

DEVELOPING FEEDBACK CULTURE AS PART OF CLIENT WORK

Case Creative Agency X

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Abstract

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Title of publication DEVELOPING FEEDBACK CULTURE AS PART OF CLIENT WORK Case Creative Agency X		
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Abstract <p>The purpose of feedback is development and learning - at every level; organizational, team or individual. Feedback impacts also motivation, creativity and engagement. Feedback culture is related to organizational culture and includes how feedback is given, received, and sought every day, as well as a shared vision of the ideal feedback. Feedback practices build the feedback culture every day.</p> <p>This thesis consists of work-oriented development research, where the target is to drive change for better feedback culture and practices in a creative agency. The aim was to find solutions for developing feedback culture and practices as part of client work.</p> <p>This thesis consists of two parts: research and development. First, the research part studied employees' experiences about feedback culture. This was conducted with semi-structured focus interviews, which were clustered with content analysis and visualized as a feedback journey with a mapping tool. The second, development work part included an online questionnaire and co-creation workshop. The online survey was designed to validate interview results and collect new information and experiences about remote work. The co-creation workshop facilitated ideas about chosen focus points. Employees exchanged ideas and developed them further as well as voted for the best ones for future implementation.</p> <p>The results were ideas for more regular feedback practices, on how to involve more client feedback, on how to develop retrospective meetings and how to increase the amount of positive feedback. All the ideas were good suggestions for developing feedback culture as part of client work. Suggestions were created to work in a hybrid working model with an increased amount of remote work.</p>		
Keywords feedback, feedback culture, customer feedback, client work, development, learning, motivation, positive organization culture, strengths		

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and frame for this thesis development research

Developing feedback culture as a part of client work is the main focus of this thesis. From this viewpoint there are many concepts and definitions under it.

Feedback in terms of the working environment is information about performance or behavior. The' purpose of feedback is development and learning - on every level; organizational, team or individual. Feedback also drives motivation, creativity and engagement. Feedback culture is related to organizational culture and includes how feedback is given, received, and sought every day, as well as a shared vision of the ideal feedback. Feedback practices, on the other hand, build the feedback culture every day.

The close tie between organizational and feedback culture, expands the perspective to leadership, other organizational practices like teamwork or remote work, and overall understanding of positive change and development. To be able to change the organization's feedback culture toward more positive, there needs to be willingness to see people's strengths, talents and nurture their motivation and well-being. A positive working environment creates an opportunity for better feedback culture, one that can handle constructive feedback, too. External stakeholders such as clients can also impact feedback culture and they should be included in the processes.

This thesis consists of work-oriented development research, where the target has been to drive change for better feedback culture and practices in a creative agency. The thesis has been done as an assignment for a creative agency. The company is called Creative X for the purposes of this thesis. The aim was to find solutions to develop feedback culture and practices as part of client work at Creative X. The benefits are in three levels: employee, organizational and client. For employees to have more specific feedback about work, it gives an opportunity for personal development while working in client teams. Rich and interactive feedback culture sparks motivation, engagement and better relationships with clients for both employees and organization. Creating feedback practices that involve more client feedback, organizations can achieve better client satisfaction and performance. For clients, an improved feedback culture in a creative agency should bring more quality results and services.

In general, this thesis gives an overview of how, by developing the organization's feedback culture with positivity, it is possible to light up employees' motivation, engagement and learning and also possibly increase client loyalty and satisfaction.

1.2 Creative X and background information

Creative X is an agency in the field of strategy, marketing and communications. The company is a middle size company with approx. 80-130 employees working under 5 different units. When providing services to their customers they work in client teams that are formed by employees with different professions and units, depending on the client's needs. The number of people in client teams can vary from 2-3 up to 20+ people and projects range from small one-time cases to longer, ongoing projects with a continuous customer relationship.

The focus of the thesis research and development work has been on the feedback culture and practices of the client teams. The need for developing the feedback culture has arisen from Creative X's personnel questionnaires (APPENDIX 1) and overall need to bring more feedback practices into the client team process from all perspectives – those of management, employees and clients.

The personnel questionnaires indicated that employees felt they did not get enough feedback during the everyday work, especially the positive feedback might be lacking, and more concrete constructive feedback was wanted. People wanted more opportunities to develop themselves in work, but they didn't see daily work as a possibility for that. From the management side of client team processes, the retrospective meetings (retros) and clients' feedback during the process needed development. The developing aspects were feedback practices as an internal process in client teams as well as how to include more client feedback generally.

1.3 Research questions, target and design of this thesis

Background from personnel questionnaires made it clear that there was a need to develop feedback culture in client teams. This practical development need combined with the theoretical background, about the importance of feedback culture and practices for organizations and employee performance (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 33), motivation (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 3), well-being and engagement at work (Ackermann 2020) and crucial customers feedback (Walker 2017, 6), led to the development research design of this thesis. The premier idea was that with positive feedback culture and better feedback practices in organization, teams and employees will have better performance for clients. At the same time, it will create more developing and learning possibilities, motivation, engagement and well-being in everyday work.

Research questions and the main target of the thesis

There were two specific research questions posed for this thesis development research work, in order to study and develop the feedback culture and practices as a part of client work at Creative X.

1. How to develop feedback culture as part of client work - on all levels of client team management, for both employees and clients?
2. How to make feedback a more regular part of client team practices?

The first target of this thesis was to create a feedback toolkit to be used in the client team process (picture 1). The idea was based on the need for more structured tools for feedback, as long as the tools would not completely control processes in client teams. Client team processes vary so much from each other (number of people involved, time of the process as well as economics).

The toolkit required tools for all employee levels, for getting clients more involved in the feedback process; tools to spark off a better feedback culture which encourages communications.

Picture 1. Thesis - first development research design and target.



The target of this thesis changed after the research phase, because there was a big change in the working model of Creative X (Chapter 5.2.). The new target became providing top ideas for developing feedback culture and practices in connection with the new working model including more remote work. The research questions stayed the same and were still relevant even when the developing part and target changed.

Design of the research and development work

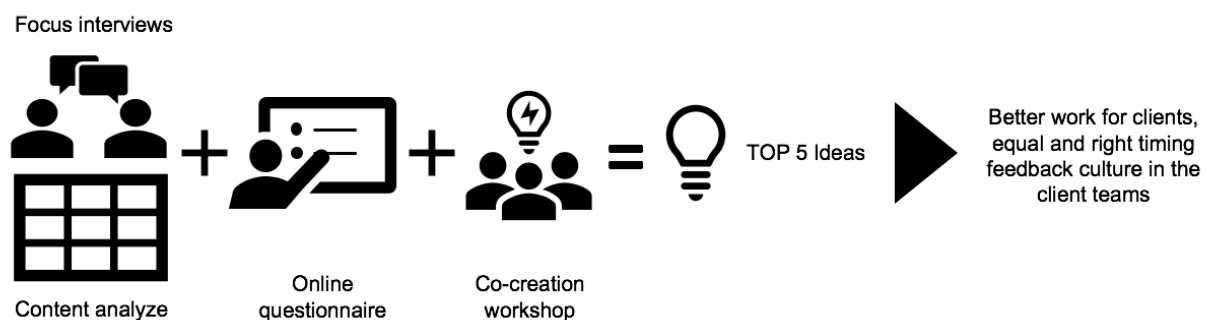
To be able to answer the research questions, this thesis was designed to have two parts. In research part one, the aim was to study the feedback culture in the client teams from the perspective of employees. Part two included developing work with employees from Creative X, first developing Plan A, eventually developing Plan B.

The aim of the second part was originally to (Development Plan A), starting with choosing development areas, based on research. Best practices would then be put together and a toolkit created, for test use. The plan was to test the toolkit in 2-3 client assignments and to do observations from kick-offs to retros, to collect feedback, and fine tune the tools if needed.

Because of the impact of the Corona- virus pandemic, the development part of this thesis changed (Development Plan B). The focus for Development Plan B was to co-create new ideas on how the feedback culture could work better in the client teams, with a new working model which included more remote work. Development Plan B is discussed more in depth in Chapter 5.2.

The process and final target of this thesis are presented in picture 2.

Picture 2. Final design, process, research, development work and target of thesis.



A qualitative approach offers insight for feedback culture and practices

The research methods for this thesis were chosen together with Creative X. Because in this study the target was to understand employees' experiences more deeply - how they feel about the feedback culture and practices as part of client teamwork, and how they interpret their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 24) - qualitative research methods were chosen. In qualitative research, the overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences, and this study was interested in understanding the meaning of the feedback culture phenomenon as well as feedback practices (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 24).

The first research part was conducted with semi structured focus interviews, analyzed and clustered with content analysis and mapping tools, that supported the in-depth interviews (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 122). These in-depth focus interviews were chosen for the gathering of information about the specific topics and the open questions, which allows for a more conversational style interview and a possibility for the interviewer to ask refining questions (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 122, Walle 2014, 72).

The second part (Developing Plan B) included an online questionnaire and a co-creation workshop. The online survey was designed to validate and view the results of qualitative interview data in a quantitative manner (Walle 2014, 16) and for collecting new information and experiences about remote work. In the co-creation workshop employees exchange ideas and develop them together and vote for the best ones, which are to be implemented in the future (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 179). The research as well as analyzing and developing methods, alongside with the process, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

2 LEADING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN AN ORGANIZATION

2.1 The Learning Organization

The learning organization is a concept or phenomenon that became popular 1990 when Peter Senge published his book, *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*. The learning organization is a group of people working together to get results that they think are meaningful by enhancing (enchanting) their skills and abilities. Senge (Senge 2006, 129-256) proposed the learning organization has five characteristics: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning.

How the term 'learning organization' has developed varies according to references used and is not easily defined nowadays. It has two different developmental approaches (Örtenblad 2018, 150-152). One approach is using it for "organized learning", when an organization has certain learning activities. According to the other approach, the term simply means an organization where learning is taking place. The one important character of the learning organization is that the entirety of the company, unit or group is part of the learning process, rather than only individuals. There needs to be an organizational extent of learning for the term 'learning organization' to be applicable (Örtenblad 2018, 152, Sarder 2016, 28).

Örtenblad (2018, 152) summarizes four elements that are in place in a learning organization: learning at work, climate for learning, organizational learning and learning structure or learning organization concept. Learning at work implies that there are ways how employees learn at the workplace through working tasks. Learning climate involves that there are tools and opportunities for learning. Failures are regarded as a learning opportunity and employees and teams are encouraged to experiment and reflect on their work. Like Sarder (2016, 28) also writes, the third element means that the organizational aspect needs to be related to learning. Last the learning organization concept indicates that a reasonable standard is set for the learning organization (Örtenblad 2018, 155). Sarder (2016, 28) defines a learning organization according to how it is valuing and supporting organization learning all the way from leaders to employees. Learning should be part of organization culture and practices: the decision-making process, addressing problems, sharing information, organization structure and the physical space of the organization. Knowledge cannot be stored, and learning is a social or cultural action – all learning is considered as context dependent (Örtenblad 2018, 153).

There is ongoing discussion and criticism on whether the learning organizations' original concept and later variants are of use anymore, in today's business world (Mak & Hong

2020,235, Hansen, Jensen & Nguyen 2019, 65, Örtenblad 2018, 155). The doubts are concerning, for example, usefulness and practicability, universality, cultural aspects and the lack of external stakeholders in the concept (Mak & Hong 2020, 235, Hansen, Jensen & Nguyen 2019, 65). Two major problems were detected with existing and traditional learning organization models: practicability or implementation problems and ignoring the external stakeholders. It is unclear how external stakeholders influence organizational learning (Mak & Hong 2020, 235-237).

Barriers for the learning organization have been found at organizational, group or individual levels. External challenges may arise from rapidly changing and highly competitive environments, differences in economics, education, employment, social status, generation and income levels and cultural differences (Mak & Hong 2020, 237-238, Sarder 2016, 25). Organizational variations include strategy, organization structure and culture, company size, resources availability and technology. Group variations include differences in the team structure, team climate, member characteristics, leadership style and team processes (Mak & Hong 2020, 238).

The learning organization in 2020s

Despite the debate whether the concept of the learning organization is still needed in the 2020s, learning is still a key element for enhancing long-term performance in business (Xie 2020, 224). Learning organizations stay ahead of the competition and are able to provide innovative products and services. Inefficient practices and problems are addressed quickly, operating is efficient. Learning organizations have better abilities to attract and retain the best employees and support employees in becoming better at what they do (Sarder 2016, 25-26).

Learning happens all the time and a big part of it goes easily unnoticed and should not be limited to specific objectives. People constantly learn from what they read, see or feel, from everyday experiences. Learning happens in interactions with others in a social context (Sarder 2016, 27). That is why Mak & Hong (2020, 236) were proposing that in this era, learning organizations should take the two following actions. Firstly, they should adopt a contextualized and social perspective. Secondly, the organizations should try to embrace a multi-stakeholder perspective. This allows for better ideas for maximizing outcomes, for developing dialogue and creates understanding of and reflection on others' perspectives and experiences (Mak & Hong 2020, 241). In the innovation process e.g., external stakeholders must be involved (Hansen, Jensen & Nguyen 2019, 65).

Collaboration between organizational actors and diverse key stakeholders are easy to carry through with digital and virtual opportunities.

There exists no one learning organization model for all organizations, but the benefits are clear if an organization is capable of supporting constant learning and development on all levels of the organization and including external stakeholders in the process. Even if the concept is still evolving it can be applicable, if it is based on the five elements from Senge (systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning). When learning is happening in a social context and in interaction with others, and it happens on all levels of the organization, it will offer organizational purpose and value. Creating practices that support learning and development on all levels provides possibilities for better performance in competitive business.

2.2 Motivation, positivity and strengths

It is a minimum expectation that an organization is profitable. Highly effective organizations go beyond this: they benefit and create well-being to all stakeholders, including customers, investors as well as employees (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 20).

People require motivation and feedback in order to learn and develop continuously. Organizations need to understand the basis of motivation to nurture their employees' motivation and engagement. Positivity and a strength-based approach, together with understanding motivation, offer perspectives for creating well-being and success – both on the individual and organizational level (Oades et al. 2017, 2)

Motivation – inner power for better performance

Understanding motivation can benefit organizations so that they may improve employees' productivity and satisfaction, as well as set goals and structure work in a way that offers optimal levels of challenge, control, variety and collaboration (Souders 2020). Considering the aspect of motivation helps to create policies, practices, and environments that promote wellness and high-quality performance (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 19). Taking motivation into account places focus on social and cultural factors that facilitate or weaken people's willingness and initiative at work. In addition, this influences employees' well-being and the quality of their performance (CSDT, 2020).

Motivation is individual and different things motivate different people. There is no one single strategy that would be the most effective way to motivate all employees (Souders

2020). Understanding the basics for creating and nurturing people's motivation can help to create organizational culture and practices that make employees thrive. Autonomously motivated employees have less work absences and they are more likely to be more committed to their organization (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 3).

Self-determination theory behind motivation

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a meta-theory for motivation, and it has evolved from intrinsic and extrinsic motivations research (CSDT, 2020, Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 20). The idea is based on the premise that people are active and have a tendency to go toward growing and mastering challenges, as well as to combine these new experiences into their sense of self. But this process is not automatic, it needs ongoing nutrients and support from the social context. This dialect between the nature of people and the social context is the basis for SDT's predictions about behavior, experience, and development (CSDT, 2020).

In using the idea of SDT to develop organizational culture, practices and performance, there are two aspects to be wary of. The first one is that employees can experience different types of motivation in their work: autonomous motivation (intrinsic and identified) and controlled motivation (extrinsic and introjected) (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 1). The second is that all employees have three basic psychological needs - autonomy, competence, and relatedness (CSDT, 2020, Manganelli, et al. 2018, 1, Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 22). When the basic needs are satisfied, this promotes autonomous motivation, high-quality performance, and wellness (CSDT, 2020, Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 19) and leads to positive individual and organizational outcomes (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 1).

Autonomous motivation happens when people are engaged with willingness, volition, and choice. Often these activities are intrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivation comes to exist when the motivation lies in the behavior itself (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 20). Controlled motivation, on the other hand, is usually regulated externally by others or by fears and negative effects. Extrinsically motivated behavior involves doing an activity to achieve exact results often through possible rewards and threats (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 21).

For employees, interesting and challenging activities are often rewarding in themselves (Souders 2020) and are not necessarily externally rewarded or supported, but they can nurture passion, creativity, and continuous efforts (CSDT, 2020). When people understand the purpose of the job, feel autonomy, receive clear feedback and support,

they are more likely to be autonomously motivated (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 20). This could lead them to perform and learn better at the workplace. Extrinsic motivation is best when used for routine tasks or algorithmic activities but can be harmful for creative attempts (Souders 2020). External regulation can motivate specific behaviors, but in the long term it reduces autonomous motivation and well-being, sometimes with effects spreading throughout the whole organization (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 21).

The psychological basic needs - autonomy, competence and relatedness

The concepts of basic psychological needs in SDT are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The satisfaction of these three needs is essential for psychological health and well-being and facilitate effective workplace functioning (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 4, Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 22). If any of these three psychological needs is unsupported or thwarted it will have a harmful impact on wellness at the workplace (CSDT, 2020).

Manganelli, et al. (2018, 4) describes what the basic psychological needs mean in a social context of work. The need for autonomy includes that people must have a chance to say how their work should be done and be able to honor their values and act by them. Competence specifies that employees understand that their work is important and leads to significant results. Relatedness is the willingness to have meaningful relationships with others. Conditions, policies and practices supporting these experiences at work promote autonomous forms of motivation, engagement including improved performance, persistence, and creativity (CSDT, 2020, Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 38).

For the purposes of this thesis, the word 'motivation' is used instead of 'SDT'.

Positivity creates well-being and engagement in the organization

Positive psychology is an approach in the study of human thoughts, feelings, and behavior, with a focus on strengths and building the good in life (Ackerman, 2020b). The key outcome and topics in positive psychology are well-being including elements of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Green et al. 2017, 11-13, Oades et al. 2017, 2). Green et. al (2017, 13) writes that positivity helps people to see new possibilities, have more resilience, connect more deeply with others, and reach their potential better.

Positive psychology in the organizational context is increasingly studied. Ackerman, (2020b) lists three ways in which studies have found positive psychology to improve the

workplace. Positive emotions increase job performance. Positive emotions are contagious, which means one positive person or team extends feelings and atmosphere through the organization. Small, simple actions can have a big impact on happiness at the workplace. Positivity has a lot to offer for employees and organizations and it is associated with valuable outcomes such as prosocial behavior (e.g., helping, sharing and co-operating), group development, and learning (Green et al. 2017, 11-12).

Daily experiences of positive emotions at work have been found to be related to the work environment (e.g., autonomy, psychological climate of warmth and cooperation) and personal resources of optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Green et al. 2017, 19). Positive work identities are closely connected to employees' engagement in work activities (Souders 2020b). Employees experiencing positive emotions are more helpful to customers, more creative, more thoughtful, and respectful to one another (Green et al. 2017, 19).

Strengths approach, and particularly character strengths are one of key processes of positive psychology (Oades et al. 2017, 2). Strength-based approach can be viewed from the perspective of individuals or organizational.

The strength-based approach in the organization

Strengths and character strengths are skills that can be learned. Character strengths are shown in feelings, behavior and thoughts. The strengths-based approach helps well-being and success also in organizations (Oades et al. 2017, 2).

An employee's work-identity can become positive through a focus on strengths (Souders 2020b). Knowing one's own strengths is part of self-knowledge and development and helps to choose the direction of personal development (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 97). It allows for effective career choices, picking daily tasks that support one's strengths, increasing work engagement and letting the employee shine (Souders 2020b). The opportunity to utilize the individual's strengths at work facilitates the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and nurtured autonomous motivation (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 9).

The benefits of using an individual's strengths in the work environment include at least increased happiness and well-being, more positive experiences at work, better goal progress and work performance (Souders 2020b). For organizations, it is also vital to understand and apply own organizational strengths (Ackermann 2020). Organizational strengths are the things that are done well, e.g., ability to incorporate feedback from customers to benefit success. In a competitive environment organization need to pay

attention to their own strengths, not only identifying them but finding opportunities to apply them to their advantage (Ackermann 2020).

There are three explanations as to how and why positivity elevates organizational performance: amplifying effects, buffering effects, and heliotropic effects (Green et al. 2017, 23). Amplification is achieved through positive practices which create positive emotions and lead to elevated individual performance in organizations. Positive workplace practices buffer the organization and increase resilience in individuals. Heliotropic effects suggests that positivity is a response to systems where all living things move toward positive energy and away from negative energy (Green et al. 2017, 24). Positive relationships are crucial to thriving organizations, leading to better cooperation and the facilitation of learning (Souders 2020b).

Positive practices that are positively correlated with business outcomes include caring friendships, compassionate support for others, fostering forgiveness and respect, honesty and gratitude, inspiring each other and an emphasis on meaningful work (Green et al. 2017, 20). Ackermann (2020) also adds the strengths-based approach, i.e., giving feedback, to the list of positive practices for the development of employees.

2.3 Leadership that creates positive change

To lead the organization towards better performance, better learning and be able to influence the positive change in people and processes, leaders play a critical role in organizations. Leaders significantly impact how employees feel at work. The ability to generate positive emotions in their teams is also crucial to organizational effectiveness (Green et al. 2017, 22).

The most impactful ways to strengthen and build a thriving organization are creating organizational practices that build autonomy, competence, and provide a sense of belonging (Souders 2020) as well as encouraging employees' openness to change (Green et al. 2017, 22). The two leadership styles that have been mostly recognized to create positive change, learning, motivation and performance are transformational leadership and servant leadership (Ackerman 2020, Xie 2020, Manganelli, et al. 2018, 6220, Park & Kim 2018, 1408, Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 32, Green et al. 2017, 22, MacKie 2017, 297, Men and Stacks 2013, 174). Also, the ethical leader (Moss et al. 2020, 626) as well as authentic and positive leaders (MacKie 2017, 297) have been connected to a thriving organizational culture.

Authenticity has been suggested to be at the core of positive models of leadership, such as transformational, ethical, and servant leadership (MacKie 2017, 297). Ethical leadership drives employees' duty orientation and has a direct positive effect on employees' feedback-seeking behaviors (Moss et al. 2020, 626). For leadership to be truly positive, regardless of style, three elements need to be included: focus on strengths, having a positive impact on employees and being able to pursue goals and objectives that are honest and ethical (MacKie 2017, 297).

Transformational and servant leaderships

Transformational leadership influences employees' attitudes, behaviors, and overall organizational assumptions (Xie 2020, 220). Transformational leaders lead by empathy, relationship building and innovation. This happens through four dimensions: firstly, affecting others by being a great role model. Secondly, creating inspiration and motivation through communicating expectations and purposes. Thirdly, through intellectual stimulation and promoting both intelligence and rationality. Finally, through personal attention and individualized consideration (Park & Kim 2018, 1409). Positive emotions are also related with transformational leadership (Green et al. 2017, 22). Transformational leaders include the elements of participative decision making and the sharing of power (Men and Stacks 2013, 174).

The key characteristics of servant leadership are to lead followers' well-being and offering them possibilities to reach their full potential (Dierendonck 2011, 1232). Listening is the servant leader's superpower (Xie 2020, 222). Other characteristics are empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community (Dierendonck 2011, 1232). Compassion and humanity have a strong emphasis in servant leadership. The followers come first, and servant leaders support their personal growth and development (Xie 2020, 220).

Promoting motivation and basic needs

Leadership that promotes a working environment which supports and satisfies all three of the employees' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) highly correlates with employees' motivation (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 1, Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 23). This can be structured with job design, interpersonal relationships and leadership, and compensation (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 1). Leaders that support autonomy in general are also supportive of the other needs. This leads to a sense of independence

and employees find themselves ways to get the other needs satisfied (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 23).

With empowering and autonomy-supportive managers as well as coworkers who are supportive of relatedness, employees are more autonomously motivated and creative in their work. Vice versa, managers causing pressure led to less motivated and creative employees (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 26). At least transformational and other authentic leaderships can help satisfy employees' psychological needs and increase autonomous regulation (Manganelli, et al. 2018, 6).

Leadership in a learning organization

Learning organization theories usually put leadership and management in focus (Mak & Hong 2020, 236). Leadership factors, attitude variables and individual behavior are forerunners of organizational learning (Park & Kim 2018, 1408). Deep understanding of the complexity and differences in a big picture are essential when leading a learning organization to success. Differences among stakeholders and employees lead to different types of opportunities and barriers (Mak & Hong 2020, 236). Trust between people, open communication and knowledge sharing predict organizational learning (Park & Kim 2018, 1408). In a knowledge-based organization value is created from knowledge and individuals need to engage in knowledge sharing and creation (Stenius 2016, 21-22).

Transformational leadership and servant leadership both have a positive impact on learning and a learning organization. Transformational leaders make the difference through organizational change and they help employees to reach collective goals. Servant leaders build the learning culture through encouraged experimentation (Xie 2020, 223). For organizational learning, transformational leadership is as a key determinant (Park & Kim 2018, 1409).

Despite of the leadership style definitions, the leader of a learning organization or team needs to be communicative and support an environment or a culture that attracts the best performing employees. Communicative leader invests in dialogue, actively gives and seeks feedback, believes and practices participative decision making and is generally open and involved (Johansson, Miller & Hamrin 2014, 155). When changing the organizational culture, one aspect to consider is change processes: decision making, rewards, communications and other organizational practices rooted in the culture. The second aspect is changing the way employees are seen as individuals (Eaton 2015, 48).

The organization culture needs to support personal development

Business has become more personal (Eaton 2015, 46-47) and organizational strategy and leading should focus on increasing employee knowledge and skills (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 1). In rapidly changing and competitive environments companies need to attract the best talents and drive employees' ability to learn, innovate, and adapt to changing realities (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 1). The organization culture should attract the best employees and embrace their personal learning and development (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 1, Eaton 2015, 48). Organizational culture is embedded in values, assumptions, behaviors and attitudes. The core which makes the company unique are its people (Eaton 2015, 47). Healthy organization culture encourages people to share their talents and employees are mentored in the areas which they can improve (Kamin 2013, 46).

It is important for both the business and individuals how an organization culture appears through its leaders (Eaton 2015, 46). As a leader, knowing your own and followers' strengths helps you get the right employees on your team, and catering to the basic psychological needs of your followers (Ackerman 2020). Work engagement is a key to success and keeping the talents motivated. For employees to feel relevance, to feel inspired and motivated in their work, the following are needed: understandable and reachable goals that are challenging enough, responsibility and independence to do your work, as well as possibility to have plenty of feedback (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 17).

Support the growth mindset

Tulgan (2015, 89) writes that best performers are usually so good because they are always working systematically and consistently on trying to get better. The best ones engage in regular, smart, purposeful practices with regular scrutiny and course-correcting feedback from someone they respect and trust (Tulgan 2015, 89, Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 101). Seeking the feedback is self-leading (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 101). The best performers usually also have a mindset that supports goals.

People's mindset orientation is one of the explanations for achievement, ability, and performance in working life. Lyons & Bandura (2018, 1) write about how all people hold their own story and theory about who we are. These beliefs have a strong influence on how we think and behave. There are two common self-theories that people hold regarding personality and learning: fixed or growth mindset.

The employees with a growth mindset set more learning goals. Making learning goals usually indicates higher intrinsic motivation and these individuals are strategically focused on improving performance (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 2). The growth mindset is also associated with more resilience. These employees are not discouraged by setbacks or failures.

The best performing employees and talents are usually growth-oriented mindsets and are self-regulating learners. They are motivated learners and take actions to improve knowledge, skill, or understanding. Leaders and managers should embrace employees' growth mindsets with coaching, developing practices and behaviors that support self-regulated learning (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 2-3). An individual's self-esteem is built through experiences, also at the workplace (Kamin 2013, 47) and all employees need supportive experiences.

2.4 Teamwork – more than the sum of its participants

Well-functioning teamwork increases work satisfaction, autonomy and performance. Teams are possibly the primary unit in high-performance organizations (Ruch et al. 2018). What individuals learn at work is stored also in a form of organizational memory (Örtenblad 2018, 152). The organizational memory, for example in the form of teams, works as a basis for further learning and is constantly updated.

For successful teams, the composition of the team is an important factor (Ruch et al. 2018). Team roles are positively related to – and well explained by – character strengths. Strengths like teamwork, enthusiasm, optimism, an energetic approach to work, and positive expectations concerning the outcomes are key characteristics that are common to all team roles (Ruch et al. 2018). When designing teams, positive psychology constructs such as strengths, might help to succeed.

Team leaders matter when building a great performing team. Great team leaders create an environment in which people can easily collaborate and take risks (Kamin 2013, 45). Sarder (2016, 28) argues that the leaders of a team should strive to communicate their vision clearly and encourage continuous learning. They should share information and keep the channels of communications open, promote equality of team members and flatten hierarchies, as well as remove unnecessary rules. Great leaders listen, include all perspectives and make space for each voice. They involve employees in the decisions that affect their work (Ackerman 2020, Sarder 2016, 28). They understand team members' unique strengths and weaknesses as well as personalities (Ackerman 2020). They want to

learn from mistakes and see problems as opportunities and encourage reflection (Sarder 2016, 28).

Great team leaders promote followers to help the team 'do well' through increasing feedback-seeking behavior (Moss et al. 2020, 627). Engagement in teamwork is about back-and-forth dialogue and challenge response. Using questions and listening to hear and not just validate your own opinion are keys to building an engaged environment in which people begin to feel comfortable self-managing and making decisions (Reilly 2017, 62). With the opportunity and the encouragement, people will give feedback and recognize each other (Kamin 2013, 45).

Teamwork's four stages

Teams have two major functions: the task, the intellectual or thinking side, as well as the maintenance, the people, or feeling side. Both sides are equally important. The task side of teams requires planning, goal setting, analysis, review, decision making and evaluation. The maintenance side requires attention to how the process is going and how to involve participants. A smooth process will allow the tasks to be done efficiently (Kamin 2013, 112).

Workflow occurs when teams have a clear goal, an appropriate level of challenge that matches their strengths and regular feedback (Green et al. 2017, 12). The experience of flow has been found to lead us to be more involved and increase positivity.

Every successful team passes four stages of team development: forming, storming, norming and performing (Cook 2019, 47-48, Kamin 2013, 116-119, Miller 2010, 2-3). These four stages can come in intervals (especially when the team membership changes) but quickly make it back (Miller 2010, 2-3). The stages were introduced originally by Bruce Tuckman.

The next listing, describing these stages, is a combination of Cook (2019, 47-48), Kamin (2013, 116-119) and Miller (2010, 2-3).

1. Forming. Team members focus on clarifying goals, membership, and leadership. They often work independently at the same time figuring out how they fit in as individuals. Team members are hesitant as they start to explore boundaries of what is considered acceptable in the way that they act, express themselves, and reveal their identities.

2. Storming. Conflict is around the corner. Team members have different ideas about how they should accomplish the work: how the team should move forward, what steps should

be taken, how to organize tasks, who should do what, and in what order. The storming stage needs to be handled well, otherwise it can lower the motivation of team members and make them underperform.

3. Norming. Team members learn to settle differences and figure out how they can approach work together. They learn how to interact with each other and what to expect from one another.

4. Performing. The team takes off. The members learn to depend on each other and become highly productive. Tasks are accomplished. People feel more comfortable emotionally and produce without anxiety and mistrust. They take each other's strengths into account and allow creativity and innovation to emerge.

2.5 Feedback drives learning, motivation, development and performance

Feedback is a powerful tool for learning, motivation and development (Buron 2011, 7). Feedback gives a chance to correct work quickly, so the whole organization doesn't need to make changes. Regularly given and specific feedback is an essential part of learning and developing an organization and helps people to understand their skills, competence and performance (Souders 2020, Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 30). Providing appropriate feedback to all employees about their performance, their performance will be more likely to improve (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 97).

Feedback influences how people feel about themselves, their motivation and how they learn. Employees construct their own understanding from feedback messages that they receive from their leader, manager, peers or external sources like other stakeholders (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 3). Feedback satisfies the psychological need for competence (Souders 2020) and it also supports autonomy and relatedness needs (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 31). Feedback is an impulse that can cause the employee to engage one's motivation (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 97).

Effective feedback provides the necessary information for people to build on their strengths (Buron 2011, 7). Strength-based feedback improves employees' behaviors by offering use for strengths and creating a support system to compensate for weaknesses e.g., by teamwork (Ackermann, 2020). Compassionate and honest feedback will help employees develop goals, make and reinforce positive changes, raise self-confidence, and spur them to action (Buron 2011, 12). In turn, positive feedback energizes employees to seek their full potential (Souders 2020).

Leaders' feedback behavior is a critical element in an organizational environment. It shows the way for expected performance standards based on team members' past performance and helps reinforce or modify work related behavior (Madrid 2020, 2). Everyone wants to be recognized for his or her worth and value. Recognition is one of the most powerful forms of motivation (Kamin 2013, 45). Leaders' positive attitudes toward interpersonal relationships and focusing on team members' development is associated with achieving better performance (Madrid 2020, 4). Little or no feedback, especially from leaders and managers, are always considered negative feedback, and weaken employees' self-confidence and motivation. Staying quiet is the most powerful way to turn a good performing person into an underperforming employee (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 53).

3 FEEDBACK CULTURE AND PRACTICES

3.1 Feedback and feedback culture

The term feedback itself is a neutral term. In the engineering world, a feedback loop is used to auto-calibrate and improve or extend performance. But in the corporate world, feedback often has a negative connotation, and usually because many people lack knowledge of giving honest, positive and constructive feedback (Reilly 2017, 63).

In the work environment feedback is information on how people are performing in their work. At work there is a purpose to do the right things in the right way, and feedback is given so people know that they are doing the right things. That is why feedback should only be given about two different types of behavior. The first one is about performance and achieving goals. The second is following the rules. (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 69)

Feedback is communication, coaching and engagement and it should be an interactive dialogue with a give and take of ideas and opinions (Reilly 2017, 62). When people have courage, willingness and knowledge to give honest feedback, the employees and organization will hear every day how they performed and what needs to be improved (Reilly 2017, 77, Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 37-38). Feedback encourages to think about performance, it identifies and develops strengths and sparks motivation. This allows for high-performing individuals, teams and organizations to evolve (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 96).

Feedback is either positive or constructive. Positive feedback is encouraging, and it tells that the feedback giver is satisfied with what has been done and it gives a permission to continue or extend positive behavior. Constructive feedback tells the opposite (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 73). Feedback succeeds best when positive and constructive feedback are delivered in a ratio 5:1 or 4:1 (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 83, Buron 2011, 16). There needs to be a more positive and supporting feedback than a corrective one. Supportive feedback leads to a feeling of success and progress, it also strengthens the sense of relevance and meaningfulness of the work (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 18).

Feedback culture and developing feedback

Feedback culture is part of organizational culture and it concerns how the company is used to give, receive and seek feedback and what kind of feedback is considered “good feedback” (Kupias, Peltola & Saloranta 2011, 103). Good feedback culture keeps the company updated. Constant feedback gives the possibility for employees to be aware of what they need for success - every day, week and month. For companies it is a quick, effective and cheap way to help them perform better (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 33).

Feedback culture or giving feedback is not the same as holding an annual performance review. The benefits of feedback occur as part of an ongoing process, not as a one-shot deal (Tulgan 2015, 17, Buron 2011, 8). One reason for quiet or poor-quality feedback is unclarity concerning the word feedback – there is no shared idea of feedback. The other reason is that people are afraid of conflicts (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 40). Feedback does not need to be complicated, frightening, or negative (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 105).

Feedback is easy to give, if the rules are clear to all employees and the following exist: firstly, an organization culture which encourages growth and development at work. Secondly, people know what feedback means and how to give effective feedback. Thirdly, everyone knows where and when to give feedback. Finally, feedback practices are clear and agreed upon together. The unclarity of feedback practices leads to only few people wanting to give feedback (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 37-38, 41).

Feedback is developing the receiver, team and organization only when it is given in a proper way. Picture 3 is showing the most important characters for developing feedback and ground rules to consider when giving feedback in a manner which supports others.

Picture 3. Characteristics of developing feedback (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 81).



The first step when building a feedback culture and relationship, is to catch people doing things right and to encourage it. To create trust, there needs to be a balance between boosting confidence with positive feedback as well as constructive feedback about problematic behavior that needs to be addressed (Burton 2011, 16). When people understand and feel that feedback is balanced, they will trust that comments are sincere and meaningful. All the feedback provided needs to be honest and constructive.

Clear two-way communication is essential to effective feedback, or the process will be harmful rather than helpful (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 97-99). The reason is that there is a definite link between active, two-way communication and improved high productivity. Also, one of the most important qualities in organizational relationships is credibility. Feedback must be given directly, not indirectly. People usually know that there is an agenda and “sugar coating” is just that – an outside shell that hides the real reason for interaction (Reilly 2017, 61).

Good feedback culture is based on a shared vision, honesty, clarity, and is to be seen as a positive and developing aspect.

According to Ahonen and Lohtaja-Ahonen (2014, 59), ten biggest obstacles for giving quality feedback and developing feedback culture in organizations are as follows: The unclarity of the word feedback, unclear goals and rules, fear of consequences, strict performance valuing systems, organization culture that covers up mistakes, difficulty to show feelings, quiet feedback and prejudice, lack of time, indifference as well as assumptions.

Feedback timing is essential

Because the benefits of feedback are accumulated over time, it should be given often (Tulgan 2015, 17, Buron 2011, 8). This way there is a best chance to reinforce positive behavior and influence change (Buron 2011, 8). Having continuous feedback means that problems can be dealt with in a timely manner, instead of waiting for the annual review or other retrospective occasion, when it might be too late to reverse problems that have arisen (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 97). When expectations for task or performance are clear, and it has been provided honest feedback for every individual every step of the way, things go much better and smoothly (Tulgan 2015, 20).

Timing is critical. Feedback should be given regularly and immediately, if possible. Feedback should be about one incident or topic. It should be quick and to the point and only take a minute or so to give (Kamin 2013, 165). Feedback should be given when development opportunities arise, or when it is necessary for an employee to modify behavior to improve performance (Buron 2011, 8). With frequent feedback it is easier to focus on a specific behavior or work task.

Observation and impact – recipe for great feedback

There is no good or bad feedback in itself, only feedback that has been given in a good and effectual way or in a bad and harmful way (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 63). Because of the sensitive nature of feedback, it should be given in person, if possible. Although feedback should not be personal, employees are human and have feelings: positive, encouraged, fearful, concerned, and often anxious (Kamin 2013, 163). Given feedback can release many feelings and thoughts.

The key issue is that feedback should always be given for a positive purpose and in a supportive manner (Kamin 2013, 163). There are two reasons for giving feedback: to help

colleagues, the manager or subordinate to develop, and in order to express one's feelings and thoughts. The first one is more important. The work colleague is much more interested in feedback that concerns one's own development (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 68). If there is no positive or developmental reason for giving feedback, there is no need to give it (Kamin 2013, 163). Also, feedback is not an instruction. There needs to be agreement between people when instructions are to be given, as they are usually only needed when learning something new (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 77). The positive manner is created through communication with a specific message that encourages the person to continue to self-assess and manage one's own development (Reilly 2017, 70).

Feedback should be given in the same way to everyone, the receiver's personality or position shouldn't have an effect (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 77). Feedback should always have two parts: observation and impact (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 64-66, Kamin 2013, 164). Buron (2011, 12) included also a third part, situation, in the model of giving effective feedback. Anyhow, the idea is the same. Observations (about the situation) should be told in a neutral way, without judgement, criticism or analysis (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 64-66, Kamin 2013, 164). Feedback is always spoken in the past tense, because it is an observation of a prior event (Miller 2010, 119). The latter part, impact, collects together feelings of the observation, describing the impact and influence of the behavior on you or others present in the situation (Buron 2011, 12). Without stating the value of this to an individual, the team, or the organization, feedback is not as meaningful as it could be (Kamin 2013, 164).

Because clear, two-way communication is essential to effective feedback, after giving the feedback, the purpose is to let the other person respond (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 97-99). These thoughts, in turn, should be listened to. After this, it is time for some positive action: offering help or providing further thoughts, if asked. The best scenario is that the recipient of the feedback arrives at similar conclusions with the giver. The positive purpose of feedback comes at the end, in letting the recipient know that there is confidence in him or her, this in turn leaving a positive note and willingness to resolve the issue (Kamin 2013, 165-166).

Sometimes feedback is incomplete, if it is missing either the observation or the impact. Incomplete feedback can also be positive, "thank you" is for example an important but incomplete feedback. It still states that the action has been satisfactory and successful. If the meaning of feedback is developing the others, or you are not sure if "thank you" will be understood precisely, it is good to give complete feedback: thank you, observation and impact. For example, "Thank you for the great presentation (thank you and observation).

Your presentation was clear and very understandable (impact). (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 84).

Receiving Feedback

People decide and control their own behavior. They will also choose how they will use the given feedback (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 74, Kamin 2013, 168). Receiving feedback is not always easy but it is an important skill in personal development, teamwork and organizational learning. It takes a secure person to gracefully accept feedback. Kamin (2013, 168-172) offers seven things as to how to become a better feedback receiver:

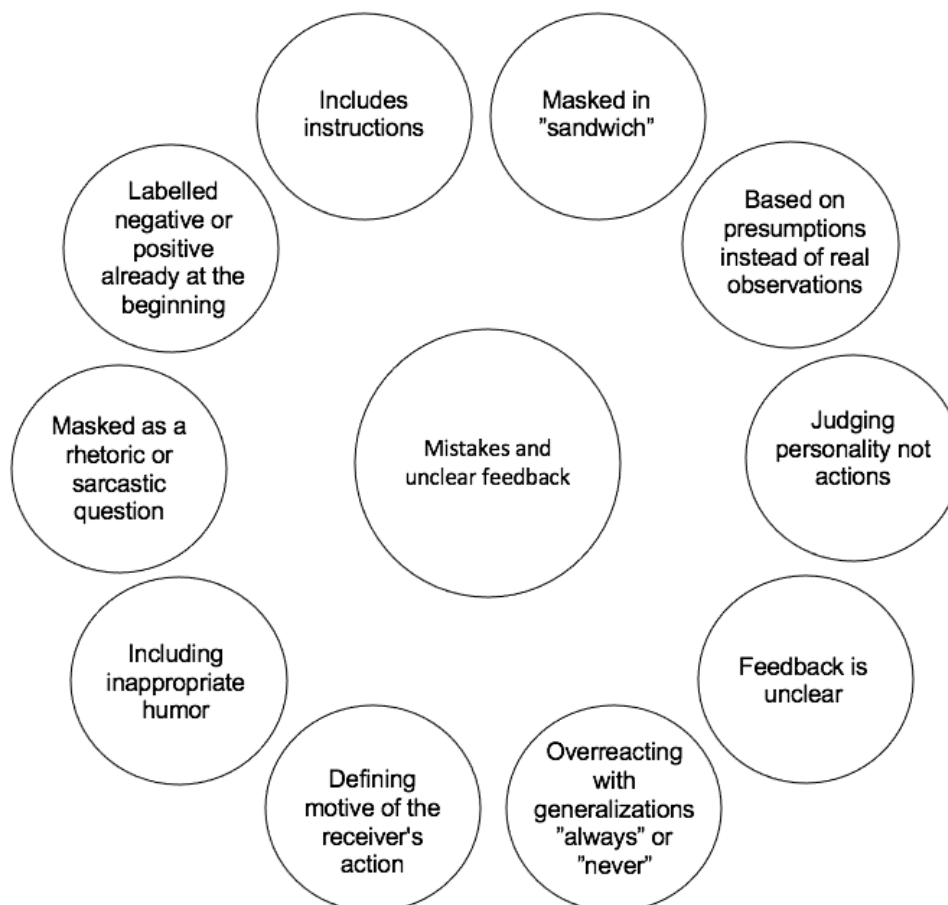
1. Recognize and be proud of your strengths. Be proud of your desire to do the right thing.
2. Be open to improvements. Your best intention could have a result that could be even better than what you accomplished.
3. Listen until the person who is giving you feedback gives you the option to respond.
4. Acknowledge the feedback. Reflect on what the other person said. Acknowledging is not agreeing.
5. Clarify, if needed. Facts may help to clarify a situation.
6. Make a plan together. Sometimes correction is easy and can be done quickly, sometimes it requires more time and investigation.
7. Say thank you. Receiving feedback and thanking for it improves the working relationship.

Unclear feedback and general mistakes

Unclear feedback is misleading, because you cannot know what the right things to do are, what is wrong or needs correction. One general mistake is the "feedback sandwich" which is warned about many times in the literature (Reilly 2017, 60, Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 86-88, Kamin 2013, 166). "Sandwich feedback" is a technique where there are first telling something positive before the negative, and sometimes end up with something positive again. This technique ruins the whole feedback - both the positive and negative aspects - because the recipient understands quickly that the only reason to have the conversation is to give negative feedback. People might get irritated about such masking

of the negative feedback. Other general mistakes and unclear feedback behaviors are presented in picture 3.

Picture 3. Ten most general mistakes in terms of giving feedback (Reilly 2017, 60, Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen, 2014, 86-88, Kamin 2013, 166).



3.2 Positive and constructive feedback

Positive feedback

Positive feedback should always be given, and most of the given feedback should be positive - the more the better. Positive feedback tells employees what they are doing right and gives them a sense of being valued (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 96, Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 73). The more valuable employees feel, the more probably their performance will be at a high level. Acknowledging success also creates trust (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 96).

Positive and encouraging feedback gives joy for the feedback giver and the receiver. Pleasure from your work leads to excitement and is beneficial for the flow of work. This will lead to successful performance and innovations (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 83). Positive feedback is important for reinforcing great behavior (Miller 2010, 61). Positive feedback energizes employees to seek their full potential (Souders 2020).

When giving positive feedback be as exact as you are with the constructive or developmental feedback. Ensure that your positive feedback is specific, objective, and relevant to the organization (Miller 2010, 124). Right timing and public praise focusing on effort and behavior and not traits are most effective. Everyone wants to be recognized for their worth and value. Given the opportunity and the encouragement, people will give recognition to each other.

Constructive feedback

Constructive feedback offers the possibility to change behavior. Constructive feedback is critical for improvement but doesn't have to be harsh to be helpful (Miller 2010, 61). It is intended to help seeing the difference between current behavior and the more wanted way to behave, to achieve goals or working by rules (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 74). The focus of constructive feedback should be more on knowledge and skills that can be developed, rather than on talents or personality traits (Ackermann, 2020).

Constructive feedback is riskier and may include the fear of making someone angry. The fear of conflict leads to people not giving constructive feedback. Conflict shouldn't be feared, because without them nothing is done differently. Conflicts are useful if they are understood to exist between issues and not between people (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 48).

Criticism and negative feedback are different from constructive feedback. Criticism is an attempt to control behavior through a system of rewards and punishments. Constructive feedback, however, is important and timely input into a professional's performance and behavior (Reilly 2017, 71).

Being straightforward and clear is important, especially when correcting, but be careful with giving instructions (Reilly 2017, 72). People need constructive feedback, but they only need instructions when they are learning something new. Otherwise, instructions are unnecessary and frustrating because it seems that the giver does not believe that the receiver can realize the options by him- or herself (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 61).

Fear overshadowing positive feedback

Optimally, positive and constructive feedback would not be given at the same time, but in most real-life feedback situations, they are both present. It is recommended to seek opportunities to give positive feedback in public and constructive feedback in private (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 99). The majority of feedback should be positive, as mentioned earlier, and constructive feedback given in a positive and developmental manner.

The problem giving positive and negative (not constructive, or poorly given constructive) feedback at the same time is that mixing negative and positive feedback invalidates the positive as well as lessens the impact of the negative. If the intention is to correct unwanted behavior or performance, including some positives after the problem-solving step, confuses the main message of correcting the behavior. If the purpose is reinforcing positive behavior, including any negative will often overshadow and wipe out the desired reinforcement (Reilly 2017, 70).

The interesting thing about using negative feedback is that it reaches the fear areas of the brain, not the learning areas. When the majority of the conversation is negative feedback, the employee is not likely to improve performance (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 96).

When giving constructive feedback, it is very important to keep focus on a positive purpose, keeping in mind the two-step model of observation and impact, and at the end let the receiver know there is confidence in him or her. Otherwise, helpful, constructive feedback can easily become negative feedback and have an unwanted effect on the employee's performance.

Feeling guilty is not always bad. Different from other negative emotions (e.g., shame, regret), Liu & Xiang (2018, 884-885) present guilt to be more likely associated with positive actions in workplace settings. It is closely related to higher cognition as well as higher willpower, which lead to positive motivation and employees' future aspirations, such as being helpful, reparation and learning from mistakes. Assuming that that person is feeling only guilty and not ashamed or regretful.

3.3 Feedback in teamwork

Organizations form teams to gain different perspectives and to use the expertise of the individuals on the team (Kamin 2013, 112). Feedback is part of the dialogue between people in teams. When team members are able to share their opinions openly, the organization can develop the work practices, performance (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 34-35). The team won't progress if its members don't give each other feedback. Feedback is the primary mechanism for addressing behaviors that would otherwise hold people back (Miller 2010, 110). In discussing issues and problems, new ideas are expressed, and the team raises valuable insights and resolutions for tasks (Kamin 2013, 112).

Peer feedback is very important, it assures that all team members get enough feedback. Everyone needs feedback to be able to develop and perform better. Because feedback is communication, it needs to flow freely and feedback skills belong to everybody (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 75-76).

The best team workers are supporting, more than criticizing, each other. The best performance team's correlation between positive and constructive feedback is 5:1. Everyone has a view on how to do team tasks better (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 34-35). The same basic rules on how to give feedback also applies in teamwork. Teamwork feedback requires an appropriate balance of compassion and courage – members must be committed to the effort it takes to deliver feedback well (Miller 2010, 110).

Team members motivate each other by recognizing effective behaviors (Miller 2010, 61). By delivering specific and forthcoming positive feedback with details and examples a team can improve and does not hesitate to ask for more feedback. A healthy team will leave members feeling productive, inspired, and confident. Trust is built, and people want to work together and respect each other more (Kamin 2013, 112).

Constructive feedback is always delicate but when it is part of teamwork it needs to come from a place of caring and a sincere desire to help each other. Good teams actively seek constructive feedback from peers and the team leader because they trust that the information will help them to improve. Useful and effective feedback is discussion and sharing opinions, it lets the recipients find their own solutions (perhaps with help). Offering straight solutions limits team members' options. Constructive feedback in the team setting is not hindsight, telling people what they should have done or should do, criticism, or directions. (Miller 2010, 61,109,119)

Feedback in teamwork is justified by the impact that team member's actions have on you, clients, other teammates, sales, internal processes, timelines, projects and organization (Miller 2010, 121). If there is no impact or no results affect the organization, maybe there is no need to give the feedback.

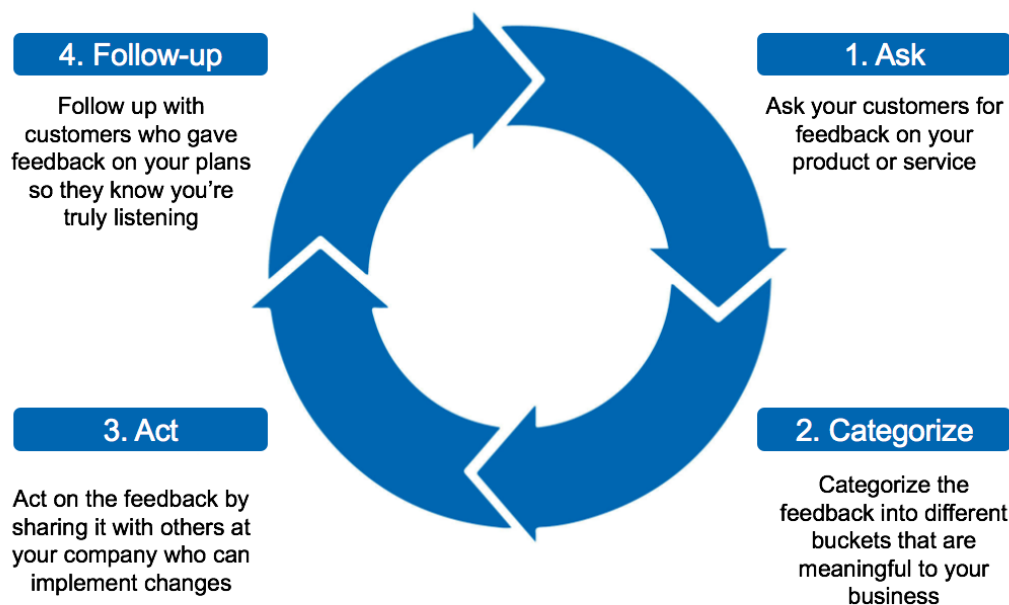
3.4 Customer and client feedback

Business has become more personalized, also in the B-to-B world. Customer experience and feedback from your clients are as important as they are in retail or consumer business (Walker 2017, 6). Many customer feedback-studies and literature are focused on B-to-C approaches, but the overall idea of how to utilize feedback from your customers or clients is useful in the B-to-B approach, too. B-to-B client expectations will continue to be influenced by transformational consumer experiences (Walker 2017, 6) and businesses can use their knowledge from B-to-C customer experience to develop their own client relationships in B-to-B setup.

Developing the client relationship feedback has a vital role. Without feedback it is not possible to understand what drives client satisfaction and increase loyalty (Tousley 2020). Loyal clients grow a business faster than sales, it is easier to sell more services or products to loyal customers than attract many new ones. Businesses also have unique needs, and one-size-fits-all usually not fulfilling the client's needs for a personalized experience. Personalized experience, and feedback as a part of that, requires three things: personalization, ease, and speed (Walker 2017, 7-8).

Customer feedback loop (e.g., The A.C.A.F. Customer Feedback Loop) in picture 4 is a strategy for constant ways to improve your services or products based on users' feedback (Kierczak 2020). Even though the idea and most of the tools serve product development and B-to-C services more, the concept behind the model is usable for strategic development for B-to-B client relationships.

Picture 4. The A.C.A.F Customer Feedback Loop (Tousley 2020).



A.C.A.F. Customer Feedback Loop is a strategic system for gathering and implementing customer feedback. The letters A.C.A.F stands for the actions of the model: Ask feedback. Categorize the feedback. Act based on the feedback. Follow-up (Tousley 2020). In the B-to-B environment there needs to be variation and a personalized way to collect and handle feedback, but the idea of using all four steps helps to develop feedback practices. Bowen (2015, 1) also writes about how loyal business customers are also interested to give feedback and give their advice and insights. This could be done with a very small group of best clients. Another option is to create a system like a feedback loop where the feedback is automatically part of the client relationship.

Positive customer and client feedback

Customer feedback studies are mostly focused on customer complaints and dissatisfaction, little is known about the effect of positive feedback from clients. The effect of positive feedback is quite unknown, especially in the B-to-B setup, studies have been more done with front-line employees in serving business. Positive feedback has a potential strategic impact so, recognizing, understanding and acting on positive feedback is important. Positive feedback can be structured like quantitative customer surveys, but

very often it is unstructured, and it is given in an informal way or through personal interaction. (Nasr, Burton & Gruber 2018, 144)

Positive feedback in customer interactions and from the client side can have crucial positive influence on employees and the whole organization (Nasr, Burton & Gruber 2018, 143). The effect of positive customer feedback on a personal level for employees has been studied mostly on the front-line employees' environment in service business. Considering what positive feedback means to employees' motivation, development and engagement (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 96) in general, the effect might be similar also in other work environments and working roles. Positive customer feedback is essential for client appreciation, empathy and gratitude. Sharing positive emotions with clients can create more productive and happier employees (Nasr, Burton & Gruber 2018, 143-144). Guerrero et al (2018, 869) amplifies that positive feedback from the client side can even compensate for the lack of transformational leadership and drive employees' empowerment and performance.

4 REMOTE WORK

4.1 Leading remote work and teams

Businesses have been moving towards remote and flexible working and it has changed organization culture (Cook 2019, 28), leading competences and management skills. The year 2020 with its COVID-19 world pandemic has catalyzed the transition to remote work. Practicing leadership virtually has now become a routine for many leaders and companies (Darics 2020, 3). There are many forms of remote work, from totally virtual teams to combined hybrid teams in which the work may be done partly in an office setting and partly online (Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, 25).

Even with remote work challenging working culture, there are many benefits for organizations, leaders or managers as well as employees. Organizational benefits include increasing productivity and efficiency, increasing employee engagement, attracting and retaining diverse talent and skills, creating a more inclusive culture as well as lower costs of office space. Known benefits for employees are connected to well-being and balancing work and home life, including no commuting and more time with your family, more time to concentrate on work without interruptions and distractions, flexible time schedules for arranging necessities of life and less stress. (Cook 2019, 15)

Remote distance leading occurs when employees are somewhere else at least part of the time. Virtual distance leading is more complicated, and communication is mostly through online technology. Commonly, in both kinds of distance leading, communication is partly limited and done by digital technology. Differences can also occur in relationships. The team leader might not have supervisory power e.g., ad hoc teams and project teams (Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, 24). Darics (2020, 5) states that research shows that leading people via digital channels requires even more effort to combine leadership and management, and both of these skills are related to communication skills. But understanding leadership and management communication virtually, especially in text-only channels, is very limited.

Managing outcomes and building trust

The customers' needs must come first. An important consideration is how remote work will impact customers, as well as organizational performance (Cook 2019, 38). The remote leader's most important rule is to think about leadership first and location second, and to accept that leading remotely affects your leading (Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, vii). For the

leader and manager, remote work offers an opportunity to manage more by outcomes and less by being present at workplace, improving work satisfaction through employees' wellbeing, empowering people to give their best as well as attracting new team members who have the right skills, no matter what their location (Cook 2019, 15).

Managing by outcomes and focusing on achieving goals are key to success for a remote leader (Cook 2019, 38, Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, vii). Because people might be working at different times or in different time zones, or they need targets, deadlines for jointly agreed tasks and trust. Building trust requires more coaching, empowering and a positive, interactional style to facilitate supportive working environment (Darics 2020, 22, Cook 2019, 20, Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, 44), as well as communicating in the ways that work best for others rather than based on personal preferences of the leader (Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, vii). The most important factors in supporting team members and increasing commitment are responsiveness and accessibility (Brower 2020). Visibility and accessibility were correlated with team members' confidence and performance, the leader's responsiveness was also found to have impact because it communicated trust, respect and empathy.

Interpersonal dynamics change when working remotely. The loss of face-to-face interaction and day-to-day contact with team members and the organizations' other teams, or issues around team coherence and collaboration are worries of remote leaders. It needs to be very clear to team members what is expected of them. This involves managers being there to support their team and ensuring that there is an effective two-way communication flow (Cook 2019, 21). Usually, people generally agree on good leadership abilities regardless of where they live and work (Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, 44). Organizational level HR professionals also play a critical role, in sharing best practices of remote working across the organization, and in having a sense of how the organizational culture is coping with remote work (Cook 2019, 38).

Remote teams need functional leadership with visionary leader

Remote teams can be categorized in many ways: by the team's function (ad hoc, project, unit), by the level of online communications (virtual as a complete remote, hybrid, co-located team) or how the team is managed and lead (by virtual leader and shared or emergent leadership) (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 26, Purvanova et al 2020, 10, Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, 25). It is possible that employees are part of many kinds of remote teams and team dynamics at the same time. As a remote leader, it is very important to intentionally nurture relationships with all team members (Eikenberry &

Turmel 2018, 32), because remote team members are often separated geographically, organizationally or culturally (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 3).

Complete virtual teamwork is often characterized by “behavioral invisibility”, which makes it more difficult to manage team tasks and dynamics and to control team processes (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 2, Purvanova et al 2020, 10). Virtual leaders who engage more in the team’s functionality (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 26), monitoring and coordinating, help their teams achieve greater performance and less conflict (Purvanova et al 2020, 10). In remote circumstances, shared power and leadership seems to be a more effective way to lead teams than hierarchical leadership, because even if the leader is not appointed in virtual teams, leadership seems to emerge, based on the interactions of team members (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 8).

Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman (2020, 15-17) have formed a theoretical model of leadership in remote and virtual teams. They compared the ideas of visionary leadership and functional leadership. They came to the conclusion that, paradoxically, both forms of leadership are necessary in remote teams. Even if the functional side of leading remote teams is important for success (Purvanova et al 2020, 10), there are situations when it has to be complemented by centralized, visionary leadership. Functional leadership influences other team members to make successful contributions to team tasks and toward shared goals, while working within and reinforcing shared models and norms. Visionary leadership changes shared models and norms. As teams evolve, there is a need to develop existing norms.

Shared and emergent leadership in remote teams

Remote teams are often self-managing by the nature of remote work, even if there would be a team leader. With or without a team leader, two phenomena are present: shared and emergent leadership. These phenomena can happen at the same time and shared leadership can be an important contributor to team success (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 10).

In shared leadership authority, power and ownership are divided and team members hold collective responsibility for project outcomes (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 4). In turn, the emergent leader is a team member with influence on the team without having formal authority (Purvanova et al 2020, 2), or a person who is perceived as a leader by peers (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 8).

Emergent leaders play a critical role for team success, because they facilitate collaboration between team members. There are two pathways to emerging leadership: by achievement, focus is on functional skills and task-oriented behaviors. Through the trait-based pathway, the emergent leader appears more like a traditional leader (Purvanova et al 2020, 2). The trait-based pathway usually appears when remote teamwork in low virtuality contexts and functional behaviors have become more important with the higher virtual context teams.

Shared leadership is a great outcome for successful self-management in teams. The strongest predictor of team success is team members' engagement and that's why supervisory behaviors performed by formal team leaders are ineffective in self-managing teams (Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 6). Despite of the leaders' status (formal, shared or emergent), virtual team leaders must be able to communicate skillfully to be able to have influence in virtual teams (Darics 2020, 23).

4.2 Good remote leading practices and feedback

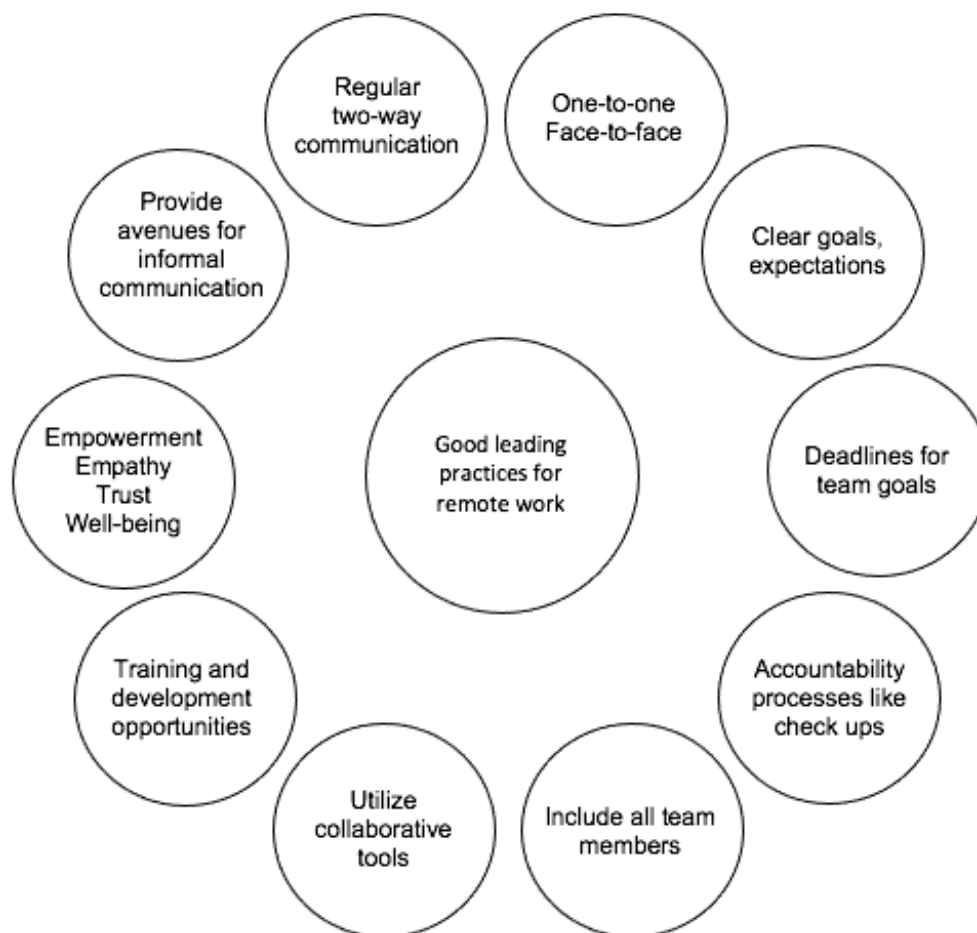
Leading people from a distance can be challenging because you don't see team members on a regular basis and cannot feel the atmosphere. It is more challenging to be in tune with their personal well-being, or to keep an eye on whether the team members are interacting with each other enough (Cook 2019, 23). Creating practices that help communication between leaders and other team members and overall team communication, increase the chances for team success. Picture 5 shows a collection of good leading practices for remote work and remote teams, from Brower (2020), Smith (2020) and Cook (2019, 52).

Regular communication with possibility to one-to-one time, clear goals for the team and individuals and being available for your team members seem to be key for successful remote team leadership. Brower (2020) also emphasizes the human side of remote and distance leading: empower and trust people, assume good intentions when people are reaching out to you, and know your team members. If you know what motivates different people and what their personal needs are, you are able to send your messages in digital channels, too.

Smith (2020) gives four reasons why remote teams might struggle with productivity: lack of communication, facetime and scheduling, technological issues and culture building.

Practically these are almost opposite to good practices. Remote work culture building can be harder if there are a lot of team members who are used to walking to a coworker's desk or who prefer a lot of face-to-face contact. They may struggle with communicating effectively in a remote work environment.

Picture 5. Good leading practices for remote work and remote teams (Brower 2020, Smith 2020 and Cook 2019, 52).



Feedback in remote work

Ongoing feedback conversations resemble chitchat happen quite naturally at the office. But working remotely leaders, managers and employees all have to be more intentional about it (Dixon 2020, Eseryel, Crowston & Heckman 2020, 3). Feedback can be given formally or informally. Formal ways are e.g., periodic performance reviews, post-project

commentary and peer surveys. But daily feedback comes usually in informal ways like check-ins, discussions, text-based commentary or passing client feedback. Recognizing a team's or individual's achievement is essential in building a supportive work environment remotely. Motivational feedback is needed when people accomplish their goals (Cook 2019, 42).

Feedback should travel both ways – also from employees to managers and leaders. In remote work, leaders also lack the immediate feedback from their work (Eikenberry & Turmel 2018, 153). This lack of honest feedback could lead to being excited about the wrong things or ignoring important facts – seeking feedback from team members serves the best outcomes.

4.3 Working models are shifting toward remote work

The world pandemic COVID-19 has changed the work life. Even if the pandemic will pass one day, research shows that remote work has come to stay (Dixon 2020, Eurofound 2020, 33, Sull, Sull & Bersin 2020, Yle 2020). The shift to remote work during spring 2020 was quick and it is still continuing at a big scale at the end of the year. COVID-19 did what has been foresighted since the 1980s - that with improved technology people want to work more from home.

Before the pandemic, approximately 15% of U.S. employees were working from home at least some of the time (Sull, Sull & Bersin 2020). In Europe, fewer than one in twenty employees were reported as remote working regularly in 2018, and less than one in ten occasionally (Eurofound 2020, 31). In spring 2020, approximately 50% of employees worked remotely in the U.S, Europe and Finland (Eurofound 2020, 31, Sull, Sull & Bersin 2020, Yle 2020). Of these, over a third (34%) were reported working exclusively from home in Europe (Eurofound 2020, 31). Many of these employees were remote working for the first time, especially younger employees (18–34) 49% haven't worked from home before.

Remote work has been popular in Finland in 2020, and according to the Yle (2020) survey, half of the people who were working remotely wanted to continue to do so after the pandemic. The quick transition to remote work has created new challenges for organizations around the world, and they are now experimenting with creative solutions (Sull, Sull & Bersin 2020).

Employees are starting to adjust to this “new normal”, but the problem for companies and teamwork is that collaboration and relatedness are a lot harder to create remote connections and screens (Dixon 2020). Also, because of the pandemic situation, team members may feel disconnected and isolated when not surrounded by their coworkers, and this could lead to lack of motivation (Smith 2020). In the survey (Sull, Sull & Bersin 2020), top concerns for companies were protecting the health and well-being of employees, preserving jobs and complying with government regulations.

Sull, Sull & Bersin (2020) asked companies to describe the most meaningful actions during the COVID-19 to support the transition to remote work. Some of the answers were similar to remote work leading in general like frequent, transparent, and consistent communication or providing help for widely distributed employees for staying productive and engaged. Others were more connected to the pandemic situation, like providing support for physical and mental health. Regular check-ins by the manager were mentioned especially. Managing the paradox of remote work-life balance and focusing on strategic priorities were the last two meaningful actions supporting remote work. To make team work more encouraging during the pandemic, Dixon (2020) adds a few further tips: Create a sense of normalcy, centralize your company knowledge, create a “virtual watercooler “, chitchat might seem like a waste of time, but never underestimate its role in facilitating teamwork and provide plenty of feedback.

5 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT WORK

5.1 Focus interview research

In the first part of this thesis, the aim was to study the feedback culture in client teams from the perspective of employees. The research setup was to do 6-8 focus interviews for employees from different units. The objectives of this research phase were:

1. To understand the feedback and feedback culture in the client team process.
2. To know how the employees experience and feel about retros at the moment.
3. To figure out the best practices and feedback tools in the client teams.

To better understand the phenomenon of feedback culture, in client teams as part of Creative X client work, semi-structured focus interviews were chosen as the primary research method. Focus interviews were conducted to understand different perspectives on this specific subject (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 122). Interviewing was necessary because observing behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the phenomenon around them was not possible. The interview concerned past events (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 108). In-depth interviews are typically conducted with small samples that have not been chosen randomly (Walle 2014, 18-19) and that was also the case in this thesis. The interviewees were chosen by Creative X.

Semi-structured interviews were conversational in style, offering freedom to the respondent to answer and describe the phenomenon, feelings and thoughts. The flow of the interview was more controlled by the interviewer in order to gather certain information (Walle 2014, 72). This format allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to specify and ask refining questions (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 110-111). This was done very subtly, because a conversational tone was important (Walle 2014, 72). Questions were open-ended, allowing for unique replies. The goal of the in-depth interview is to gain an honest, almost “stream of consciousness” type of response (Walle 2014, 18-19).

Themes for the focus interviews

The themes for the focus interviews were created based on the discussions with the management and the HR manager, combined with the background information from the personnel questionnaire and literature about the feedback.

The interview was semi-structured (Table 1) so the focus would stay on feedback in the client teamwork and not for example so much about personal development discussions. Also, the timeframe was tight, a little bit less than an hour per interview, so frames, themes and sub-questions were prepared in order to get the needed information (APPENDIX 2). The sub-questions were only used if the interviewee did not mention the topic while talking about the theme or interviewer needed to clarify or get more in-depth information about the topic, experiences or thoughts.

Table 1. Structure of the focus interviews

FRAME	THEME
Warm up	Yourself and feedback
Feedback culture in your recent client team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feedback in the client team process 2. Personal experience of the feedback culture in a client team process 3. Positive feedback 4. Constructive feedback 5. Team experience
Personal development and support	Personal development and self-reflection in client work
Closer	Anything else about feedback culture

Employee interviews

The focus interviews took place in March 2020 and included a total of 6 interviews of employees representing all the units of Creative X. Three of the interviews were face to face meetings in the office and three were online video interviews, after the remote work recommendation due the Corona virus situation.

Interview times were between 40-60 minutes. All six interviews were made in English and voice recorded. During the interviews notes were made with Miro Online Platform to get a quicker overall vision about the themes and topics of every interview. Hence there was

opportunity to develop the interview technique and interview themes in-between the interviews. Also, during the analysis, this helped to see topics and issues that started to repeat in all interviews. After all interviews, the voice recordings were transcribed, analyzed, categorized and clustered. Journey mapping (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 130) was used in visualizing the results of the feedback culture in client teams.

The nature of a qualitative study is that the researcher knows what the problem is and has selected a purposeful sample to collect data. But the researcher does not know what will be discovered or what the final analysis will be like. Data analyzing in a qualitative study is usually done simultaneously with data collection (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 197) as it was done in this research also and field notes were created with Miro Online Platform while doing the data collection. Field notes not only help develop the data collection, they also assist to make more detailed and refined analyses later (Walle 2014, 31). Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming with the volume of the material that needs to be processed (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 197). In this research the saturation started to quickly form around some of the themes and after 6 interviews there were quite clear patterns in answers.

5.2 Changes in thesis development work design

The world pandemic situation of COVID-19 in the year 2020 has also affected this thesis. The first part of this work, focus interviews, were possible to do as planned in the first place. The second half of the interviews had to be made in the form of online video meetings, which made the interviews a little bit more difficult – the flow of discussion was not the same and sometimes there was a need to put the video away because of the bad connection.

The pandemic was a severe economic hit for strategy, marketing and communication agencies. Clients backed off and many companies did not invest, for example in marketing, in the spring of 2020.

For Creative X this meant that they needed to make quick changes to their working models. They had to have everybody working remotely, like many businesses did. This was a big change for the company. Before, the employees of the Creative X had mostly worked at a very open office setting, where people have been used to go and quickly ask a question or to talk with each other. People from different units have been in the same office and client team meetings have been done in a face-to-face setting. There were no remote work practices or instructions.

Change was permanent for Creative X. After the summer of 2020, they moved to the new working model that combines remote work and a co-working space possibility. In practice this means employees mostly work remotely, and for example every meeting there is a chance to participate online.

Because of the pandemic situation during the spring and summer 2020 the development part of this thesis was postponed to autumn 2020. The change to a new working model also created a different kind of need for the development work part of the thesis. When employees mostly work remotely it affects the feedback culture and new practices are needed. That's why there was a need to make a new plan for the development part of this thesis - Plan B.

Development Plan B

Creative X started to work in a new working model in August 2020. The aim for the development plan B was to hear employee' feedback experiences from the remote work and create 3 - 5 new ideas on how the feedback culture could work better in the client teams with the new working model.

For this purpose, the Development Plan B had two parts. Creative X chose 9 employees who were invited to join this development part of the thesis. Some of them were the same people who were interviewed and some of them were totally new participants. The first part was an online questionnaire (APPENDIX 3), and the second part was a co-creation workshop (APPENDIX 4) to create the 3 - 5 new ideas or experiments for developing the feedback culture in client teams.

5.3 Online questionnaire

The online questionnaire (APPENDIX 3) was centralized on the chosen developing focus points from the interview results. There were three sections in the online questionnaire. First was feedback culture as a part of client work - this section was to validate the findings from the interviews. The second section's topic was remote work and feedback culture in client teams. The third section was ideas on how feedback culture should be in the new working model.

The online questionnaire was sent one week before the workshop to all chosen participants. Of 9 employees, 6 answered the online questionnaire. Because some of the

participants were new to the project, the online questionnaire was also an introduction to the project and a warmup before the co-creation workshop.

The first section (validation the findings from interviews) had 9 rating scale questions. The scale was from 1 to 5, with 1 being “I don’t agree with the question” and 5 “I totally agree”. The second section about the remote work had 7 rating scale questions, with the same scale and 3 open questions about feedback culture in client teams during the remote work period. The last section, on how the feedback culture should be in the new working model, had 3 open questions.

Some survey questions (especially rating scale questions) in this online questionnaire were qualitative data recorded to a quantitative scheme, because respondents were asked to provide quantitative responses to a question that was more of a qualitative nature (Walle 2014, 16).

5.4 Co-creation workshop

The 2 h workshop was planned, facilitated and held in late August 2020 (APPENDIX 4). Four employees had the possibility to join the workshop. Unfortunately, there were a few last-minute cancellations.

The target of the workshop was to create the 3-5 new ideas and experiments to develop the feedback culture in client teams an in new working model. Because of the new working model policy, it wasn’t known in advance how many of the participants were online and how many were present in the same co-working space. There was also a planned possibility that everybody would be online, and the workshop would be held with the use of the Miro online platform (APPENDIX 5). The workshop ended up being a hybrid model workshop. One of the participants joined the workshop online and the other three were present at the co-working space.

Before starting to work together with the themes of the workshop it was discussed how participants wanted to work – everybody online on the Miro platform, or more traditionally with post-it notes and a pen. The group made a decision that they wanted to work more traditionally, and the online person was present via video call. Participants discussed themes in a very lively and co-creational way, so all assignments were not necessarily done like planned.

From the previous research results (focus interviews and online questionnaire) there were three themes for the workshop:

1. Retros and feedback from the client
2. Timing of the feedback, daily practices and coworkers' feedback
3. Equality of the feedback in client teams

At the end of the workshop the ideas and discussion were shared with one of the leaders of Creative X, so the employees know that their ideas were heard for further implementations.

Workshop methods

The co-creation workshop was facilitated ideation, where co-creation methods like brainstorming, pre-ideation, quick voting and facilitated open discussion, were used.

The structure of the workshop was:

- Warm up and results from the previous phases
- Validation of workshop themes
- Ideas for the themes (individual work)
- Working on the ideas together (presentation, clustering, discussion and developing the ideas, voting for the top ideas)
- Closer and feedback from the workshop

The first two parts were presentation and discussion of the previous results. The third part was brainstorming combined with individual writing (Kaner et al. 2014, 84) where every participant came up with ideas about the workshop themes (5 min per theme). The next step was the "How might we" - method, where questions were made from the insights to develop the ideas more (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 179). In this workshop the question was in the form of "How to improve...?". While discussion was on about the improvements and ideas of the themes, facilitated open discussion was used to keep lively conversation on topic. Kaner (et al. 2014, 100) reminds of the importance of the open discussion - if someone raises an important issue, the entire group can discuss it. Last but not least, quick-voting was utilized - it gives quickly the majority view as to which ideas and insights are most interesting for going further (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 186).

Feedback from the workshop

The feedback from the workshop was the closer assignment. Feedback was collected by three questions: What did succeed? What would I like to have more? What would I remove from the workshop?

The workshop was succeeded in the matter of structure, timeframe and discussions.

“Excellent discussion, which was structured and lead well to go forward”

“Great structure and facilitation, there was enough time, and it didn’t feel rushed, even there was a lot of things”

For an even better workshop, the participants would like to have more people and real cases from the client work.

“More people and maybe real cases to make it even more concrete”

Less themes were mentioned for the question of what should be removed.

“Three important topics, maybe only 2 would be enough”

6 RESULTS

6.1 Focus interviews results

The results of content analysis of the interview material were clustered under three themes:

- 1 The ideal of the feedback culture, expectations and needs.
- 2 Positive and constructive feedback.
- 3 Feedback in the client team process, team experience and used tools.

There were 7 categories and 19 topics. The categorized and detailed results from the focus interviews and quotes are presented in APPENDIX 6. The quotes shown in this chapter are examples of common answers and are at times shortened or exclude confidential information.

The results from these clustered topics formed a great picture of the feedback journey in the client teams (picture 6 at Chapter 6.2., APPENDIX 7). It shows clearly the focus points that it could be possible to develop.

Qualitative content analysis is all about identifying themes, categories, patterns (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 204) as was done also in this thesis. Because there are no statistical tests to help, when an observation or pattern is significant, the researcher must rely on her or his own sense-making, understanding and judgment (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 216). The other tool is a feeling for when the data has saturated and repeats itself enough (Kananen 2012, 174). The topics, categories and themes started to form tentatively from the field notes, and they were supported by observations from voice recordings and transcribed interview data.

The ideal of the feedback culture, expectations and needs

The ideal feedback culture described by the employees is gathered under three topics. An ideal feedback culture is open, natural and spontaneous.

"everybody should know how to give feedback and be committed to giving it"

The feedback would be given in small, daily doses.

"timing is essential"

Employees included both positive and constructive feedback to be part of the ideal feedback culture.

"feedback is not instructions. It's always opinion, everybody trying to make case better"

The employees' common expectations and needs for the feedback were motivation, taking the project in the right direction and getting support from the peers and supervisors. Regarding results of how employees felt about feedback in the frame of developing oneself in one's work the answers were divided. Others had very positive experiences and expectations and others didn't know how to develop themselves.

"I don't know how to develop myself"

"I have got a lot of support to pushed forward"

Positive and constructive feedback

The meaning of the positive feedback was common to everyone. Positive feedback gives motivation, confidence, it keeps you going, and lifts the team spirit up. Positive feedback is a win-win-situation for the receiver. It's also easier to give than constructive feedback and comes more spontaneously.

"it makes the work not just better but also nicer and it makes you more motivated to know that other people are appreciating the work that you do. So, it has many positive effects in the team, in the project and outcome and in the team spirit."

The employees were unanimous that to develop the positive feedback culture even more the important things are thanking people for their work, giving more specific feedback than just "this is going well" and being an example by giving positive feedback to peers.

Constructive feedback was a more difficult topic, even if all the attendees had a common view that constructive feedback is needed to make client projects better and also for one's own personal development. The most important thing in the client team process for the constructive feedback is timing. Constructive feedback needs to come early enough, so there's an opportunity to do possible changes or change the direction of the project.

"small feedback here and there constantly. I think that's the best way that everyone's on the same page of where the team and the project need to go"

The form of the constructive feedback was mentioned several times. The most popular way of giving and receiving constructive feedback was face-to-face or in small groups. Face-to-face feedback gives an opportunity to hear the tone of voice, too. Good, constructive feedback can also come in question form. The employees felt that well formulated constructive feedback always has an aspect of nudging and next steps, it's focusing on work and the project and is still given in a positive manner.

Used feedback tools, retros and clients feedback

Many of the feedback forms and tools were mentioned to be used in the client team process. Some of them were used only internally and others with clients. Conversations in person, meetings and checkups, shared documents, using questions to give feedback were most mentioned when employees talked about internal feedback between client team members.

The retros, and templates used in retros, were mentioned by every employee. The importance of the retro-meetings was very clear – especially in the bigger projects. Everyone mentioned that the retros should be a more regular part of the client team process. The variation of retros was a challenge – many projects didn't have a retrospective meeting at the end of the process. The most common reason why retros were missing was time issues and being in a hurry for the next project.

“The retros are important so that you actually remember to look back and see everybody's input for that project.”

The feedback from the client side was mainly mentioned as part of the retros. The feedback from the client might come straight to the team if the meeting was held together, via team managers, or from the neutral party who has interviewed the client.

“it's kind of also good that a neutral party goes to the customer and receives the feedback instead of the ones who have run the project.”

The examples of the client feedback during the process were agile-style projects and continually on-going projects. The examples of the retros that have been held together with the client, as part of the client's project frame, have been very encouraging. The employees who have been joining those kinds of retro meetings, proposed that for one of the developing aspects of the retros, Creative X could take the initiative to have more retros with the clients.

Equality of the feedback in client teams

The equality of feedback was a new theme that surfaced from the results in the analyzing phase. There were no special questions for it during the interviews, but it was discussed inside of many topics like when talking about feedback as a part of a team experience, and in what situations employees received feedback, positive and constructive feedback or using feedback to develop oneself at work. After the analyzed results, it showed that employees who have a work role that is connected directly to the client, got more feedback for their work. For example, when giving presentations, they got direct feedback for their work. The same thing happened inside client teams, people in a presentative or designer role got more feedback.

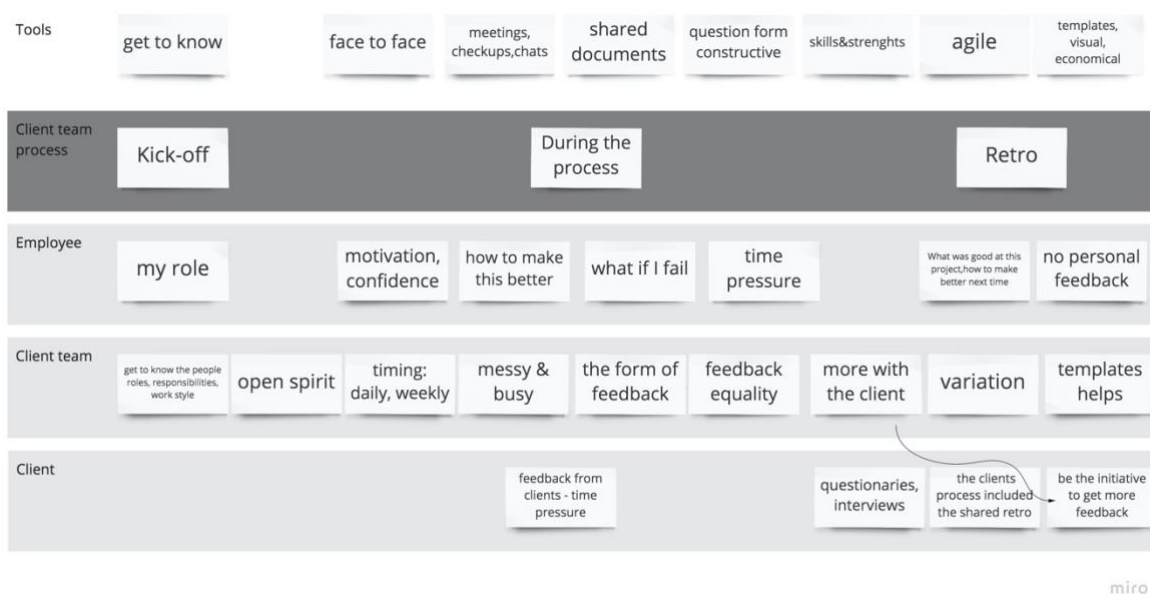
“it should be equally given... not concentrate on giving the positive feedback, or I wouldn't say even positive feedback, I would say feedback, to certain people. And so, in those situations, others might feel that their input is not as important or not as valuable as others'... I think it should be more thought about for everyone.”

“they're not saying it (feedback) to the x roles... which is a huge problem for them. Because they can never develop. They don't know if they're doing a good job or not.”

6.2 Feedback journey of client team

Feedback culture of client teams and the results from the focus interviews were gathered together as a feedback journey (picture 6, APPENDIX 7). The feedback journey figured feedback in the different stages of the client team process – employee level, client team level and client feedback as part of the process. It also shows the most used tools for feedback and situations when the client's feedback was present.

Picture 6. Feedback journey of the client teams



In the start (kick-offs) there were no actual feedback or tools, but it created the base for team level communications and feedback, especially if the client team was a new one. An open atmosphere affected the feedback and team experience.

“When we feel like we can openly talk about things and can trust... team is working for the same goal.... you can be surer that the team is engaged.”

In the feedback journey process, one of the affecting features was being in a hurry, and this was present on all levels. It was one of the barriers for getting more feedback and better-quality feedback. Being busy also affected the timing of feedback.

“Everyone's being very busy all the time...I don't want to bother that person by asking for feedback now.”

Sometimes time pressure was so tight from the client's side that discussions and feedback from the client's side was missing during the process. This led to a situation where all feedback from the client is retrospective.

The retros were focused on the project, client feedback and team level. The employee level of the feedback was not part of the retros.

The focus points of feedback journey for development work

The results from the focus interviews revealed many possibilities for developing the feedback culture and practices as a part of client work in Creative X. The feedback journey (Picture 6) framed that there were feedback development possibilities on all the levels: tools, process, employee level, team level and co-operation with clients.

When combining all the results from the interview, feedback journey with the target of this thesis, three developing focus points were chosen.

1. Developing retros and feedback from the client

Developing retros and getting more feedback from the clients during and at the end of the process was the most important focus point. Because in the end the client's satisfaction is crucial to business. There were already many tools and experiments on how to make retros better. The challenge was to get retrospective meetings established as a part of almost every project and develop the client's role in the client team process.

2. Timing and daily practices as part of the client team process

Timing of the feedback was critical for both positive and constructive feedback. Constructive feedback was needed early enough for the possibility to change direction. Positive feedback felt most genuine and gave motivation and confidence when it was given immediately. Feedback as a regular part of daily work would help dealing with the feeling of a messy and busy process and lack of individual feedback.

3. Equality of the feedback in client teams

Feedback belongs to everyone who works on a team. The results from the interviews clearly showed that employees who had a presentative role or were more connected to the client, got more feedback on their work. When retros were more focused on the client's feedback and how the process went, there should be other ways during the process to get more personal feedback about your work. It was important for personal motivation and professional development.

6.3 Online questionnaire results

The online questionnaire (APPENDIX 3) was centralized on the three chosen developing focus points from the feedback journey. The accurate results and answers for every question of the online questionnaire are presented in APPENDIX 8.

The results from the first section were similar to the results of the focus interviews and show that those findings and chosen focus points were valid. There was similar variation with the answers according to timing of the feedback, positive and constructive feedback and equality of feedback in client teams. The importance of having retros and developing the retros with the client were also clear.

Remote work and feedback scale questions revealed that some of the challenges were similar during the remote work: timing of feedback, polarization of receiving positive feedback from your work and equality of the feedback in a client team. The remote work period made giving feedback harder and it was given less frequently to co-workers and team members. Retros and client feedback seemed to be more challenging during the remote work.

The open questions concerning the remote work period, and feedback culture in client teams, were “What has been working well”, “What did not work” and an “Open comment” field. On the positive side were employees’ efforts to keep up the team spirit, committing to shared documents and more accurate written feedback. The lack of face-to-face contact affected the chance to give feedback to your coworkers and made it harder, especially giving constructive feedback. The small things were at a risk to become bigger issues. Spontaneous encounters were missing because communication was limited to video meetings, calls and writing.

The last section of the online questionnaire was three open questions for ideas on how the Creative X client teams’ feedback culture should be in the new working model. The first one concerned a good habit or tool that should continue to be used in the future. Thanking people, open discussion, calling instead of writing, and town-hall meetings were mentioned. The second question asked for a habit or tool that needs to change, and the answer was totally unanimous: different types of chat channels need to be more organized and it needs to be clearer to everyone, which channel is for what kind of information. Last, there was an open comment field for bringing forth any other ideas. The most common answer concerned discussion time with colleagues without an agenda.

6.4 Co-creation workshop results

The co-creation workshop target was to create 3-5 new ideas and experiments on how to improve feedback culture as a part of client work in the new working model. The frame for the ideas were the three focus points from the feedback journey:

- Retros and feedback from the client
- Timing of the feedback, daily practices and coworkers' feedback
- Equality the feedback in client teams

All the ideas in each category are presented in APPENDIX 9. The top 5 ideas that were voted to be most important are described here. There were two top ideas for developing retros and feedback from clients. Timing of the feedback, daily practices, coworkers' feedback and equality of the feedback in client teams were included in the same ideas on how to make feedback more part of the client team process and encourage positive feedback culture.

1. Example structure for retro with the client. The neutral party interviews as part of the retro structure.
2. Collecting small feedback from clients during the process. Ideas how to achieve this were for example a traffic light system for the project status or every week a "Friday checkup -call" – depending on the scale of the project and client.
3. Feedback as a daily part of the client team process. For example, make it a habit in weekly meetings – everyone is responsible to give feedback, but the manager level should have the responsibility to remember to bring it up.
4. Positive feedback, for example from the client, should be shared immediately to everyone in client teams.
5. "Stardust"- channel for the company. A positive feedback channel for everybody in Creative X. A place where leaders, managers and employees can praise, give recognition and thanks concerning results, great customer feedback or coworkers' great work.

7 REFLECTION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Reflection of the results

Feedback culture is part of organizational culture, and it includes how the company is used to give, receive and seek feedback and what kind of feedback is considered “good feedback” (Kupias, Peltola & Saloranta 2011, 103). Feedback culture and feedback practices are strongly tied together - practices build the feedback culture every day. To improve feedback culture there needs to be also shared willingness and mindset for development. Cultural change requires a leadership, in organizational and a team level, to ensure that the new vision of feedback culture and practices are put in use, and the change is for the better.

Positive feedback culture promotes motivation and development

Creative X employees had a mutual idea about the “good feedback culture and feedback”. Ideal feedback culture feedback flows through all levels – feedback comes at the right time, and everyone is committed to given feedback. Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen (2014, 76) have a similar summary that feedback skills belong to everybody and it needs to flow through organization.

There was also a common view in Creative X how the feedback should always be given in a positive manner, and the purpose is helping others or the projects to develop. Both positive and constructive feedback should be part of healthy feedback culture. The positive manner is created with communication, coaching and engagement with a specific message that encourages the person to continue one’s own thought process (Reilly 2017, 70). The leader’s or team manager’s ability to generate positive emotions in their teams is very important for feedback culture and performance (Green et al. 2017, 22).

For employees in Creative X feedback was fuel to motivation, development and learning. Motivation to work, be excited about work, and be able to develop in your own work were the most common expectations and needs for feedback. These existed in both aspects, personal development and in teamwork. Feedback seems to serve competence development as a part of client work, as well as the personal satisfaction and joy about work. Feedback is crucial for motivation, because it satisfies the psychological need for competence (Souders 2020) and it also supports the autonomy and relatedness needs (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan 2017, 31). Feedback nurtures all the three psychological needs, and on the other hand, poorly given feedback or negative and critical feedback, can harm those needs. People construct their own understanding and work identity from feedback messages that they receive (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 3).

Results considering personal development and support were polarized inside Creative X. Others felt that they have been pushed forward and some people felt that they have no idea how to develop themselves at work. This was supported with the finding that e. g., more presentative work roles got more feedback overall and from the client's side. Getting feedback should not be based on work role or personality, i. e. 'people with a growth-mindset who tend to ask for more external feedback will receive more of it' (Lyons & Bandura 2018, 3), it belongs to everyone and feedback culture and practices cannot depend on external stakeholders. There need to be internal practices on how to provide appropriate feedback to all employees about work performance, which will be even more likely to improve after feedback (Leonard & Pakdil 2016, 97)

A decent amount of quality feedback made the team experience better. Positive feedback has a clear effect on team spirit, but even more important was the feeling of belonging as well as of knowing people better. Effective feedback provides the information for people to build on their strengths and to shore up weaknesses (Burton 2011, 7), which is an important factor in teamwork. Peer feedback also assures that everybody gets enough feedback (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 75). When employees have a strong interpersonal trust in their colleagues and team, they experience more positive learning experiences (Park & Kim 2018, 1411). Remote work challenges options to give feedback to team members and people didn't give enough feedback to their colleagues according to Creative X employees. Also, there were less opportunities to chit chat with colleagues, which affected people's team experience and they missed informal discussions during remote work. The role of informal discussions in facilitating teamwork should be considered (Dixon 2020).

Regular feedback practices are needed

The feedback journey of Creative X client teams (APPENDIX 7) revealed what kind of feedback practices there were and when feedback was given in the client team process. The most significant result was that feedback was quite often buried under the messy and busy process and was usually focused on retros with client feedback. Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen (2014, 56) says that being busy is an excuse. Giving feedback is not only looking back, it is influencing future results and performance.

In Creative X positive feedback came quite naturally, spontaneously and most of the people felt that they got enough positive feedback, even if there was a little bit of polarization. Positive feedback was a win-win-situation for the receiver and giver. In teamwork positive feedback raised the team spirit and personally it was permission to

explore and experiment more. The positive feedback also has to be specific, objective, and relevant to the task or organization (Miller 2010,124), more than just stating “good job”, like Creative X employees expressed. For successful feedback culture the ratio for positive and constructive feedback should be at least 5:1 or 4:1 (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 83, Buron 2011, 16).

Giving constructive feedback felt more challenging but it was very important especially in client teamwork. Timing of constructive feedback was important and there were a lot of problems with timing. People felt that they did not want to bother others with asking feedback because everybody is so busy, or the team process was messy and feedback came too late for changes, or client feedback came too late. Timely constructive feedback and discussions assure that the team is achieving the best possible result. Constructive feedback is critical for improvement (Miller 2010,61), and when team expectations and practices are clear, it provides honest feedback in every step of the way (Tulgan 2015, 20). Remote work influenced feedback timing in two ways. First, people were more committed to sharing documents and giving accurate written feedback. Second, with many digital channels and without the previously used possibility of “quickly asking the peer next to you for advice” -possibility, employees felt that feedback still did not come at the right time.

Creative X employees mentioned lots of tools for feedback and there were forums like weekly meetings and check-ups, but people still felt that there was not enough feedback during the client team process. There was not enough feedback from the client side either. Personal feedback was missing from the client team process, even when daily work tasks are mostly done in client teams. The conclusion is that the client team process needs more regular feedback practices. Even when the client team process is focused on client work, the feedback culture and practices cannot focus only on retros. Team and people in the team need more exact and developing feedback to be able to shine, be motivated and perform better in their work. This will possibly lead to better success and achievements for the client, too.

To have more positive and equal feedback culture and right timely feedback practices, Creative X employees created three ideas in the co-creation workshop. Firstly, improving the client team process and practices, so there would be more regular, specific and also personal feedback. Secondly, sharing positive feedback immediately e.g., from the client. Thirdly, starting a “stardust” -channel where employees can praise their colleagues. All these are great suggestions for more ongoing feedback culture (Tulgan 2015, 17, Buron 2011, 8) and including more positive elements and emotions which will improve

engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment at work (Green et al. 2017, 11-13, Oades et al. 2017, 2).

The “stardust” -channel experiment could also improve equality of feedback between different work roles. Public recognition is the most powerful form of motivation. Recognition improves also well-being and reduces stress (Kamin 2013, 45). In addition, peer-to-peer recognition has a positive impact on the employee experience (Souders 2020). It does not take much to encourage the workplace to become a happier and more positive place (Ackerman, 2020b).

Developing client feedback and retros

Client feedback was usually focused on retros in the client team process. Client feedback during the process was present but sometimes the schedule was too tight to have enough feedback from the client. Remote work has challenged client feedback and right timing of the feedback even more. Having enough feedback from clients should be a priority, and there was a clear willingness to develop these practices. One of the top ideas was creating a few new ways to collect feedback from the client during the process. Suggestions were e.g., traffic light -system for project status and “Friday check-up call”.

Increasing client feedback during the process gives possibilities for a more personalized client experience which is key to success in a competitive business environment (Walker 2017, 6). Creating a feedback loop (Tousley 2020) that goes through the whole client team process gives an advantage to react on client feedback quickly. The ways to collect feedback need to be easy for the client and feel personalized to the project, it does not have to be a complicated digital way, the most important thing is nurturing the client relationship (Walker 2017, 10). Both of the Creative X ideas were promising ways to also improve the client experience and not just get crucial information about the project.

Retros were important according to every employee in Creative X. The bigger the project, the more important it was to look back and analyze things that went well, what needed to be corrected and discussed about the client’s feedback. Retros should be done, regardless of project results. Also, with projects that went well, it is important to stop for a while. Sharing positive emotions with clients can create more productive and happier employees (Nasr, Burton & Gruber 2018, 143-144). Follow-up is an important part of the feedback loop (Tousley 2020), it shows that client feedback has been listened to and learned from. Retros are the most important follow-up step when developing the client feedback participation and learning from the project. But for various reasons, retros were

still missing from many projects in Creative X. Being busy or the team leader not arranging a retro were the most common explanations. People just run towards the next project and move on. There were many templates to use for retros and even retros should be part of the process, the variation was big, and it seems that retros haven't become a habit yet. During the remote work period, there have been fewer retros overall. One reason is probably that teams have been adjusting to remote work, but another thing is that it may need even more focus to arrange a retro in a remote or hybrid model.

Retros with clients were an interesting finding that came up in almost every interview. Some of the employees who have been part of this kind of retro, suggested that Creative X should investigate this kind of cooperation model more. It could develop the client team process and the whole organization. Employees seem to have interest in this kind of feedback process and more companionship style feedback model with clients. In a B-to-B environment, meeting the customer expectations means shifting more toward customer committed thinking and action (Walker 2017, 14). To create a retro with clients -model would be a great way to have more this companionship style relationship with clients. Prioritizing client feedback and interaction the client experience and loyalty can improve.

Two ideas from the co-creation workshop were about developing retros. First one was to have an example structure for the retro with the client. Because the projects differed remarkably from each other (size, team members, economy), there should be a few example templates for retros. Second idea was a client interview made by a neutral party; this could give new perspectives to retros and give a client an easier way to tell if they were not happy with the result or process.

Remote work challenges feedback practices

The change to work remotely was not planned in Creative X, it came by surprise because of the pandemic situation. The online questionnaire results about the remote work and remote teamwork experiences were similar with virtual work challenges in general. On the positive side were people's effort to keep the team spirit up even with the stressful pandemic situation. This sparked the team spirit and increased the team experience in remote work.

The lack of face-to-face contacts made giving feedback harder, spontaneous discussion and sharing were missing, and big things or constructive feedback became "too big" or seemed harsher when written, according to the results from Creative X. Processes were more unclear than before e.g., meaning of different digital channels. In remote work teams

there need to be very clear expectations for team members and one must make sure that there is effective two-way communication all the time, because interpersonal dynamics change when working remotely (Cook 2019, 21).

The hybrid working model occurs when most of the time people work remotely and sometimes, they work in an office or co-working space. Creative X employees were unanimous about the most annoying habit of the remote period: all chat and digital channels were full of messages and sometimes feedback got lost or it should be in a more formal channel. This is typical in virtual teams, Purvanova et al (2020, 10) writes that even with many technology solutions, team members often struggle to find relevant project information, or know who holds what knowledge. This was not wanted to transfer to a hybrid working model.

On the positive side of remote work and feedback were thanking people, open discussion, calling instead of writing, and town-hall meetings. These were wanted to continue in the hybrid working model. All these are variables for positive and open communications, that are an important part of remote work and remote leading (Brower 2020, Smith 2020 and Cook 2019, 52). Creative X employees' most requested thing in the hybrid working model was discussion time with colleagues, without an agenda. This is not surprising, many people's motivation at work involves social interaction (Cook 2019, 54), so they might feel isolated when not working in the office and are technology-dependent for their interaction (Purvanova et al 2020, 9).

7.2 Benefits and useability of main results

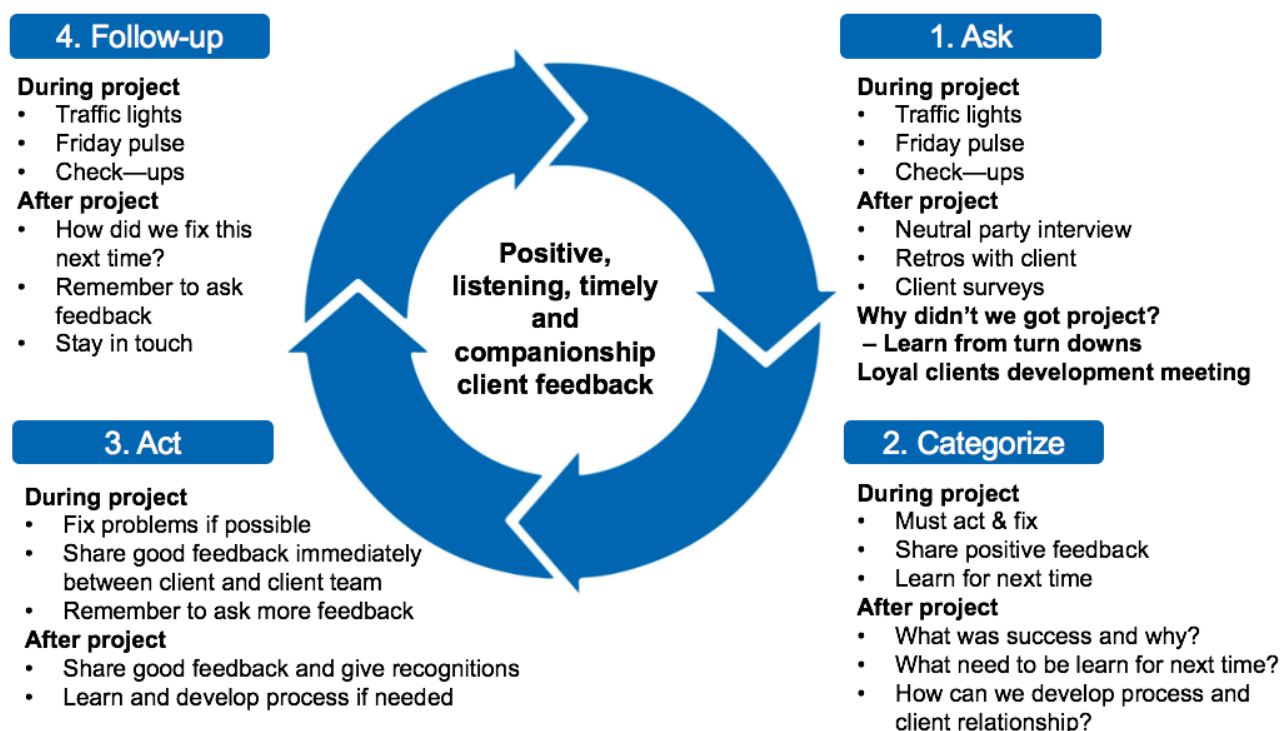
When developing feedback culture as part of client work in a creative agency, it needs to be considered how the changes will affect all levels, i. e. client, organization and employee, and what the benefits will be. Picture 7 shows what benefits each of the top 5 ideas could have on feedback culture at Creative X. Some of the ideas could be applied to other companies, that are either of the same size or in the same business field. For example, the "Stardust" -channel could be beneficial in many organizations to create a more positive feedback culture.

Picture 7. Top 5 ideas and benefits for feedback culture.



More involved client feedback and new practices to create it, was one of the focus points in this thesis development research. Including more client feedback during projects and developing retros were a much-discussed topic. Both the research and development parts found many suggestions, tools and practices for further development. The client feedback of the future could be a much more ongoing process and a more companionship-style relationship. Involving clients more in the process could lead to better client satisfaction for the results and from the client experience side. Picture 8. demonstrates how the customer feedback loop – concept could help to get a more standardized, positive and companionship-style client feedback process in creative agencies. The examples are set in the frame of a creative agency, but the idea is transferable to other business fields, too.

Picture 8. Customer feedback loop as a tool for developing client feedback involvement.



7.3 Reliability ja validity of this thesis

Work-oriented development research is not trying to generalize phenomena, because the change is never totally transferable to other organizations (Kananen 2012, 174). This is true with this thesis also. Creative X and its employees' experiences and thoughts are not directly transferable to other organizations, even if there are lots of findings and results that are similar to literature of feedback culture, feedback practices, learning and development and remote work.

This thesis research and development work was designed with a qualitative approach which is describing people's feelings and thoughts (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 238).

Reliability of qualitative research is usually based on documentation evidence. Good documentation indicates what has been done and how it has been done - traceability is an important reliability factor in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 238, Kananen 2012, 163). This thesis documentation was done carefully in every phase e.g., choosing interviewees, interview forms, field notes, voice recordings, transcriptions, questionnaire answers and statistics and workshop notes. Analyzed and facilitated methods were written open and data saturated well during interviews (Kananen 2012, 162, 169). The reliability of this thesis is good, the same kind of research and development work could be repeated if wanted. The results would be of course different in other companies – but the chosen methods would be repeatable.

In turn, validity speaks for studying the right things. In this thesis some of the topics, like retros and positive feedback, have been repeated in every phase from background information to co-creation workshop, this indicates that these topics are relevant to research and can be developed further. Focus interviews results were validated in an online questionnaire, and in the co-creation workshop all previous results were presented and discussed with participants. All these were done to be sure that right and relevant things are studied and developed in this thesis. These actions increase the validity in this kind of approach, where people know that they are being studied and it might provide a bias to their responses (Walle 2014, 49).

The most important factor in work-oriented development research is change (for the better), so results of development work are as important as the research (Kananen 2012, 162). The final results of this thesis are top ideas how to improve feedback culture and practices as a part of client work in Creative X - in new hybrid working model. To put these changes in use and study how they affect feedback culture, would be the next steps and could create even more validity and meaningfulness.

7.4 Conclusions and research questions

Feedback belongs to everyone in the organization. Feedback culture is part of the organization culture, it is executed on all levels of the organization: leaders, managers and employees. External stakeholders, such as clients, also have an impact on feedback culture. Valued feedback culture and well used feedback are like an inner service in a company that drives better performance, it helps to stay on top in a competitive environment and to create more value to clients because the products or services keep getting better.

Feedback is crucial for learning, motivation and development – personal, team and organizational. Positive feedback culture that can handle constructive feedback increases engagement. In a creative company with creative people who are development-oriented, feedback has to be a daily part of working culture. Inspired, creative people are the biggest capital, so feedback culture needs to support their motivation, learning and engagement. Feedback culture should be led and present every day and be seen, heard and felt by every employee.

In this thesis, the aim was to research and develop feedback culture and practices in a creative agency, Creative X. The research questions of this thesis were:

1. How to develop feedback culture as part of client work - on all levels of client team management, for both employees and clients?
2. How to make feedback a more regular part of client team practices?

Developing Creative X's feedback culture at all levels and in relationship with clients, the focus points were: Involve client feedback better already during the process and particularly in retros. Add more feedback practices in the client team process. Create positive feedback and recognition practices, ensure the equality of feedback.

Client feedback and retros with clients were the hot topic of the results. This, more of a companionship style feedback model, will definitely be the new future in client relationships. In a competitive industry it is crucial for the business to be sure that the client is satisfied with the work. The joint retros were a promising idea. The suggestion is that Creative X should initiate this kind of new cooperation more. It would be also interesting to explore how this kind of client involvement influences the client's satisfaction or employees' opinions about feedback culture.

Research question two concerned regular feedback practices. Feedback works best when it is constantly given and received, and there is enough positive feedback versus constructive feedback e.g., customer feedback loop (picture 8). The messy and busy client team process was missing the feedback practices quite often. Feedback is not a leading tool, but the client team leaders are in a key holder place. To make feedback practices more regular, team leaders have the responsibility to engage feedback routines and make sure that there is time for feedback e.g., in weekly check-ups. Everyone has a responsibility to give feedback, but there need to be areas for feedback, otherwise only the bravest ones will have the courage to give it.

Remote work challenges the feedback culture, this was seen also in this work. Less face-to-face contact makes feedback giving harder, especially constructive feedback. Also, there might be less feedback overall or it disappears in many virtual channels. Creating and practicing good feedback culture in remote or hybrid teams and workplaces definitely needs more research – feedback needs to reach everyone via virtual contacts or the next desk at the office.

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