Asking for Feedback

The more you practice asking for feedback, the more comfortable it becomes. There are 'better' ways of approaching these conversations with your colleagues, making sure they are as constructive and helpful as possible. Here are some hints and tips to get you started:

- **Show that you are open to feedback** - if you look and sound defensive, it will instantly stop people being honest. Look at the person when you ask them for feedback and listen quietly. Keep your arms uncrossed.

- **Focus on the future** – ask what you can do differently in the future to improve. People are much more comfortable talking about what you *could* do than what you *have done* in the past.

  Example: 'Next time I work on this, what could I do more of…?'

- **Ask for specifics** – 'I'd like some feedback' is too broad a statement (and the word 'feedback' doesn't always sit comfortably with people anyway). Focus on a specific area to encourage the person to talk.

  Example: I'm interested in how I make more impact in our team meetings. We've got a meeting next week. What could I try doing differently?

- **Use open questions** – Open questions (*Who, What, When, How, Tell me about…*) will gather more information than closed questions *(Did I …Am I … Will you… Have you…?)* which will tend to give you a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Here are some examples:

  What do you see me doing well in this area? Can you give me an example?
  What would you like to see me doing differently in this area? Can you give me an example?
  Going forward, what could I do more of …? How might that make a difference…? When might it be best for me to try that…?

  Here's a helpful open question that can produce new information. Listen carefully to what they say and don't worry about silence, as responses here tend to require more time - they may need to reflect how working with you makes them *feel* before they can articulate it:

  Example: What can I do to get the best from you when we work together?

- **Keep it simple** – Ask one question at a time. Multiple questions in one sentence will confuse the other person and they will tend to answer the question they are most comfortable with – not necessarily the one you are most interested in hearing the answer to!

- **Be appreciative** – thank people for being honest and let them know that you have found their thoughts helpful. Respond positively and they are much more likely to give you feedback again in the future.

- **Keep asking** – if you ask for feedback regularly, people will begin to expect it and it becomes part of normal team-working life.