

MILLENNIUM — Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century

Capsule #4—Providing
Performance Feedback

Facilitation and Self-Study Guide

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Looking to the Millennium

I remember 1970. I had just graduated from high school and was getting ready to head off to university. Leaving home seemed a wonderful adventure and I was filled with awe at the opportunities and anxiety at the uncertainty. I remember thinking how significant it was that this huge milestone in my life had fallen at the beginning of a new decade.

I also remember thinking that in 3 more decades—an eternity, it would be the end of the millennium. I thought of how funny it would be to be part of the graduating class in the year 2000. What would they be called? The class of zero?

And now, here we are. Eternity didn't really take very long at all. But in those thirty years it seems that everything has changed.

We used to pop popcorn on the stove. My children find this idea fascinating. “Why didn't you use the microwave?” they ask. We all worked in office buildings or factories. Now many of us run businesses in our homes or telecommute. We used to get a job and keep it forever. In 1970 people in the United States were amused by the little cars coming out of Japan and derided their quality. In 1970 there was no CNN. In 1970 there was no cellular telephone industry. In 1970 no one owned a home computer. A Macintosh was an apple—the kind you eat. The world was clearly divided into the good guys (us) and the bad guys (remember them?).

A millennium feels like something really big. Historically, that's been true. In the first century, paper was invented in China. It has taken 2000 years for us to develop a better medium for recording information. Around the same time, the city of London was founded by the Romans. Events happened of such tremendous historical and spiritual consequence that they still have a profound impact on our lives today.

So it is with those familiar feelings of awe at the opportunities mixed with anxiety at the uncertainty of it all that I look ahead at the millennium on whose doorstep we stand. Things will be profoundly different. They already are. Changes in how we do what we do happen at speeds that are mind-numbing.

Our organizations face these same forces. They are scrambling to redefine themselves so that they will remain relevant in a world that is in a state of constant, rapid flux. Charting the course, setting the mission, sharing a vision, opening to new learning have become the key skills that leaders need. But what does that mean on a day to day basis? How does being a LEADER change how you hire people? Or fire people? Or provide feedback? Or coach your team?

We need to create bridges between where we are coming from and where we are going. That is the purpose of this series. MILLENNIUM—Leadership Capsules for the 21st

Century is 7 short bridges linking management functions and leadership skills. Each 15 minute capsule is a thought provoking discussion of the issues managers, supervisors, team leaders and others playing a leadership role in their organizations face daily. They can be used as part of a comprehensive learning experience or as refresher material to revisit concepts already explored. They can be presented in a facilitated classroom setting or as part of a self-directed study program. They are versatile tools designed to support a wide range of learning situations.

In my collaboration with a team of extraordinary leaders, I've learned a tremendous amount while producing MILLENNIUM. I hope you will find the series as rewarding to work with as I have.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robt Rosell." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R" and a period at the end.

Robert Rosell
Producer

How to Use this Guide

Program Format

MILLENNIUM—Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century contains seven different programs:

- #1 Leadership Is . . .
- #2 The Leader as Coach
- #3 The Leader as Mentor
- #4 Providing Performance Feedback
- #5 Beginning Employment Relationships
- #6 Ending Employment Relationships
- #7 In Compliance

The material in the MILLENNIUM capsules looks at the practical skills that are necessary to be a leader in today's complex and ever changing world. It introduces viewers to the all-important notion that each of us, at one time or another, no matter what our position in an organization, must be leaders in the 21st century. Throughout the series, experts provide us with practical ideas about leadership, and help us prepare for the realities of leading in the next millennium. The material in this booklet supports the video capsule you will be using.

Using the Guide

The material in MILLENNIUM is complex and requires a good amount of reflection, and a willingness to practice known and new skills. For that reason each of the booklets is divided into three parts:

- Part One Reflecting on the Material Covered in the Leadership Capsule
- Part Two Discussing the Capsule
- Part Three Working with the Material Presented in the Capsule

The support material can be used in three different ways: for self-study, for team presentation and discussion, or for direct facilitation.

Self-Study Approach

If you are using this material for self-study, the best way to benefit from the topic being covered is to turn to Part One of the booklet and complete the exercises. Most of the exercises presented help you explore the topic through your own experiences and ideas. Continue with this approach by viewing the entire video capsule. Following the video, reflect on the questions in Handout 5 of the Guide, comparing your own ideas with those expressed by the experts in the video. You may prefer to continue by reading through Part Two, which is a synopsis of comments presented in the video. Move onto Part Three and complete the exercises.

Team Approach

A team would do best by following the self-study method outlined above. Each team member could individually complete the exercises presented in Part One, and then view the video together. Following seeing the video, the team could engage in a discussion of the material. This discussion can be facilitated by the questions and responses offered in Part Two. The team can elect to complete the follow-up exercises and activities in Part Three individually or as a group.

Facilitation Approach

If the MILLENNIUM series is used as a training, the method of how to use this book would vary slightly to those outlined previously. The facilitator of the training should view the video capsule first. Following the viewing of the video, (s)he can review the exercises in Part One. A decision can be made about how or if any of these exercises would be incorporated in the training presentation for the capsule. As a part of constructing the training design, the facilitator can elect which questions would be used for discussion. These can be found in Part Two. In the same way, the exercises offered in Part Three can be reviewed, and a decision made as to which ones would be incorporated into the training.

All exercises, activities, and discussion questions are sequentially presented to follow the presentation of the material in the video capsule. All printed materials for all three formats is contained in this booklet. Handouts for participants are located throughout the booklet.

The only additional materials needed for exercises and activities are either a black or white board or flip charts for writing observations or recording information from brainstorming or other activities.

Discussion Questions for the Capsules

A list of discussion questions is presented in the booklet. This page can be copied and distributed to participants when the program is being used for training. Part Two contains a summary of material covered in the program as it relates to these questions.

Handouts and Photocopying Rights

Handouts pages that are part of the training are located throughout the program booklets. There are approximately three to five activities contained in “Part Three: Working with the Material” section of each program booklet. Trainers need only to decide which of the activities and exercises would be relevant for individual distribution, and have copies made. With the purchase of the MILLENNIUM—Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century series, Quality Media Resources, Inc. grants you license to make as many copies of this guide or the handout pages as you need for your organization. However, copying the videos is illegal.

Bibliography for MILLENNIUM

The bibliography includes works that relate to leadership and working in the 21st century. It is not a definitive list, but rather is intended to assist individuals or teams of workers who are interested in expanding their understanding and knowledge about leadership, and related leadership topics for the 21st century workplace.

MILLENNIUM—Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century

Capsule #4—Providing Performance Feedback

Part One: Reflecting On How Leaders Provide Performance Feedback

This fourth capsule of MILLENNIUM deals with the following concepts:

- Uncovering and dealing with how I, as an individual, feel about performance feedback.
- Thinking through the process of how I can best provide feedback to others.
- Developing feedback communications skills.
- Uncovering the difference between performance feedback and performance evaluation.
- Considering the role of the leader in the feedback process.

Reflecting on Personal Ideas

Performance feedback. What's it all about? Granted the word performance makes it seem as if we were on stage. Only the stage looks different, and we aren't playing the lead in a successful Broadway play. Or, are we? It is not Broadway, but it might be the closest phenomenon we will experience to "The Smell of the Greasepaint, and the Roar of the Crowd." Success at work is our applause, the managers and leaders of our organization are the directors and producers, and our successful Broadway run, well, that's obviously the bottom line.

Very few actors, whether legitimate stage or film, walk away with a Tony or an Oscar for mediocre performances. We are finding that is also true in the work world. Our survival as an organization rests on the quality of our work. Each of us is being asked to give more of our talents, often with fewer co-workers, and many of us are doing tasks that we've never done before. The script is being written and rewritten as we are performing the play. Second City in Chicago and Saturday Night Live has provided us with a foundation of impromptu theater, but we know that this quick paced, think on your feet approach to entertainment has its drawbacks. Without stopping to playback our performance, and taking a serious look at what and how we are doing, we might find that our run will be much shorter than we anticipated. How do we avoid a "short-run?" Performance feedback.

The questions and exercises below are for everyone. It doesn't matter if you are a team member or the CEO of an organization. We all have been, and essentially all should be part of an on-going feedback process.

What Do I Feel about Others Telling Me About My Work?

Handout 1

If you're like most of us, the dreaded performance evaluation memo that tells us about our meeting with "the boss" means a slow swirling turn of the stomach, possibly sweating palms, and a minor low intensity pain located somewhere between the base of the neck to the upper forehead. What's this all about? Don't you think you do good work? Don't you get things done on time? Don't you contribute to the success of your team and your organization?

Let's stop for a moment. There is a lot of ammunition in those questions, and just maybe, the power of the questions is deeply embedded in something we don't often ask. Take a few moments and answer the questions below. Be straightforward in your replies. This exercise is to help you begin to take hold of the feedback process.

Tell It Like It Is

1. How do I feel when I'm receiving performance feedback?
2. If I'm doing my work well, why do I need performance feedback?
3. Have I ever really benefited from performance feedback?
4. How do I usually feel when I'm giving feedback to an employee or team member?
5. How do people respond to me when I provide them with performance feedback?
6. Do I give constructive, helpful feedback to my team members on a regular basis?
7. Am I comfortable receiving feedback from those who may be subordinate to me in the hierarchy of my organization?

How Would I Like to be Evaluated? Handout 2

If you are like most of the population of the world, your life is surrounded by contradictions. Why should we expect work to be different? On one hand we want to hear that we are doing good work. We want to hear it frequently. We want to hear it from many different people. On the other hand, we are often as uncomfortable with praise as we are with criticism.

Let's do some reflection on when someone told you about your work and you felt good about it? Hopefully this scenario has occurred often. Pick out one time. Take a few moments and reflect on when it happened. Who was involved? After you have taken the time to think about it, take a few moments to write in your responses to the questions below.

Talking about a Constructive Process

1. Was this a formal or informal performance feedback process?
2. What was said, and by whom, that made you feel that it was constructive feedback?
3. Was the information shared one-sided, or was it a dialogue?
4. What did you learn about yourself and your work because of this exchange?
5. How did you go about your work after this feedback?
6. How was follow-up conducted?

When Should Feedback Happen?

Handout 3

Remember there was reference above to a question that we don't often ask ourselves? It has to do with this contradiction we've been talking about. Don't tell me. Tell me. Don't tell me formally, once in awhile. Tell me frequently, in different ways.

We all want to know we are doing good work. We all need encouragement to know how our work is appreciated, and that we are going the extra mile. We all want feedback, even if we think we don't want it. We all need feedback on a consistent basis. The operative words here are feedback and consistent.

Let's look at the concept of time and feedback. Fill in the chart below.

Time Schedule of Performance Feedback

1. When was the last time I received performance feedback?	Date:
2. When was the last time our team took the time to assess our accomplishments or consider our problems?	Date:
3. When was the last time I gave feedback to an employee?	Date:
4. When was the last time I gave feedback to my supervisor or manager?	Date:

Are the results of this reflection expected, or surprising? Do you get enough feedback? Does it come on a regular basis? Is it planned? Is it spontaneous? What can you do if you aren't getting it? What can you do if you aren't giving it?

Who Should Give Feedback?

Handout 4

What have you learned so far?

- Feedback is important for your organization's success.
- Feedback is a process that keeps you on course.
- Feedback should be offered and received on a regular basis.

Who should give feedback? If you're a manager, then it is expected that you provide your unit and workers with evaluations. If you are the supervisor or have an administrative title, are you expected to give feedback? If you are the CEO or president of the organization, do you expect your supervisors and managers to take care of the feedback process? If you are a team member, should you be giving feedback to others on your team?

If any of us are going to meet with success in the next millennium we have got to take the best of what we have and see how it applies to what we are doing. Performance feedback is an excellent tool to help us assess where we are and how we improve. However, timing is critical, and who gives it and how it is given even more essential to success. Before we move on, answer the questions below.

Name Names

1. Who knows your work best?
2. Who can tell you what you know and don't know?
3. Who can tell you when you need help?
4. Who can tell you when you aren't doing your best work?
5. Who knows why you are meeting with success or wrestling with obstacles?

For many of you, the answer will be "you." Surprised? Shouldn't be. You are essential to the feedback process. Let's look at who else should be factored into this process.

Who Should Give Feedback?

Handout 4, page 2

Getting at Some More Names

1. Who can tell you how you communicate with your co-workers?
2. Who can let you know about how your final work product looks, is received, can be utilized?
3. Who can honestly tell you how you and your work are perceived beyond your immediate setting?
4. Who can help you build on your strengths and help you work with your areas of need?
5. Who can be somewhat objective in helping you grow in your work?

Are the names different this time? In a healthy situation, you can be your own best critic. Most of the time you know what is going on with you, and why you are working or not working to your full capacity. However, as is implied in the second set of questions, people with whom we work can be extremely helpful, even crucial in helping us see ourselves through a different lens, thus having acted as a catalyst to promote our growth in new directions.

Performance feedback should not simply be a rating scale that periodically gets put in your file. It is a communication process to help you keep challenging, changing and assessing your strengths and needs. If performance feedback is working to the optimum it involves everyone in the organization in a natural on-going basis. Effective communication is happening between team members, between managers and teams, between all levels within the organization.

What's the Role of the Leader in Performance Feedback?

Handout 5

Let's take a moment to envision the best of all worlds—a leader who knows how to give performance feedback. Take a few moments and jot down some responses to the questions below. These answers will help set the stage for program four in this series: "Providing Performance Feedback."

Good Performance Feedback

1. As a leader, what is expected of you when you are providing performance feedback?
2. How should the person you are assisting act towards you?
3. How will (s)he know that you have their best interest and growth in mind?
4. What do you expect to happen as a result of the feedback?
5. How do you expect to follow-up on the feedback?

Part Two: Watching the Video Capsule

Watch the video in its entirety. The questions below have been provided to help you center a discussion around the concepts it presents. When necessary restructure and add to the questions in order for the discussion to best suit your own organization.

1. Why do people dread performance feedback?

Too often the emphasis on performance feedback is placed on the mistakes that individuals make. For many people, performance feedback is associated with getting a “bad” report card, or a remembrance of being scolded by one’s parents.

Organizations need to shift the perception and mood around the process of giving and receiving feedback. Effective feedback should be an ongoing process of growth, improvement and reinforcement.

2. What’s performance feedback?

Performance feedback is a process that allows people to know how they are doing, rewards them for successes and strengths, and helps them develop new skills for the challenges they face. It corrects performance in need of improving and sustains positive performance.

Every opportunity that a leader has to communicate with his/her colleagues is an opportunity for feedback. Performance feedback is more than a manager to an employee, it also involves upward feedback. In the concept of a 360 degree performance assessment feedback is given by the leader, by team members, by customers, by subordinates. It is a total performance picture.

3. What is a performance appraisal?

Performance appraisals are usually an annual event. Managers monitor an employee for the entire year and then tell the employee about his/her work. This is a form of evaluation and is often tied to an employee’s compensation and advancement.

4. How do you best provide performance feedback?

Ideally, in order for performance feedback to be effective it should be a day to day occurrence— integrated into the operational fabric of business. When you wait to give feedback, you don’t remember nearly as well as when you communicate closer to the event you want to comment on. Feedback needs to be done as soon as possible after someone has done something good or after noticing a need for improvement.

5. What are the guiding principles for giving feedback?

Three key principles in the performance feedback process are:

- Maintain or enhance a person's self esteem.
- Provide empathy.
- Help the employee develop the solution.

6. What are the rules for giving feedback?

The most important rule for giving feedback is to be honest. Other rules require that good feedback is:

- Timely and specific.
- Behaviorally oriented.
- Given in a respectful way.
- Interactive
- Supportive of the person

7. What happens when feedback is not given?

If you don't ensure that feedback is given in your organization, people will be adrift. They won't know how they are doing. This is unfair to good performers as they feel doubtful about their work. It is unfair for poor performers who are allowed to continue to get further off target in their work. Essentially without giving feedback you are asking people to perform in the dark. Without feedback there is ambiguity. People will decide how they are doing with limited information. Not giving feedback is the biggest mistake made in the performance feedback process.

8. Who should provide feedback to whom?

Traditionally feedback was a top down process but this is inadequate. In the 21st century the feedback process will be seen as a communications process truly moving in all directions. Three hundred sixty-degree feedback has us learning from our peers, our subordinates and people up the chain of command. The more sources we use the better served we all will be.

9. How does providing feedback fit into a person's role as a leader?

Without performance feedback a leader does not help an individual or the organization to learn and improve performance. A leader needs to model performance feedback, giving feedback to people so they know how they are doing relative to the expectations set, making sure people have resources to meet expectations and modeling how to receive feedback.

Performance feedback and development feedback are partners. Performance feedback without development and career feedback is reality without hope. In the past performance appraisals or counseling was something done to get someone out the door. The law requires it. However, in the 21st century we need to think about performance feedback as a way to keep employees in the door. Leaders should give employees feedback to help them succeed, not to help them fail.

Surveys have shown that one of the primary motivators for employees' high performance is realizing they can make a difference. Employee feedback provides an opportunity for individuals to understand how to make that difference.

Part Three: Working with the Material

Focusing on Strengths

Handout 7

There is an old story that people have been relating for years about the Viennese psychiatrist, Alfred Adler. Adler was a colleague of Sigmund Freud and Gustav Jung. He believed that individuals were social beings and needed to feel a sense of belonging. Without belonging, Adler felt people became more discouraged, and far less productive. Throughout his career Adler worked with children.

The story goes that a teacher asked Adler to come into her class. She was having a problem with a young boy. He was so mischievous and consistently out of line that the teacher was at a loss as to what to do with him. In exasperation she remarked to Adler, “He does nothing correctly, you can’t even read his penmanship.” Adler took up the challenge, and visited the teacher’s classroom, and found that the woman did not exaggerate nearly as much as he had thought she had. Adler watched the boy, trying to find something that he did well. Then it happened, he saw. Out of all the scribbling on his page, he recognized that the boy had constructed his written “o” legibly. Adler spoke to the child. “You made a nice ‘o.’ ” “Where,” said the boy? Adler took off his wire-rimmed glasses and pointed to the letter. The boy leaned forward and peered at the “o”. “It’s good” said Adler. “Yes, it is,” said the boy.

Adlerians use this story to help people see the importance of encouragement, honesty and helping people build on their strengths. The young child in the story was so discouraged that he even found it difficult to believe that he could do anything correctly. The important lesson to be learned in this story is that Adler found something that the child did right. He didn’t invent it. He didn’t say something he didn’t mean, and something that the boy could question.

Consider giving feedback to someone you work with, someone that is above or below you in rank. Fill in the information below:

Who is the person?

What event are you providing feedback on?

What was done right?

What kind of encouragement can you offer?

What are this person’s strengths?

How can you help them to continue to build on these strengths?

Managing Weaknesses

Handout 8

“I can’t do it! I just can’t!” Not everyone is so vocal about what they can’t do. There are all kinds of reasons for having weaknesses. Some of us are afraid that if we tackle something we don’t know how to do, we just won’t do it perfectly. Others of us need a blueprint. Without it we feel that we are bound to fail. As a leader you are going to have to help people over these hurdles. There is a guidepost to follow. Another psychiatrist, Rudolph Dreikurs, a student of Adler, coined a phrase: “The courage to be imperfect.” Dreikurs used to coach his interns by saying, “Try, take a guess, say it is a guess.”

As leaders we need to get people on a positive course. We need to help them face weaknesses, and we need to help them make guesses about why they think they have these weaknesses, but more specifically we need to help them manage their weaknesses and work to turn them into new skills. How is this done through the feedback process? Honestly, respectfully, openly, thoughtfully and with a sense of purpose.

Think about giving feedback to someone who is not working up to expectation. Work out the situation below by using a personal example.

- What is the weakness that is a concern to you?

- How can you say that you are concerned about this weakness in a respectful and helpful way? (Be specific. “You aren’t contributing to the team’s effort” is a difficult statement for someone to hear. Reformat the weakness. “I am concerned when you don’t get your reports in on time” refocuses the concern as a problem.)

- How can you offer this person encouragement to change the way they have done things in the past?

Guideposts for Receiving Feedback Handout 11

Giving feedback and receiving it can be a sensitive thing. It is a skill. Like all skills it needs to be practiced in order to be perfected. Brainstorm with your team the attitudes people must adopt in order to receive feedback, the reasons it is difficult to deal with this attitude, and the reasons for changing your attitude. A few are suggested below.

Guideposts for
Receiving Feedback

Why is it Difficult?

Listen, be open
to information

=====

Avoid being defensive

Ask for help

Respond positively

Questions for Watching the Video

Handout 6

1. Why do people dread performance feedback?
2. What's performance feedback?
3. What is a performance appraisal?
4. How do you best provide performance feedback?
5. What are the guiding principles for giving feedback?
6. What are the rules for giving feedback?
7. What happens when feedback is not given?
8. Who should provide feedback to whom?
9. How does providing feedback fit into a person's role as a leader?

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