

Guide to Giving and Receiving Feedback

How to get the
best outcomes

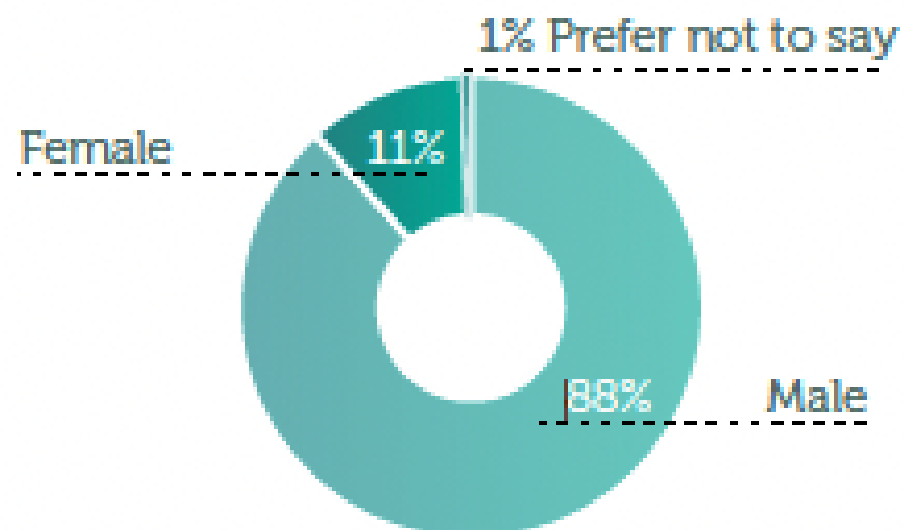
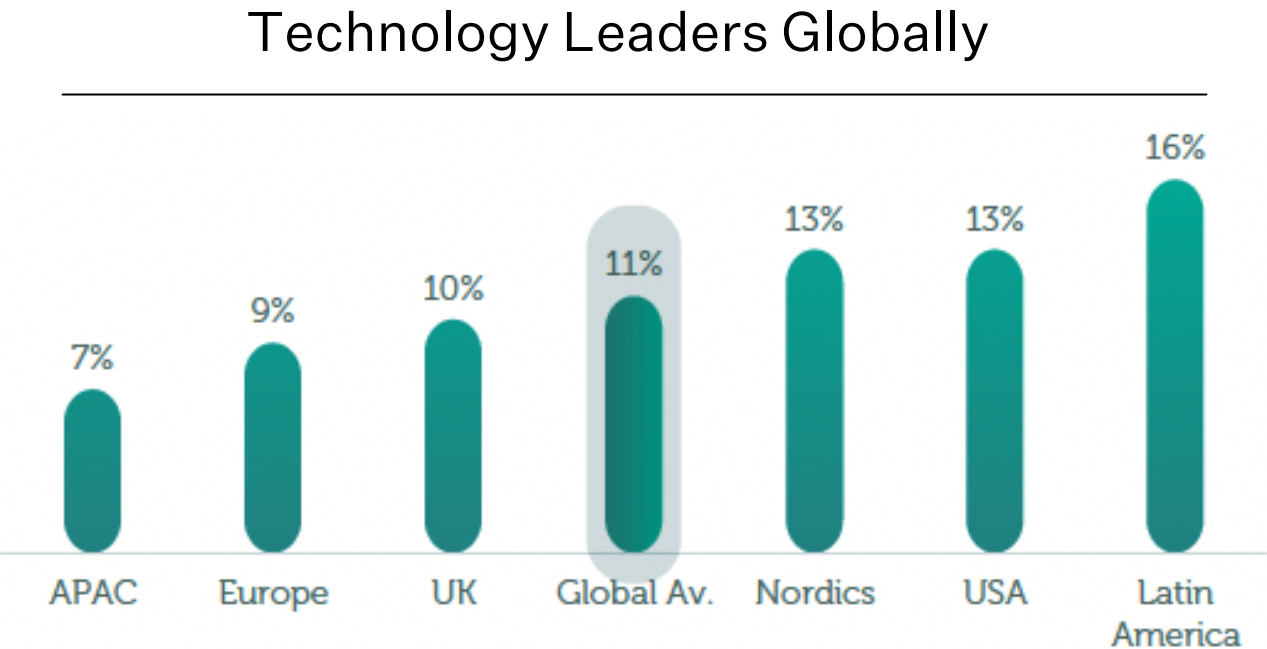
F FACTOR



Men and women get different feedback

Knowing how to provide and respond to feedback is critical, when done well it is an enabler of performance, collaboration, engagement and sense of belonging. Giving feedback is a critical skill for surviving and growing in your career.

However, research shows that it is a gendered phenomenon, meaning men and women are given different feedback. And the differences can lead women down less effective pathways than men and widen the leadership gender gap.



Global CIO Report 2020
Harvey Nash

At a headline level, we know that women don't have as many advancement opportunities as men. They're not in the C-Suite. This research into feedback shows 'why'

Dr Laura Hamill
Organisational Psychologist & Chief Science Officer
Limeade Institute

A 2020 study on the gendered language of performance reviews conducted by Stanford Graduate School of Business revealed clear gender differences in the correlations between language and performance ratings.

The study showed managers expect men and women to enact their jobs as gendered people and then they police the behaviours that fall outside of those expectations, calling out gender atypical behaviour, penalising women's ratings.

Gender was seen to frame who is seen as truly exceptional and who is likely to have the skills necessary to succeed at higher levels.

- Women were called out more often than men for having too aggressive of a communication style
- Women were also viewed as more helpful and communal than men
- High levels of helpful language decrease the likelihood of getting the highest ratings that increase compensation and promotion opportunities
- Taking charge is more valued for men, being associated with the highest ratings for men but not for women
- Men and women are equally likely to receive general feedback about the kinds of improvements they need to make, however higher levels of future-oriented feedback lead to significantly lower ratings for women but not for men
- Less than a quarter of managers in the study believed the criteria for promotion were clear
- Despite getting the same feedback about improvements, women received lower ratings than men, meaning women have to clear a higher scrutiny bar to get to the next level.
- Men were more likely to be viewed as visionary and it was valued more highly in men than women.

VAGUE FEEDBACK HOLDS WOMEN BACK

The data

Over 70% of people feel their performance would improve if they received corrective feedback

Only 1/3 say they receive the feedback they need

Research suggests that women receive more vague feedback than men and that vague feedback is correlated with lower performance review ratings for women but not for men. One recent Harvard Business Review study of performance reviews in a large tech company showed that women received 15% more vague praise than men and men received 20% more developmental feedback linked to business outcomes than women.



References to being "too aggressive"

76% women
24% men

Harvard Business Review

Avoid the traps

1

Ask for specific feedback and context for feedback given, including where you have excelled and where you need to build skills

2

Where vague behaviours or traits are called out negatively, ask what the improved behaviour/trait looks like with specific context for what would demonstrate mastery

The paradox of negative feedback

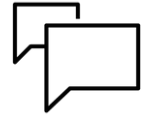
Because receiving negative feedback is often accompanied by unpleasant feelings and thoughts, we tend to think of feedback on either side, giving it or receiving it, as a negative activity. Reframing the feedback interaction as an opportunity to learn more about strengths and how we can further develop them can make a world of difference.

44% of managers believe giving developmental feedback is stressful or difficult

21% of managers admit that they avoid giving development feedback at all



How to receive feedback



FIRST, UNDERSTAND WHETHER YOU HAVE THE MENTAL CAPACITY TO HEAR FEEDBACK. REALLY BE ATTUNED TO WHETHER YOU ARE IN A PLACE TO HEAR WHAT IS ABOUT TO BE SAID. IF NOT, THEN ASK FOR A PAUSE.

“Could we do this tomorrow/next week?”

IT'S OK TO ASK FOR A BETTER TIME.

IT HELPS A LOT IF YOU UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT OF WHAT IS BEING SAID AND YOU MAY NEED TO ASK FOR IT.

“Can you tell me a bit about why you feel you wanted to share this with me?”

or

“What is the context that I should understand...?”

LISTEN. REALLY SIT BACK, BE GROUNDED AND LISTEN. THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU COULD GET FROM THE FEEDBACK, HOW YOU CAN GROW AND LEARN FROM IT. ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS.

“Can you tell me more about that / can you give me some specific examples / can you give me a time where you’ve seen somebody do that really well?”

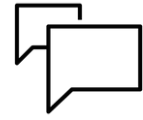
ASK QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND AND THINK ABOUT HOW YOU MIGHT FOLLOW UP ON THAT FEEDBACK.

ASK FOR 2 TO 3 SPECIFIC THINGS THAT YOU COULD DO TO REALLY ADDRESS YOUR FEEDBACK.

“What does it mean to be a great (eg manager/leader) here?” and “Can we talk about that, can we talk about specifically where I am relative to that and how I might close the gap?”.

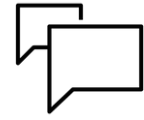
IT'S VITAL THAT WOMEN DO THIS. PUT IT ON PAPER, GET SPECIFIC.

How to give feedback



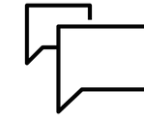
Swap vague praise like "you had a great year" or "people like working with you" for specific feedback that is linked clearly to business outcomes

"You are effective at building team outcomes. You successfully resolved the divide between the engineering team and the product team on which features to prioritise in our last sprint, leading us to ship the product on time."



Help women move past their areas of technical expertise into broader leadership roles by encouraging them to think strategically about the wider context in which the organization operates. Invite them to develop a personal vision for their team, rather than overly focusing on operational details and execution

"What is your personal vision for the team?" and "How does it fit in with the bigger picture?" and "How can you involve others in developing this vision?"

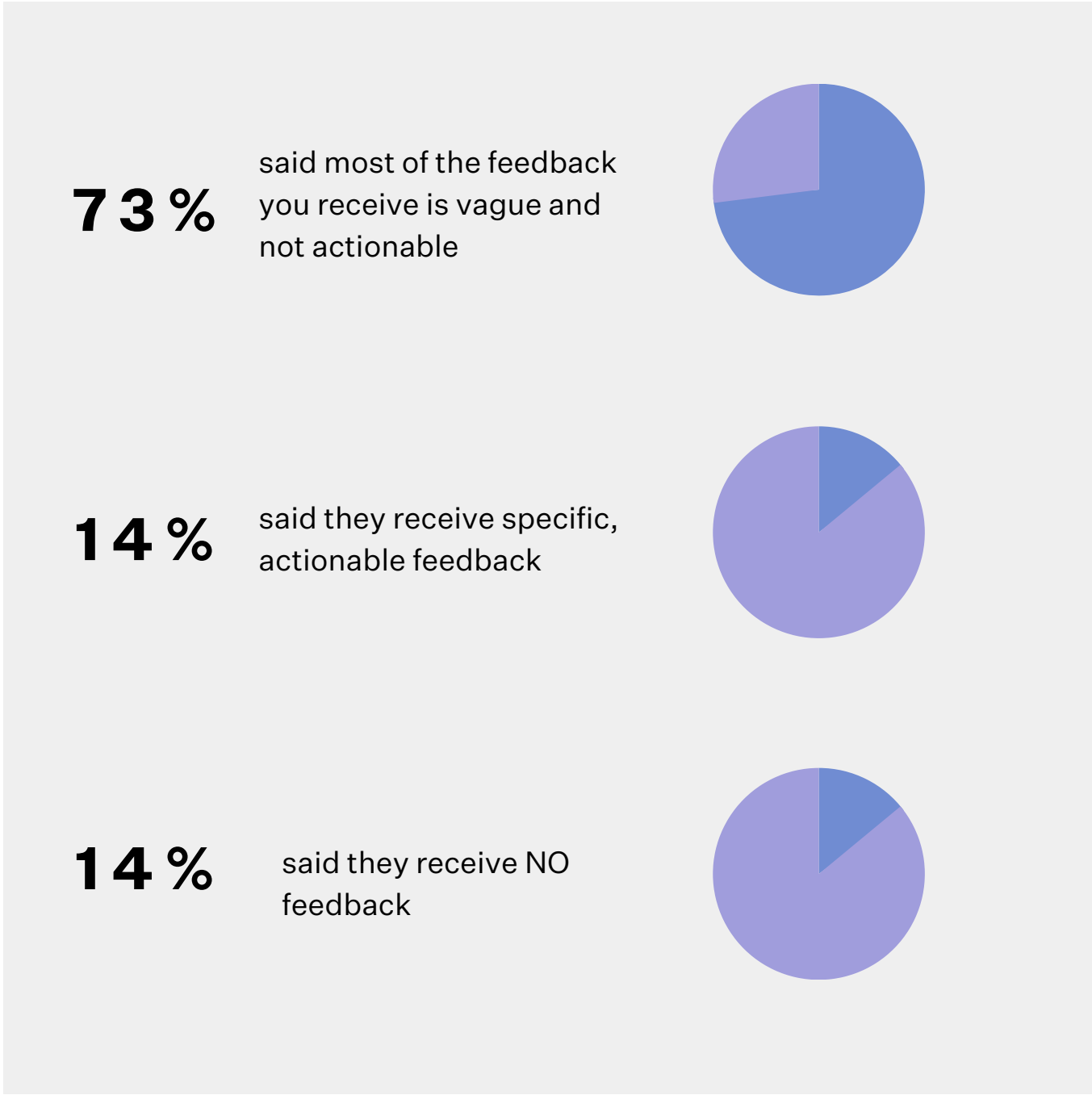


Move beyond generic advice on behaviour traits, to be more specific, for example when addressing confidence, rather than "you need more confidence" try

"What specific skills do you feel less confident about? How can you develop them?" or "Display more confidence in this particular meeting, in this particular way" and in addressing developmental feedback, be specific, "You need to deepen your domain knowledge in the X space — once you have that understanding, you will be able to contribute to the design decisions that impact the customer."

WHAT YOU SAID

WE SURVEYED F FACTOR MEMBERS AND YOU SHARED THE SURVEY WITH PEERS. HERE'S WHAT YOU SAID



The (real) vague feedback you get that's holding you back:

You need to be deeper with data

You're a good leader

You need to act more like a senior

You did a good job on that project

You're too private

You've done great and improved a lot, keep it up

I did not see someone who is thriving and embracing an open mind set under my leadership

Improve stakeholders management

You're doing well

Occasionally you may invest too much time into work that doesn't offer the most immediate customer impact.

You're not there yet. It's difficult for women to get into leadership positions in this culture. How many females do you see in the leadership? And how many of them are Indian?

In Summary

Women are systematically less likely to receive specific feedback tied to outcomes, both when receiving praise and when feedback is developmental. In other words, men are offered a clearer picture of what they are doing well and more specific guidance of what is needed to get to the next level. Therefore you need to be intentional about giving and receiving feedback, having difficult conversations and overcoming gender bias.

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1. Work on trust to create environments for healthy feedback
 2. Make sure feedback is specific and actionable
 3. Give or ask for context, linked to business outcomes
 4. Women don't need to be 'fixed' to be more like men in order to succeed

The F Factor is a community group for women in tech in and is part of Project F
Learn more at www.projectf.com.au

