

Clients tell us this is one of the most useful pages in this Action Planning Guide.

Bridging Discussions™ with Your Direct-Reports

This may look complicated, but it's not. Give it a *spin*.

Sometimes it's hard to obtain straightforward feedback from your direct reports. We have developed a process called *The Bridging Discussion™* that will help you bridge the gap between where you are perceived with a particular leadership skill and where your Raters feel you need assistance in exercising that skill. Feel comfortable modifying this process in any way that best meets your needs.

1. From the INSIGHTMirror 360° Feedback Report, first select one or two skills for which you would like suggestions for possible improvement from your direct-reports. (For large groups of eight or more, you may prefer to select two skills.) The examples used here apply to a group of direct-reports of any size.

Skill A: When delegating, what advice can you give me on how I can teach others to think ahead about potential problems?

Skill B: I am very much looking forward to any advice you can give me on how I can be more effective in telling people they should be doing better, in a way that inspires, as opposed to curtailing motivation

2. Next, prepare two charts as illustrated to the right. You will need four pieces of flipchart paper. Tape two together for each skill to be discussed. For both charts, write at the top a question regarding a skill that you would like to improve. Label the left-side column "What advice can you give me to help me be more effective? List numbers 1-4, indicating that you would like at least four responses for this skill. Label the right-side column "What am I doing that's working?" Tape these charts to a wall (or white board) for use during *The Bridging Discussion™* session.

Note: We have found in this exercise that "Raters" are more comfortable and productive in responding to a request for their "advice," rather than being asked for "feedback."

When delegating, what advice can you give me on how I can teach others to think ahead about problems?

What advice can you give me to help me be more effective?

1. Ask us what potential problems we see in a way that lets us know that you are really interested in our opinions.
2. Give us more frequent updates.
3. Brainstorm with us.
- 4.

What am I doing that's working? Or, make-up what strengths that would make me more effective.

1. You don't hog the interesting tasks for yourself. You spread them around equally.
2. You build in time for possible schedule delays.
3. You help us learn project management.
- 4.

I am very much looking forward to any advice you can give me on how I can be more effective in telling people they should be doing better in a way that inspires, as opposed to diminishing motivation.

What advice can you give me to help me be more effective?

1. Ask us how we perceive the problem, to get our perspective.
2. Listen before making judgments.
3. Ask what we could do differently.
- 4.

What am I doing that's working?

1. Sometimes you do ask what we could do differently.
2. Your sense of humor helps.
3. Provide important immediate feedback.
- 4.

3. Invite your direct reports (ideally, ALL of them, including those who did not participate in the INSIGHTMirror 360° process), to come to a 60-90 minute meeting that will focus on helping you enhance your leadership skills.

4. Explain to the attendees that you will leave the room for 30-45 minutes and would like the charts completed **in your absence**. Ask them to suggest at least five things you can do better and at least one thing you are doing that is working.

Meeting Facilitation Suggestions:

a. You may wish to divide a large group into two separate groups, each with its own group-appointed facilitator and separate skill to address. Employees can be grouped randomly, by department, or by the topic about which they feel most strongly.

b. To protect anonymity, each group will appoint a “scribe” to record the comments on the charts.

c. Each group facilitator should ensure that all ideas are heard and

all comments are included on the charts.

d. The most important suggestions for you to consider. Each facilitator will tally each group’s votes and then circle the highest scoring suggestions.

5. When you return to the room after 30-45 minutes, read what is written on the charts. If you don’t understand a suggestion, ask for clarification and discuss the item. **Never dispute the feedback**. You can tell participants that the Never Dispute Rule is a ground rule you were given for this intervention. Remember, your people are doing you a favor by giving you their ideas and trust. You don’t have to agree with the comments, but you must promise participants that you will reflect on what they have communicated. Thank participants for their candor and let them know you will get back to them shortly.

Set up another meeting within one week to report to the participants what actions, if any, you plan to take, or actions you wish to further discuss as a result of this insightful bridging session. If you cannot buy into some of their suggestions, let them know why, but promise that you will continue to review the issues they have raised

Bridging Discussions are an outstanding way to close gaps of misunderstandings and forge new agreements between people.



Above is a playful way of using the closing the gap metaphor as it pertains to the **Bridging Discussion**