

Feedforward: Creating a Thriving Culture of Continuous Improvement

We're taught that feedback is how people improve. But feedback often looks backward, and the brain reads criticism as a threat — making it hard to actually hear.

This session introduces feedforward, a coaching-backed approach that focuses on what's next instead of what went wrong. Drawing on UCLA social threat research and the coaching work of Goldsmith & Katzenbach, participants will learn why words shape how feedback lands, and leave with a simple habit for giving feedforward starting this week.

Learning Objectives

- Understand why feedback often triggers defensiveness, even when it's well-meant
- Learn what feedforward is, and how it opens curiosity instead of criticism
- Practice turning real feedback moments into simple, forward-looking questions

Content Outline

Feedback vs Feedforward

- Why feedback puts the brain on the defensive
- What feedforward is instead
- Where the idea came from

The Power of Words

- How language shapes outcomes: Appreciative Inquiry's 4-D cycle
- A harsh line versus a feedforward reframe
- The neuroscience: naming a feeling, or a person's potential, calms the brain's threat response

Making Feedforward a Habit

- A simple 3-step way to give feedforward
- Why a positive focus builds momentum
- Writing and practicing your first feedforward this week