



July 2021

"An organization does not live by its members agreeing with one another at all times about everything. It lives by people committing to support the decisions and the moves of the business." – Andy Grove

"Winning has a price. And leadership has a price. So, I pulled people along when they didn't want to be pulled. I challenged people when they didn't want to be challenged. And I earned that right. Once you join the team you live at a certain standard that I play the game (at) and I wasn't going to take anything less. I wanted to win but I wanted them to be a part of it as well. - Michael Jordan

INTRO

Open and honest feedback are the foundations of high performing cultures designed for continuous improvement. We want to build a company where it's okay for freewheeling discussions to get heated. Where ideas stand on their own, independent of where they come from. And where disagreement is collaborative, aimed at finding the best answer, rather than being right. No matter how passionate, a successful investment culture is dependent upon the team's ability to function effectively in such an environment.

We put the following guidelines together to help us do that. And we are sharing them here to start a dialogue, ask for your feedback, and give our clients a look into "how the sausage is made at Broyhill." BAM's Feedback Guidelines include key takeaways from the Netflix Culture Deck, which Sheryl Sandberg called "the most important document to come out of Silicon Valley," along with our 5A Feedback Model (adopted from Netflix's 4A Feedback Process), advice from *The Culture Code* (one of the best books on culture ever published), and a list of related resources and suggested reading from the Broyhill Library.¹

This isn't easy. Most of us have a tendency to avoid conflict. But conflict and disagreement are necessary components of problem solving. We are a work in progress. And that's okay, because it means we are still learning. Building a company culture doesn't have a finish line. We will always be a work in progress.

Great teams, like great companies, find a way to transform weakness into strength.

Note that this document is a blend of direct quotes, excerpts, and our own contributions from the sources identified in each section. If we have taken anything out of context or failed to give proper attribution, please understand that was not our intent. It is simply the result of a creating a "living" document that has evolved over many iterations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM "NO RULES RULES"

The first rule of feedback: Only say something about someone that you **will** say to their face. We've all heard this one, in some form or fashion, since we were kids on the playground. But it's safe to assume all of us are guilty of ignoring it at one time or another. The reason this is so important is more than just bad karma. It's because people **need** to hear your feedback.

The goal of feedback is to help each other succeed, even if that means that feelings occasionally get hurt. If you fail to speak up when you disagree or have feedback that would be helpful, it is tantamount to being disloyal to the team. **Your feedback could help the business, but by choosing not to share it, you are choosing not to help.**

It's stressful and unpleasant to hear what we are doing poorly, but after the initial stress, this feedback really helps. **We learn faster and accomplish more when we make giving and receiving feedback a continuous part of how we collaborate. Feedback helps avoid misunderstanding, creates a culture of accountability, and reduces the need for hierarchy and rules.**

Frequent candid feedback exponentially magnifies the speed and effectiveness of our team. A culture of candor is one in which everyone gives and receives a lot of feedback. It ensures that everyone on the team shares responsibility for each other's behaviors and takes pressure off one person as the primary giver of feedback overseeing everyone's work.

Feedback can and should be given exactly when and where it will help most. Until this becomes second nature, let's build feedback into all our regular meetings.

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Candor is like going to the dentist. Even if you encourage everyone to brush daily, some won't. Those who do may still miss the uncomfortable spots. A thorough session every six to twelve months ensures clean teeth and clear feedback.

Performance reviews are not the best mechanism for a candid work environment, primarily because the feedback usually goes only one way (down) and comes from only one person (the boss).

A written 360 review is a better mechanism for annual feedback. These reviews should avoid anonymity and numeric ratings. Instead, we'll use a "Start, Stop, Continue" format to ensure we give concrete, actionable feedback rather than pats on the back.

CP to share his own 360 Reviews with the team annually. The aim here is to strengthen transparency and create "reverse accountability" so the team is comfortable calling me out for bad behavior. One benefit of our small team is that we can each give feedback to everyone through annual 360 Reviews.

Positive feedback is fine, but keep the mix weighted toward developmental action items – aim for 25% positive and 75% developmental. Nonactionable fluff should be discouraged and stamped out.

GOOD ADVICE FROM THE CULTURE CODE

Over-communicate expectations. Leaders should be explicit and persistent about sending big, clear signals that establish expectations, model cooperation, and align language and roles to maximize helping behavior.

"I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations, and I know that you can reach them." This magical feedback contains three separate cues:

- You are part of this group.
- This group is special; we have high standards here.
- I believe you can reach those standards.

Make sure everyone has a voice. Many groups follow the rule that no meeting can end without everyone sharing something. Others establish regular forums where anyone can bring an issue or question before the group no matter how controversial it might be. No matter how strong the rule, the key is to have leaders who seek out connection and make sure voices are heard.

Avoid giving sandwich feedback. Instead separate the two into different processes. Handle negatives through dialogue, first by asking if the person wants feedback, then having a learning focused two-way conversation about the needed growth. Handle positives through ultra-clear bursts of recognition and praise.

Make sure the leader is vulnerable first and often. Group cooperation is created by small, frequently repeated moments of vulnerability. None carries more power than the moment a leader signals vulnerability. "I screwed that up" are the most important words a leader can say. Leaders should ask their people three questions:

- What is one thing that I currently do that you'd like me to continue to do?
- What is one thing that I don't do frequently enough that I should?
- What can I do to make you more effective?

BROYHILL 5A FEEDBACK GUIDELINES

- **AIM TO ASSIST:** Feedback must be given with positive intent. Giving feedback in order to get frustration off your chest, intentionally hurting the other person, or furthering your own agenda is not tolerated. Clearly explain how a specific behavioral change will help the individual or the company, not how it will help you. “The way you pick your teeth in meetings with external partners is irritating” is wrong feedback. Right feedback would be, “If you stop picking your teeth in external partner meetings, the partners are more likely to see you as professional, and we’re more likely to build a strong relationship.”
- **MAKE IT ACTIONABLE:** Your feedback must focus on what the recipient can do differently. Wrong feedback would be, “Your presentation is undermining its own messages.” Right feedback is, “The way you ask the audience for input is resulting in only some people participating.” Even better would be: “If you find a way to solicit contributions from others in the room your presentation will be more powerful.”
- **APPRECIATE:** Natural human inclination is to provide a defense or excuse when receiving criticism; we all reflexively seek to protect our egos and reputation. When you receive feedback, you need to fight this natural reaction and instead ask yourself, “How can I show appreciation for this feedback by listening carefully, considering the message with an open mind, and becoming neither defensive nor angry?”
- **ACCEPT OR DISCARD:** You will receive lots of feedback from lots of people. You are required to listen to and consider all feedback provided. You are not required to follow it. Say “thank you” with sincerity. But both you and the provider must understand that the decision to react to the feedback is entirely up to the recipient.
- **HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE.** If you decide to accept the feedback, put a plan in place to hold yourself or your colleague accountable. Ensure that there is clarity and agreement on how to move forward, then set realistic expectations for the next steps. Regularly track and measure progress.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BROYHILL LIBRARY

[The Culture Code](#)

[No Rules Rules](#)

[It's Your Ship](#)

[Dream Big](#)

[The Five Dysfunctions of a Team](#)

[From Good to Great](#)

[Turning the Flywheel](#)

[Never Split the Difference](#)

[High Output Management](#)

[Netflix Culture Deck](#)

[Bridgewater's Principles](#)

[Extreme Ownership](#)

[Plain Talk](#)

[Shoe Dog](#)

[Ego is the Enemy](#)

[The Boys in the Boat](#)

[Zero to One](#)

[Creativity, Inc.](#)

[The Innovators](#)

[The Idea Factory](#)

[Sam Walton: Made in America](#)

[Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose](#)

[Trillion Dollar Coach: The Leadership Playbook of Silicon Valley's Bill Campbell](#)

[Leaders Eat Last](#)

[The Score Takes Care of Itself: My Philosophy of Leadership](#)

[Eleven Rings: The Soul of Success](#)

SUGGESTED READING

Articles & Additional Resources

- [Amazon Leadership Principles](#)
- [How to Provide Great Feedback When You're Not In Charge](#)
- [How to Give Tough Feedback That Helps People Grow](#)
- [How to Give Feedback People Can Actually Use](#)
- [Does Your Team Have an Accountability Problem?](#)
- [How Leaders Can Ask for the Feedback No One Wants to Give Them](#)
- [What Good Feedback Really Looks Like](#)
- [The Basecamp Employee Handbook](#)
- [McKinsey Quarterly: Better Bosses](#)

Google [re:Work](#)

Learning & Development

- [Create an Employee Learning Program](#)
- [Foster an Innovative Workplace](#)
- [Goal Setting](#)
- [Develop & Support Managers](#)
- [Set & Communicate a Team Vision](#)
- [Care Professionally & Personally for your Team](#)
- [Stay Technical & Results Focused](#)
- [Empower Your Team](#)
- [Identify What Makes a Great Manager](#)
- [Give Feedback to Managers](#)
- [Coach Managers to Coach](#)

Unbiasing

- [Raise Awareness about Unconscious Bias](#)
- [Hold Everyone Accountable](#)
- [Gather Data & Measure Decisions](#)
- [Evaluate Subtle Messages](#)
- [Use Structure & Criteria](#)