Feedback (not only) for Software Developers

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What we will talk about

- Why feedback?
- Types of feedback
- What makes is effective
- Steps
  - Seeking feedback
  - Giving feedback
  - Receiving feedback
  - Using/Applying feedback
- Good practices
- Feedback culture – getting started

Why feedback?

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Why should you talk about feedback?

- Because we care
- Reflecting on ourselves
- Adjusting / improving
- Becoming more valuable for our clients/partners
- Learning and growing
- **Becoming stronger as a team**

How does it help teams?

Feedback improves team effectiveness by

- Fostering a culture of continuous learning
- Addressing problems early ('fail fast')
- Tackling individual conflicts before they affect the broader team
- Creating communication opportunities
- Appreciating team members and their contributions
- Strengthen their confidence
- Increasing trust and safety
- Improve collaboration

What is feedback?

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Our take on feedback

Good intent

Share information to reinforce or improve something

It's a gift

People share their feedback because they care about you - say "thank you!"

You chose how to use it

You decide on whether it has priority for you and what to do with it

What we don't talk about today

Developer & customer feedback loops.

Performance feedback

Positive or reinforcing feedback

Goal

- Let others know where they are good at
- Let others know where they had a positive impact

Why is it important?

- Boost confidence of the receiver
- Reinforce good behaviours

Constructive or redirecting feedback

Goal

- Let others know what we think didn't go well
- Share the negative impact a behaviour, action or communication had

Why is it important?

- Helps receiver to reflect on their behavior
- Creates opportunity for learning & growth

Examples for reinforcing feedback

'I really enjoyed the session you facilitated for the team today. It was well structured and you made clear what outcomes you were aiming for. You paid attention to people's contributions and encouraged the more quiet team members. This ensured that everybody contributed.

How do you feel about it?'

Examples for redirecting feedback

'It was hard for me to follow the session you facilitated today. It felt to me that we were trying to cover a lot of different topics in a short timeframe and the priority wasn't clear to me. Some team members were talking a lot while others stayed quiet. I would have wished for more structure and active facilitation from your side.

How did you perceive the session?'

What makes feedback effective?

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Effective feedback is F.A.S.T.

FREQUENT

Feedback is a muscle to be exercised regularly. Over time, it gets easier.

ACCURATE

Choose words and tone of voice carefully.
Make sure the facts are represented correctly.

SPECIFIC

The more specific you can be about the feedback you're delivering, the better.

TIMELY

The further away you are from a situation, incident or behavior, the less effective it is.

On the importance of frequent and regular

Frequent feedback...

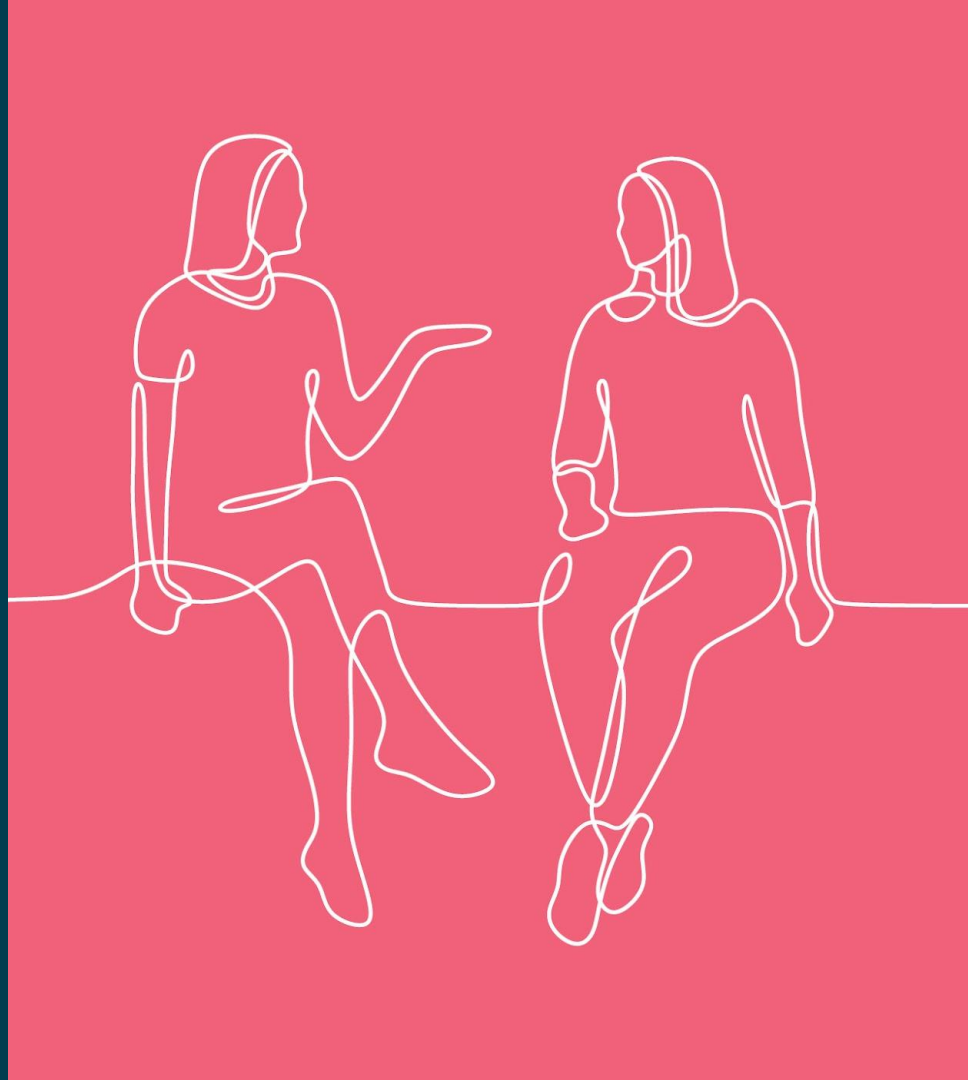...avoids that frustration adds up until there is the "we have to talk" moment

Regular feedback...

...makes our 1:1 conversations a safe space that can be used if needed

Actively seeking for feedback...

...creates room for dialogue and exchange - helps your team to expect feedback from each other

Asking for feedback

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When asking for feedback...

Encourage

Reinforce that feedback is welcomed and appreciated for you.

Give time to prepare

Schedule feedback session a few days in advance or have a regular cadence
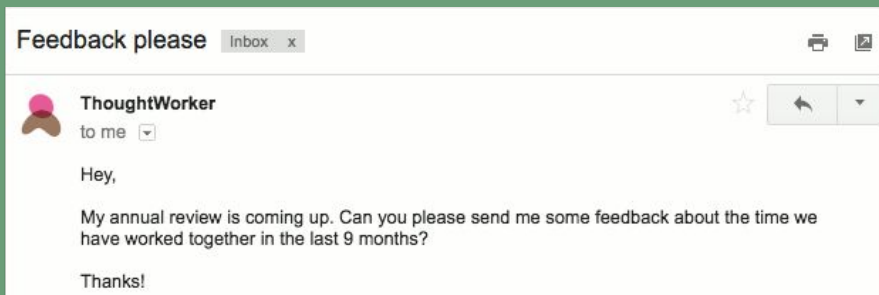
Be specific with what you ask for

Ask about specific topics, e.g.on capabilities and skills you want to grow
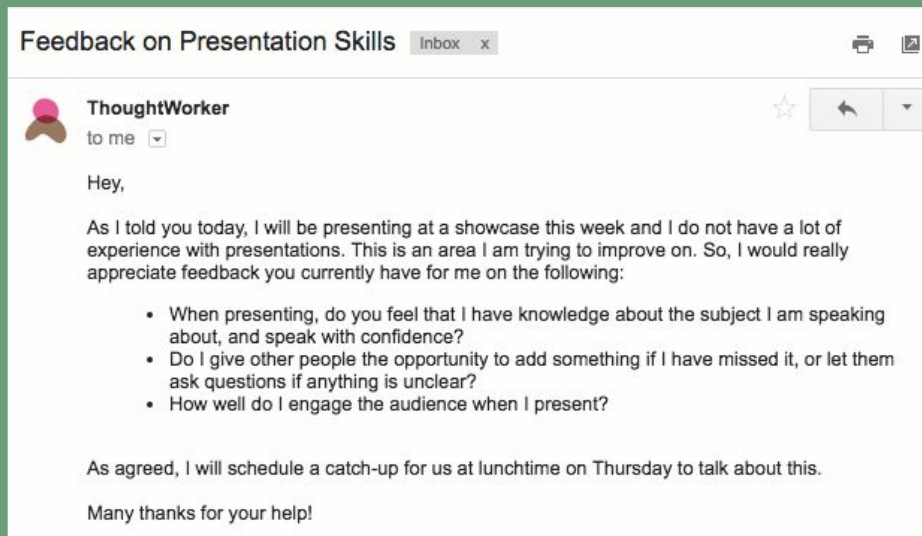
Be intentional

Ask for feedback from those you work closely with.

What can specific look like?

Less like this...

...more like this

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Giving feedback

Giving effective feedback: the SBI model

SITUATION

Define the context
of the behavior
in question.

When?
Where?
With whom?

BEHAVIOR

Describe the specific
behavior you are giving
feedback on.

What happened?
Specific actions?
Specific quotes?

IMPACT

Define the perceived
or real impact of the
behavior in question.

How were you affected?
Who else was impacted?
What were the results?

Giving feedback - examples

| SITUATION	BEHAVIOR	IMPACT
EXAMPLE #1 During the kick-off with the client last week,	you used a strong metaphor and imagery to illustrate the issues we are facing.	This caught the attention of everyone in the room, ensuring they understood the urgency and listened to our suggestions on how to proceed.
EXAMPLE #2 During our check-in meeting the other day,	you challenged our main stakeholder in front of her boss.	I clearly noticed she felt unpleasantly surprised by your comments.

Avoid the feedback sandwich trap
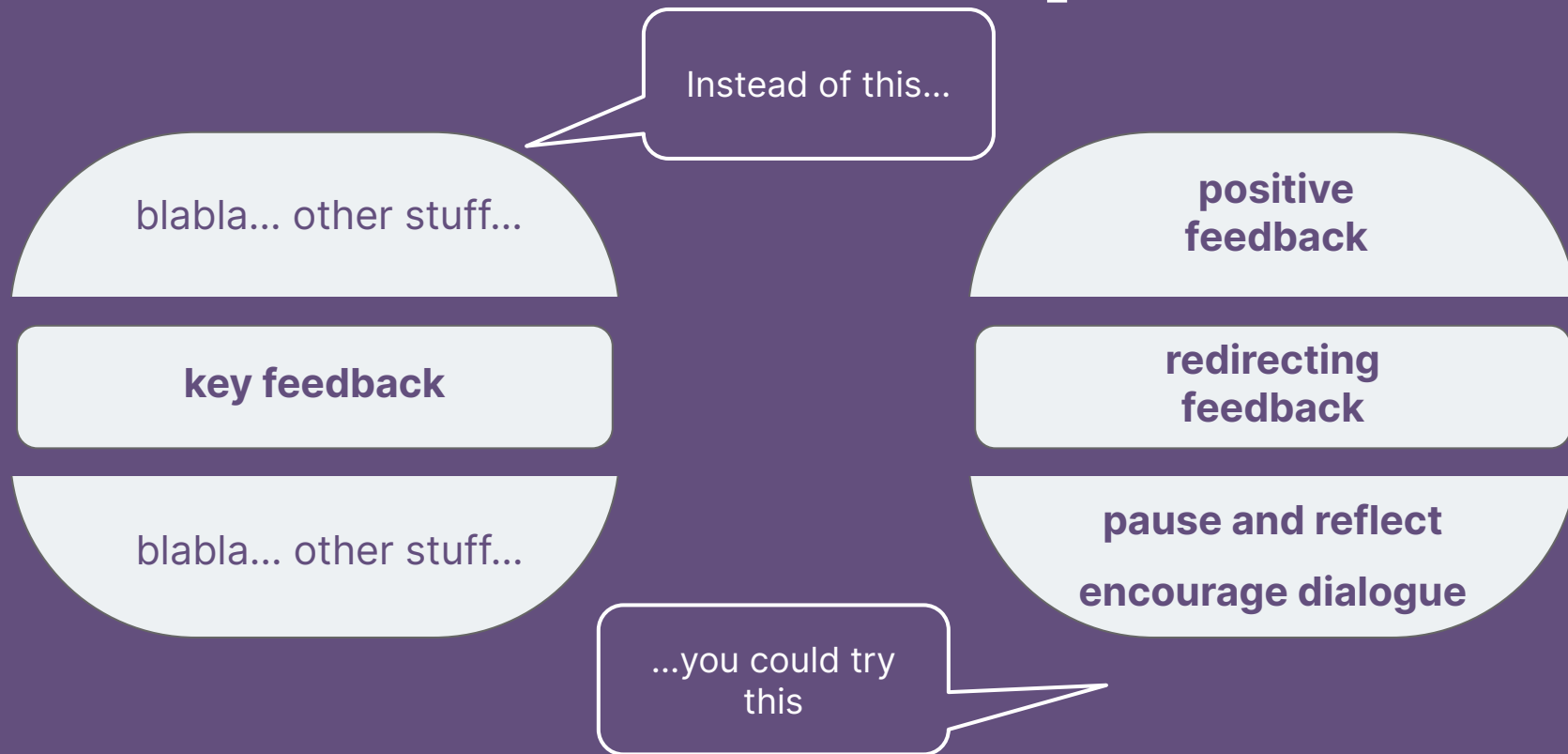
Receiving feedback

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Things to avoid when receiving constructive feedback...

- Denying
- Defending
- Justifying
- Deflecting
- Digressing

"I can't believe you are bringing this up. I noticed you were late last week."

"I wasn't talking over others. It was just a high energy meeting."

...rather

- Make it a conversation
- Stay positive so they feel safe
- Be curious, ask questions
- Ask for examples
- Take notes for later reflection

"Thanks. I am trying to understand this - could you give me some examples?"

"I can't remember any situation when this happened - can you help me to dig deeper?"

Breaking down challenging feedback

DON'T GET MAD, GET CURIOUS.

*"What's **wrong** with this feedback?"* ⟶ "What might be **right**?"

Applying feedback

Filter & look for patterns

Filter

- Does it help me to improve in my areas of focus?
- Does it impact my ability to grow?
- Does it affect my team or colleagues negatively if I don't change?

Seek for patterns

- Have I received similar feedback multiple times?
- Do other colleagues relate to or confirm this feedback?
- Is this a recurring theme throughout my professional (or personal) history?

Decide which feedback you want to apply

- Applying feedback, you typically
  - 1. Reinforce a behaviour
  - 2. Redirect a behaviour
- Understand the feedback in depth
- Follow up with feedback giver(s)
- Define problem statement and goal (now vs. future state)
- Seek support from others
- Plan your actions
- Collect feedback, reflect and learn

Good practices for feedback

Consider larger groups vs 1:1s

Topics to reflect on as a team

At least when hierarchy is involved:

"Praise in public - criticize in private"

Groups – Prime Directive and Safety Check

Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand.

Source: Norm Kerth, Project Retrospectives: A Handbook for Team Review

5 — I am open to talk about anything and want to explore others' thoughts as well as may own.

4 — I am open to talk about most things, but a few small topics I might keep quiet on.

3 — I am happy to sit and listen and I will talk if something I feel strongly about comes up.

2 — I am not comfortable talking. Even when I have a strong opinion, I will keep it to myself.

1 — I am not comfortable being here. I want to leave.

1:1 – Consider the setting

- Don't give feedback in the heat of the moment
- Don't force your anger down someone's throat
- Schedule regular sessions to avoid the "we have to talk moment"
- Understand readiness to receive feedback
- Replay your personal reactions — don't tell how good or bad they are, it is about your experience of it — so focus on how you felt.

Take notes for later reflection

- Support personal reflection
- "Monitor" topics over time / document development
- Backlog for annual feedback/reviews
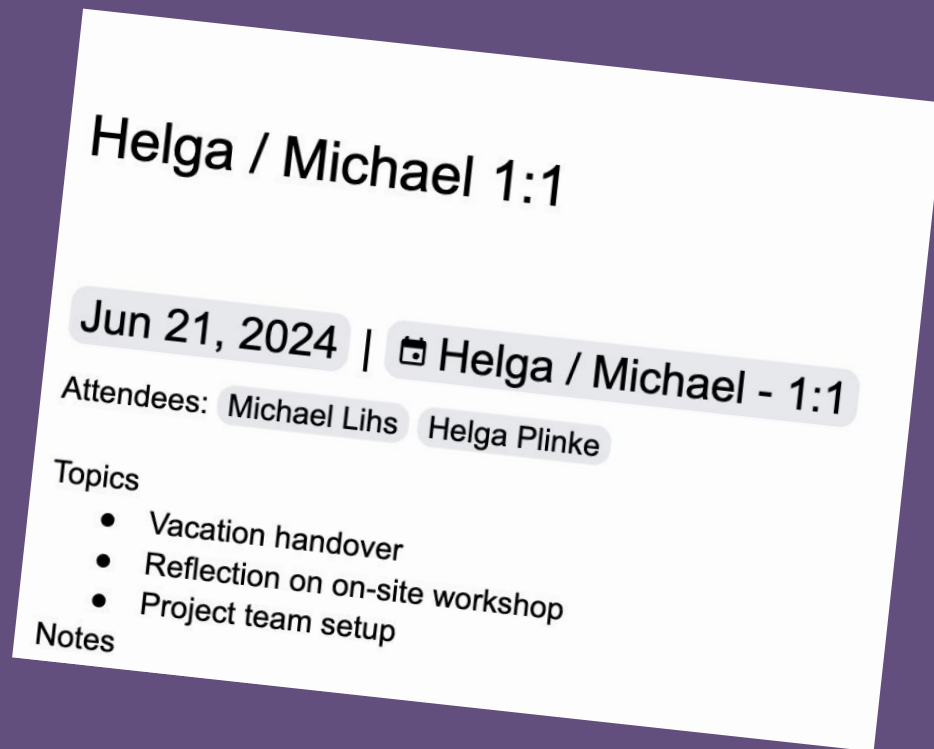
Avoid indirect feedback

- Don't let others collect feedback on your behalf and then share it back as a 3rd party
- Don't let others do the filtering and prioritisation
- You lose the ability to ask questions and follow-up
- Whenever possible, make feedback a conversation

Creating a feedback culture – how to get started

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Introducing feedback in your teams

Speedback

Like speed dating, but with feedback. Rotating pairs, 5 minutes of feedback per pair, then switch.

Retrospectives

Team exercise to reflect on what when well, what didn't and what you want to change. Insights can feed into 1:1 conversations.

Feedback Fridays

Start with a fixed day in the week / in the month to have feedback sessions in the team. Increase / decrease the cadence upon demand - but make it regular.
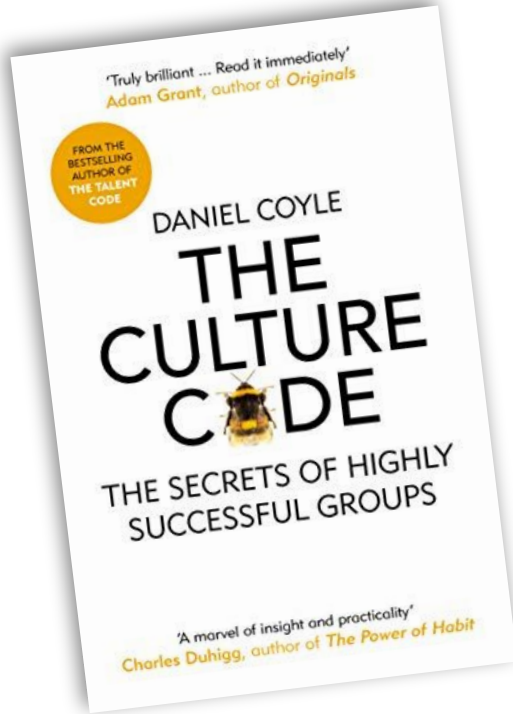
Lead by example

As a leader, actively seek for feedback by scheduling 1:1s and clearly state the expectation that this happens between any team members.

Some questions to get you started

Getting your first 1:1s started can be a little awkward – here are some questions that might help you to break the ice…

- What are your current growth goals?
- How can I support you with them?
- What do you expect from me (on this project)?
- Is there anything I should know if working with you?
- Can I give you some feedback on *your presentation at the client yesterday*?
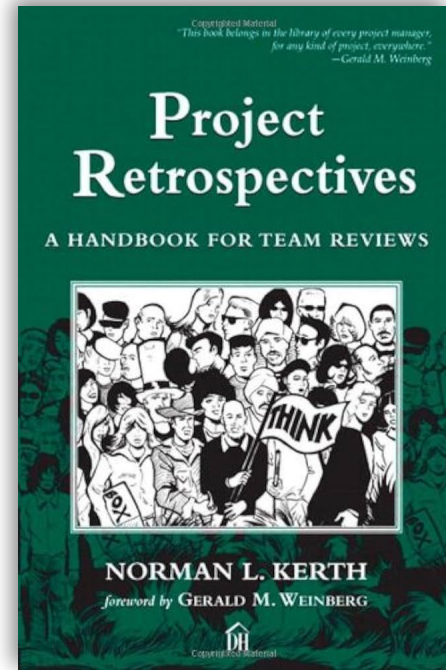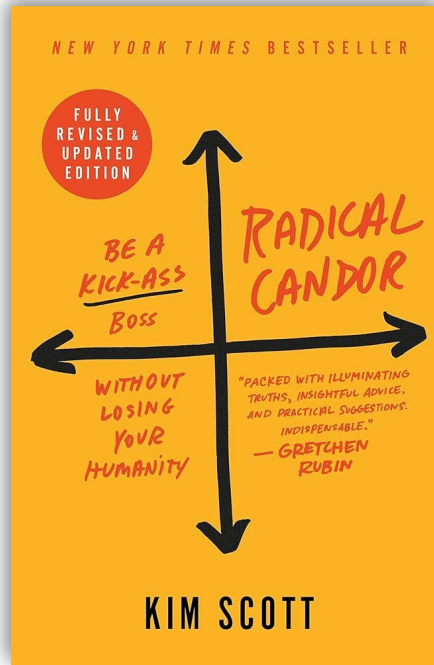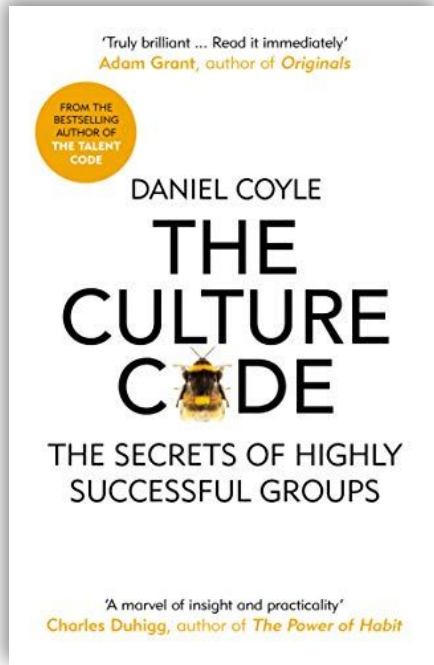- Send out questions for your 1:1 the day before

Clownfish and feedback

'Truly brilliant ... Read it immediately'
Adam Grant, author of *Originals*

FROM THE
BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF
THE TALENT
CODE

DANIEL COYLE

THE
CULTURE
CODE

THE SECRETS OF HIGHLY
SUCCESSFUL GROUPS

'A marvel of insight and practicality'
Charles Duhigg, author of *The Power of Habit*

At Pixar, those uncomfortable moments happen in what they call **BrainTrust meetings**. The BrainTrust is Pixar's method of assessing and improving its movies during their development. (**Each film is BrainTrusted about half a dozen times**, at regular intervals.) The meeting brings the film's director together with a handful of the studio's veteran directors and producers, all of whom watch the latest version of the movie and **offer their candid opinion**. From a distance, the BrainTrust appears to be a routine huddle. Up close, it's more like a **painful medical procedure**—specifically, a dissection that spotlights, names, and analyzes the film's flaws in breathtaking detail. A BrainTrust meeting is not fun. It is where directors are told that their **characters lack heart, their storylines are confusing, and their jokes fall flat**. But it's also where those movies get better. "**The BrainTrust is the most important thing we do by far**," said Pixar president Ed Catmull. "**It depends on completely candid feedback**."

Further resources

'Truly brilliant ... Read it immediately'
Adam Grant, author of *Originals*

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Project Retrospectives

A HANDBOOK FOR TEAM REVIEWS

THINK

NORMAN L. KERTH

foreword by GERALD M. WEINBERG

N.O.W. IT: Stories from a high performing team

How did you like our talk?

- Was there anything you missed?
- Did we use good examples?
- Did the slides & visuals help digesting the content?

Please reach out to us and help us to improve

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