I had?*
- b. Ask follow-up questions, as needed.
- c. Ask for examples. This is especially important if some of the feedback is surprising or causes discomfort.
- d. If you have a specific concern, ask about it. For example, *“Do you think I sometimes come across as _____?”*

(5) Thank them for their feedback

- a. Only people who are truly committed to your success in life would take the risk of giving constructive feedback.
- b. If they said anything that you might take as negative, make an extra effort to acknowledge them for their generosity.

(6) Notes and processing the feedback

- a. Take notes turning the interviews. To the degree that you can, write down what they say verbatim. This is particularly important if they say something that seems odd or that makes you to feel uncomfortable.

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- b. Keep a record of your notes, discuss them with your Accountability Partner(s) (APs) and bring them to the second webinar.
 - c. In the second webinar I will explain how to identify your “Essence” (the highest and best part of you) using the feedback from your leadership interviews.
 - d. Notice your reactions to the feedback. In the second webinar there will be a chance to discuss your experiences as well as to **share wins and inspire others** with the results of your interviews.

(7) Notice your reactions

- a. While 90% of the feedback tends to be positive, sometimes people react to comments in an unexpected way.
- b. You may find yourself judging people based on your perceptions of their insightfulness, honesty, etc.
- c. Practice just noticing your reactions, and putting aside your judgements.
- d. This is a great topic to discuss with your APs.
- e. Developing a greater capacity for getting into another person’s world and seeing things from their perspective is one of the valuable aspects of this exercise.

Your interviews will be inspiring and rewarding!

If you have any questions, please email me. The vast majority of the feedback people receive in the interviews is positive; and they find the process affirming and inspiring. Nevertheless, once in a blue moon a conversation goes awry. If that happens, please reach out to me. I would be happy to talk with you and help you address whatever concerns you may have.

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Accountability Partner Activity

The leadership interviews can be done entirely on your own, but they also provide a great opportunity to work with your LCLD Accountability Partner(s) (APs). Here are some recommended ways that you and your APs can engage with each other around the leadership interviews.

- Share with your APs your list of people to interview.
- Practice laying the foundation for the conversation.
 - You may want to mock the first part of the conversation, with your APs playing the part of the interviewee and providing feedback.
- Interview your APs.
 - This is an opportunity to practice and get comfortable with the interview process.
 - You may be surprised at how insightful people can be, even if they don't know you well!
 - Take notes and include this interview in the file along with your other interviews.
- Support each other to schedule and conduct the interviews.
- Talk through the feedback that you receive during the interviews.
- You may want to discuss the judgements and assessments that naturally arise in the course of doing the interviews.
 - Practice avoiding good/bad, right/wrong thinking.
 - Remember that both you and the person you are interviewing have valid perspectives. If they happen to be different, that is good news, because now you understand that person better than you did before.



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