

THE LEADERSHIP ANALYTICS GROUP - POWERED BY

DevelapMe



SEVEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT REAL-TIME FEEDBACK

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK HAS BECOME A POPULAR BUZZWORD

Fortune 500 companies and small businesses alike are revamping their performance management systems to increase agility, transparency and collaboration. As of writing this article, searching “real-time feedback” yields 374,000,000 results. You may have heard a lot about real-time feedback, but with so many different interpretations and opinions available, it can be difficult to understand exactly what the real-time feedback process entails. Below, we dispel seven popular misconceptions regarding real-time feedback. By clarifying what real-time feedback isn’t, we hope to leave you with a deeper understanding of what it is and why you should embrace it.

THE MYTHS: REAL-TIME FEEDBACK...

- 1 **MUST BE SENT IMMEDIATELY**
- 2 **IS TOO DIFFICULT FOR EMPLOYEES TO ADOPT**
- 3 **MUST COME FROM ONLY MANAGERS**
- 4 **IS TOO FREQUENT, CREATING “NOISE”**
- 5 **REPLACES HUMANS WITH TECHNOLOGY**
- 6 **LACKS DEPTH**
- 7 **IS A TREND THAT DOESN'T GENERATE RESULTS**
- 8 **BONUS ATTACKS THE INDIVIDUAL AND ALLOWS EMPLOYERS TO RANK EMPLOYEES AND REWARD THEM ACCORDINGLY**

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK MUST BE SENT IMMEDIATELY

One of the primary real-time feedback misconceptions is that the feedback must be delivered immediately. However, this is a fundamental misunderstanding. Real-time feedback should be provided as quickly as is *optimal*, not as quickly as is *possible*. Forcing employees to immediately provide feedback under any circumstances could lead to employees rashly sending rushed or emotionally-charged feedback. Delivering clear, detailed feedback after an event is much more valuable than delivering low quality feedback immediately.

Feedback timeliness is crucial because it increases organizational agility and enables the recipient to rapidly improve. Promptly providing feedback also allows both the feedback provider and recipient to recall details with clarity.

However, immediacy is not paramount. If you feel overly emotional or don't have enough time to send detailed feedback, yet feel the event deserves recognition, jot down the main points and wait until later! By doing so, you preserve crucial details that would be lost in an annual performance review and generate rapid performance improvement in a positive, constructive manner.

We make it clear that feedback quality is paramount, and sending feedback even days after an event occurs massively increases agility compared to an annual review. Ultimately, employees should prioritize feedback quality and provide feedback as promptly as is convenient.

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK IS TOO DIFFICULT FOR EMPLOYEES TO ADOPT

Some view the real-time feedback process as just another trend that today's busy workers will not sustainably incorporate into their regular activities. We at DevelapMe fully agree building a new habit can be very difficult. However, providing workplace feedback is far from a new activity for employees. Furthermore, the workplace consensus is that annual performance reviews are deeply flawed and insufficiently effective. If annual performance reviews are to be eliminated or relegated from the primary means of organizational performance feedback, a superior process must complement, if not replace, them. Real-time feedback has been shown to consistently power elevated performance when properly implemented. Therefore, the question becomes whether or not real-time feedback mechanisms support sustainable adoption.

For an adopted technique to become a habit, it must meet a need and have a reward. Real-time feedback meets both criteria!

Employees, particularly millennials, desire more frequent, higher-quality feedback. To seize control of their careers and elevate workplace performance, employees need to understand where they excel, where they can improve, and what steps they should take to do so. Employees reap rewards by applying the feedback, allowing them to improve performance in their respective roles and organizations.

Real-time feedback provides employees with access to the pipeline of feedback they desire, and rapid, continuous performance improvement solidifies employee "buy-in." Time and time again, our team observes that employees who receive feedback begin rapidly improving. Upon seeing results, employees increase how frequently they provide and seek real-time feedback from others in their network. DevelapMe creates a positive cycle which naturally incentivizes employees to continuously provide feedback to others and seek it for themselves.

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK MUST COME FROM ONLY MANAGERS

Many of us are accustomed to traditional top-down hierarchical structures, in which feedback is primarily provided by managers. Real-time feedback skeptics find it hard to believe that already-busy managers have enough time to provide frequent feedback to each of their direct reports. However, real-time feedback generates the greatest benefits in open, honest cultures of collaboration. Traditional hierarchical structures limit performance improvement. Therefore, employees should seek feedback from a wide variety of sources within their respective organizations.

Employees need the perspectives of managers, peers, and direct reports alike to gain a truly holistic performance picture. Therefore, our team at DevelapMe strongly advocates for hierarchical flattening to boost creativity and collaboration, which we discuss in greater detail [here](#). Real-time feedback is most effective when accompanied by a cultural embrace of honesty and transparency which encourages employees to seek feedback from a variety of relevant organizational sources.

Managers are essential sources of feedback, but receiving feedback solely from bosses stifles feedback quantity and quality.

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK IS TOO FREQUENT, CREATING “NOISE”

In a work climate in which employees are already bombarded by emails, texts and other notifications, skeptics fear real-time feedback will simply get lost in the “noise” of technological clutter. Some envision real-time feedback getting swept away in a sea of unopened emails and ignored alerts. However, much of this technological noise comes from spam, advertising and other unwanted sources of information employees cannot avoid. Employees want more feedback, and they want it in real-time. According to a [LinkedIn talent blog](#), “5 Employee Feedback Stats That You Need to See,” 80% of Gen Y said they prefer on-the-spot recognition to formal reviews. Therefore, our team at DevelapMe dedicates itself towards getting employees the feedback they want as cleanly, efficiently and impactfully as possible.

DevelapMe provides both ease of use and depth because it boils feedback down to its critical components, eliminating excess content and “dimming” noise.

Many of the concerns regarding feedback frequency stem from a notion that real-time feedback entails “feedback on everything all the time.” However, constant feedback is unhelpful and simply not possible. It takes time to provide feedback, and everyone in the workplace has their own individual tasks to complete. Just as no one wants to receive constant feedback on minute details of their lives, no one wants to devote time towards constantly providing it. While DevelapMe ensures providing feedback is efficient and effective, employees will only take time to give feedback if they believe doing so will generate genuine results. Feedback frequency is a self-regulating process because employees will only receive feedback on events that their peers view as sufficiently significant to warrant spending time interpreting and explaining. Misconceptions regarding feedback frequency are partially perpetuated by misconceptions regarding the role of technology in the real-time feedback environment, leading us to the next myth.

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK REPLACES HUMANS WITH TECHNOLOGY

For some, terms such as “artificial intelligence,” “machine learning,” or “algorithms,” conjure ideas of robotic systems constantly surveilling employees and generating anesthetized assessments. However, providing and interpreting feedback is an inherently human activity. Plenty of technological processes already exist to measure workplace performance, such as items per minute scanned, sales made per week, and so on. These processes might be useful in quantifying certain aspects of workplace performance, but they rarely provide insights on how individuals can develop and grow in their roles. Our team has no interest in mechanically ranking employees; rather, we focus on extracting and liberating human insights to aid personal development and organizational performance.

Optimizing real-time feedback involves leveraging technology to maximize the quality of feedback people receive from each other.

DevelapMe technology gives each employee personalized attention, a voice in their organization, and the ability to seize control of their personal development. For example, DevelapMe users have access to a Virtual Coach, [Athena](#), which provides high-level oversight to support employees. Athena, a series of AI-based algorithms, serves as a supplementary interpreter of feedback data to enhance human feedback, not replace it. Almost paradoxically, properly implemented technology further humanizes the feedback process by improving existing systems and empowering employees without replacing the critical human component. Ultimately, real-time feedback is provided by people for the benefit and development of other people.

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK LACKS DEPTH

A frequent critique of real-time feedback goes something along the lines of, “If this feedback is so quick and simple to send, it can’t possibly contain enough depth to yield genuine results.” If feedback is hastily sent and superficial, it is unlikely to lead to improvement and could even prove detrimental! However, the very nature of real-time feedback grants it depth. Promptness allows feedback providers to capture details that would be lost in a traditional review, providing the feedback while the event is still fresh in the recipient’s mind. Context can be recorded before memories of the event are blurred or lost.

DevelapMe’s feedback framework ensures providing feedback is a quick and easy process that conveys specificity, detail and depth. DevelapMe siphons feedback into organization-specific competencies relevant to job performance. Competencies are further divided into behaviors. Moreover, comments provide context and recommend action steps. The DevelapMe feedback framework allows an employee to provide

detailed feedback highlighting where another employee excels or explaining an area for improvement—all within a matter of minutes of the event’s occurrence! If a recipient is left confused by feedback or wants further information, he or she does not have to wait for a formalized meeting for clarification. All DevelapMe users are encouraged to actively request feedback. The individual can request more feedback from the provider, or comment on the feedback they received. Feedback “depth” is somewhat subjective, but we at DevelapMe believe specific, constructive, real-time feedback is amongst the most valuable feedback employees can receive.

Ultimately, depth may be subjective but data is not. If real-time feedback lacked depth, receiving it would not improve (and could possibly hurt!) performance. However, as the results overwhelmingly show, this is not the case, leading us to our final point.

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK IS A TREND THAT DOESN'T GENERATE RESULTS

Real-time feedback is a revolution, not a fad. According to a Harvard University and University of Southern California [empirical study](#), “Seeing Where You Stand: From Performance Feedback to Performance Transparency,” transparent performance data has displaced traditional performance feedback in nearly 10 percent of Fortune 500 companies.” This was in 2015! A *Harvard Business Review* [article](#), “The Performance Management Revolution,” reports Deloitte findings that only 12% of surveyed U.S. companies were *not* planning to rethink their performance management systems. Business researcher Josh Bersin estimates that about 70% of multinational companies are moving towards a real-time model of regular conversations regarding performance.

Real-time feedback is no fringe movement: the process is being embraced by companies worldwide.

Industry leaders such as Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, General Electric and Adobe are not arbitrarily devoting time and resources towards reorienting their feedback and performance management systems—they are doing so because real-time feedback generates powerful results. We discuss the benefits realized by massive corporations, as well as our own clients, in greater detail [here](#). Concisely stated, the benefits are tremendous: GE implemented a real-time feedback system and reported a “fivefold increase in productivity.” Our usage data has shown that managers who regularly gave feedback and coaching to their sales representatives on sales-specific behaviors using DevelapMe experienced between 8% and 120% higher team productivity when compared to other sales managers not coaching their sales representatives as regularly. For further information on benefits realized by DevelapMe specific clients, read about Temple University Health System [here](#).

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK ATTACKS THE INDIVIDUAL AND ALLOWS EMPLOYERS TO RANK EMPLOYEES AND REWARD THEM ACCORDINGLY

Real-time feedback is a tool for learning and growth, not a determinant of a person's value or self-worth. Moreover, real-time feedback is a powerful tool that necessitates ethical implementation.

The Season 3 premiere of the popular television show *Black Mirror* demonstrates how a culture obsessed with high real-time feedback scores becomes stifling, oppressive and predatory.

The very real example of China's Social Credit System further highlights the consequences of real-time feedback gone awry. In these scenarios, real-time feedback essentially becomes weaponized, promoting conformity and fear instead of innovation and creativity.

One of the major distinctions between dystopian versions of real-time feedback versus properly implemented feedback used to empower employees is the interpretation of feedback scores. The real-time feedback systems utilized in *Black Mirror* and China provide perks to individuals with high feedback scores and restrict the abilities of those with lower feedback scores. The people existing under this system are afraid to make any

sort of minor mistake for fear of a low score. However, this totally defeats the purpose of real-time feedback: that constructive feedback generates dramatic improvement. Employees must feel comfortable actively embracing constructive feedback and seeking out areas to improve upon. A lower feedback score should not be seen as a bad thing, but as an opportunity for growth.

Real-time feedback does not determine your identity or value as an employee; rather, real-time feedback acknowledges a specific demonstrated behavior at a specific point in time to promote development. Consider the *Harvard Business Review* article, "Let's Not Kill Performance Reviews Yet," which discusses the importance of using feedback to create a growth culture. Facebook, one of the most innovative companies in the world, mentions how it doesn't have A, B, and C players—feedback is used to assess a period of time, not a person. The article uses David Bowie as an example: despite being a groundbreaking, phenomenal musician, even Bowie released the occasional bad album.

BONUS

REAL-TIME FEEDBACK ATTACKS THE INDIVIDUAL AND ALLOWS EMPLOYERS TO RANK EMPLOYEES AND REWARD THEM ACCORDINGLY *Continued*

Constructive feedback does not define Bowie's value as a person or musician. While constant perfection is impossible, Bowie's fearlessness and willingness to experiment created some of his best music. Innovative, industry-leading companies such as Facebook and Google empower their workforces by encouraging employees to approach problems creatively, experiment and learn from mistakes.

Lastly, real-time feedback must not be directly tied to any sort of ranking process or compensation. Properly implemented real-time feedback does not compare "Person A" to "Person B." Instead, real-time feedback serves as a tool to help both Person A and Person B reach their respective personal potentials.

As we discussed earlier, individuals reap rewards by *applying* what they learn through real-time feedback. For example, employees should not get a bonus for high feedback scores; they will earn bonuses by leveraging the feedback they receive to improve performance.

Ultimately, isolating real-time feedback from ranking processes liberates employees to embrace constructive feedback and holistically improve.

BONUS

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We at DevelapMe believe fully in the tremendous power of real-time performance feedback, and we hope to have left you with a deeper understanding of its realities and benefits. If you're interested in harnessing the benefits of real-time feedback for your organization, drop us a note at contact@develapme.com. We'd love to have a free, exploratory conversation with you!

The Leadership Analytics Group - powered by DevelapMe, creates healthy transparency in organizations to drive performance through real-time, competency-based feedback and goals between employees, clients and vendors. Feedback focuses on both individual development and on an organization's primary business drivers. Competencies are fully customizable and tailored to the needs of any organization. Feedback can also be delivered upwards to various business units, creating an "always-on" survey to measure employee engagement and real-time voice-of-the-customer. DevelapMe's platform also incorporates a virtual coaching feature called Athena that provides all users with a virtual leadership coach supporting their development. Athena's algorithms analyze the real-time feedback users receive and identifies opportunities to intervene. **More information is available at www.develapme.com**

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