

# **We do things differently at Howamigoing.**

We think people performance is better  
achieved through empowerment than  
"management".

# **We think that it's more about**

Removing the barriers that prevent people  
from doing their best work each day than long  
evaluation discussions at year-end.

# So without further ado

Here are 10 of our favourite tips to instantly  
get better performance out of your  
employees.

# #1 ALWAYS SEPARATE FACT FROM FEELING

The 2 biggest reasons people don't give feedback in the workplace are:

1. "I don't want to hurt their feelings", and
2. "They didn't specifically ask me for feedback"

Because of these two things, each day we don't say what needs to be said and we bottle things up.

Then later during a performance review, we say something that catches others by surprise, hurts feelings and damages relationships.

There's a simple trick to help you avoid this situation.

**We call this trick FACT vs FEELING feedback.**

All you do is split out what you saw or heard (FACT), from your opinion or conclusion (FEELING).

In order for feedback to be actionable, it needs to be tied to an action. There can't be behaviour change without a behaviour to refer back to.

Here's a real-life example, from me to one of my developers:

*"Hey {name removed}, dropping below some Fact/Feeling feedback for you following yesterday's Product update call.*

*Fact - while we were on the video call you sent some messages on Slack, and when I asked for your opinion half-way through, you took a few seconds to respond and asked me to repeat the question.*

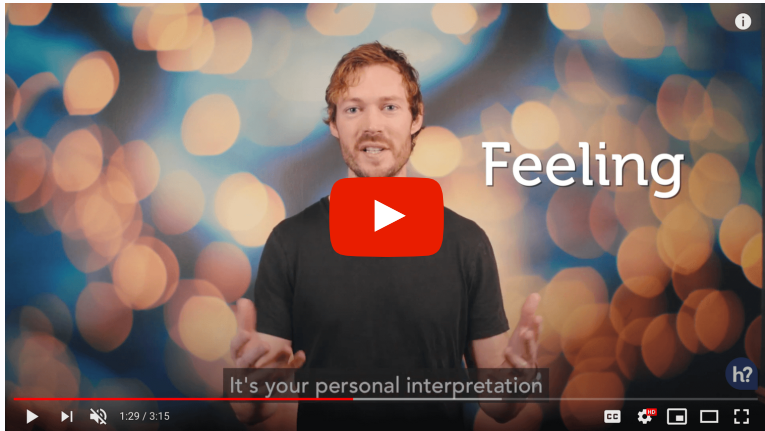
*Feeling - I felt like you weren't actively listening on that call because you were multitasking. I know you're busy, but it's important to me that when we're making time to speak, that we're present and focused. I didn't feel that you were present on that call."*

It's mechanical, but it's fair. It's an honest mix of objectivity and subjectivity.

And it also works a treat with husbands, wives, friends, kids etc :)

## #1 ALWAYS SEPARATE FACT FROM FEELING

Here's a short video that brings this concept to life...



(If the link doesn't work, use this url: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkRivLcKY34>)

## #2 BETTER PERFORMANCE IN 3 HOURS

A killer performance management process gets the highest quality work from people in the shortest possible time.

For most people this means juggling lots of tasks at once and being "always available".



But this is not how our brains work.

### **Humans are not designed for multitasking.**

Many moons ago, NASA wanted to optimise their spaceship control panels, so they had pilots complete some context-switching tests.

Turns out that when people switch between two tasks (vs doing one to completion then moving to the other):

- They take longer to do each task
- They perform worse in each task
- They make poorer decisions later in the day (willpower reserves are depleted faster)

### **Constant interruptions reduce the quality and timeliness of your work.**

But there's a simple fix...

## #2 BETTER PERFORMANCE IN 3 HOURS

...Introduce a 3-hour "no distractions" block into your team's diaries.

E.g. between 9am and midday:

- No internal calls
- No internal emails
- No internal meetings

Then you surface for lunch knowing you've already got A LOT of quality, thought provoking, creative work done.

Then you've got from 1-6pm to get all the chatter and Slack/ Teams messages out of your system.



**Sometimes it's the smallest daily tweaks that can deliver the biggest yearly changes.**

Sometimes it's near impossible for your people to perform at their best when you're asking them to always monitor their phone, inbox and any other messenger app you have.

Sometimes it's best to focus on HOW your people have done their work, rather than the output of their work.

## #3 RATINGS DON'T IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

### **Past, Present & Future**

There are 3 types of feedback: Praise, Advice and Evaluation.

Praise = "I like how you did that";

Advice = "Here's how to do that better";

Evaluation = "Here's where you stand".

*We need all 3 forms of feedback.*

But most companies just do Evaluation.

Evaluation removes the uncertainty around our situation and relationships, but it's focused on the past...

Praise = Present moment;

Advice = Future focused;

Evaluation = Backward looking.

And, when we want to improve employee performance, we're talking about future performance.

Spending too much time evaluating past performance is unhelpful.

### **Quant & Qual**

Once a 360 feedback processes is complete, we usually survey employees to ask which questions were most valuable.

The result? Feedback is 6x more valuable when received as a comment vs a rating.

Why? Ratings might give you a snapshot about where you stand, but they don't tell you how to get better. The purpose of feedback is to help you get better.

To illustrate this, consider these two questions.



## #3 RATINGS DON'T IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

### Question 1

How would you rate my presentation skills?

- A. Below average
- B. Average
- C. Above average

### Question 2

When have my presentation skills impressed you most? What did I do that made me effective?

Which would help you improve your presentation skills the most? The second one, of course. What does "average" even mean here?

That's not to say ratings aren't useful at all, just that they should be combined with comments.

### And finally, bell curving

When you assign employees a number from 1 to 5 via ranked distribution, only 5-10% of people are allowed to get "top marks".

You think you've motivated the 3s and 4s by giving them a carrot to chase and colleagues to be competitive with.

But the 4s - perfectly smart and capable people, many of whom overachievers their whole life - now feel inferior and possibly even a failure.

You think you've rewarded people by giving them a 5 but you've just made them anxious about having to live up to that standard for the next 12 months.

And what happens to the 5s when they eventually get downgraded to a 4?

They leave.

# If you want to chat with us:

Send an email to [julian@howamigoing.com](mailto:julian@howamigoing.com).  
He's one of the Co-founders of Howamigoing  
and he LOVES talking shop with  
People Leaders on a mission :)

## #4 PAY VS PERFORMANCE

We get this question a fair bit:

*"If we take away ratings, how do we allocate pay rises and bonuses fairly?"*

Except for Salespeople, it's impossible mathematically to correlate someone's contribution to the firm's profit.

If you categorise someone's performance each **MONTH** as either "Good" or "Bad", then in 12 months of work there are 4,096 possible performance combinations.

### A random walk through the year

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Good month												
Bad month												
Cumulative performance combos	2	4	8	16	32	64	128	256	512	1,024	2,048	4,096

(If you break this down into a Good or Bad **DAY**, there are over 1 trillion performance combinations)

But how can you calculate if someone had a good or bad month? And who should calculate that - the employee or their manager?

## #4 PAY VS PERFORMANCE

### **Award salary increases:**

- 1.(Internal factors) To compensate for taking on extra responsibility and risk e.g. after a promotion
- 2.(External factors) If salaries are out of line with market

For #2, everyone affected should be adjusted to avoid gender pay gaps and personal preferences creeping in.

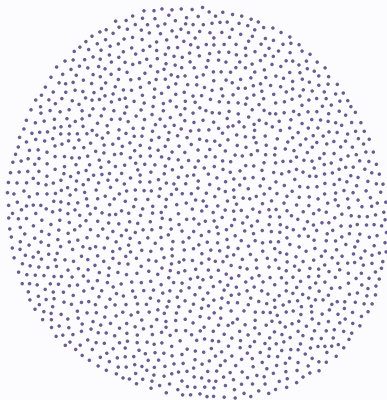
### **If there is sufficient profit left over to pay bonuses, then allocate proportionately based on salaries:**

- if salaries are fair, then bonuses will be fair
- this also ensures people are working toward team and company objectives, rather than personal glory

It might be controversial but at least it's simple, fair, transparent and scalable.

I'm yet to find someone who says "we need our pay review process to be complex, hard to communicate and difficult to justify!"

[More on that here.](#)



## #5 WHEN PEER RECOGNITION DOESN'T WORK

Companies are spending more money than ever on employee perks and rewards.

Yet "feeling appreciated" remains the biggest unmet need for employees.

Thankfully, you don't need a big budget to have a first class peer recognition programme.

In fact, the best peer recognition processes cost next to nothing to set up and reduce staff turnover by up to 30%.

There are 2 traps to avoid here.

### **Trap #1. Sloppy, inconsistent format**

Saying "thanks!" or "thanks for the hard work!" or "thanks for staying late to finish that off!" is a nice touch.

But what's the positive behaviour that you are reinforcing?

- Working late?
- Working hard?
- Existing?

If this is all it takes to get praise, then the gold standard in your company will be quantity of work, not quality. All stations to Face Time Central.



## #5 WHEN PEER RECOGNITION DOESN'T WORK

A good peer recognition programme recognises people. A great peer recognition programme recognises specifically what people do.

This is why it's important to have your peer recognition follow a simple and consistent formula.

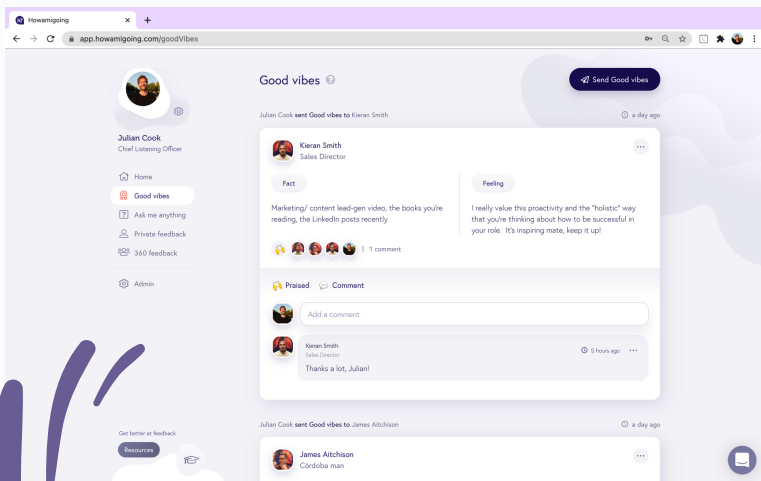
At Howamigoing, we call it FACT vs FEELING feedback. But you know this now :)

### Trap #2. No social proof

Sending an individual email or message of thanks to someone is a nice touch. It feels personal and authentic.

But ideas kept private don't spread.

It's much more powerful to make that email or message public for others in the business to see and comment on.



## #5 WHEN PEER RECOGNITION DOESN'T WORK

Not only does public praise make the recipient feel more recognised, it creates social proof.

When we see others engaging in peer recognition, it makes us want to join in. This is especially true when public praise comes from senior employees.

Monkey see, monkey do.



# Really, don't be afraid to reach out!

We have tonnes more useful resources, such as a kick-ass 360 feedback "question bank" built with psychologists and tested on humans. It's OK to need help. We don't judge :)



## #6 WHEN LESS FEEDBACK IS MORE HELPFUL

### No more than 6 questions

It's easy to want to put as many questions as you can into a performance feedback template.

*"We might not do this again for 9-12 months, so let's get as much data as possible".*

But there is an inverse relationship between the amount of feedback you ask for, and the amount that you get.

The more feedback you ask for, the longer it takes each person to write it out, and the fewer people that actually do it.

Or, everybody does it, but they start giving shorter and shorter and less thoughtful responses because it's taking them sooo long and they feel like performance feedback isn't "actual work".

Ideally, you don't want employees spending more than hour typing out feedback for each person.

Stick to 4-6 questions for your feedback template. Focus on quality, not quantity.

By doing this, you'll end up with a greater quantity of feedback anyway.



## #6 WHEN LESS FEEDBACK IS MORE HELPFUL

### No more than 3 lines

If you give people room to write half a page of feedback, they'll feel pressured to do just that.

Not only does this creates anxiety for the feedback giver, it creates a sh\*t sandwich of advice. It goes like this:

*"[Bread] Here's something good that you do!! :) I really like this thing :). It's great, I wish others did it!*

*[Meat] Sometimes you do this other thing though that [really p\*\*\*\* me off] isn't great.*

*[Bread] But don't forget that good thing I mentioned before!! So good. You rock."*

Huh? What should I focus on here? What's the message? Is there something to work on?



If you instead give people only a few lines of feedback to write, split into the Fact and Feeling (i.e. Action and Reaction), then there's no room for waffle. Feedback will be concise and actionable. And it will take less time to write out.

## #7 FEEDBACK SQUARED

How do you know if your performance management process is working?

Because you have a high employer NPS score? Sorry - that's a shocker of a vanity metric.

Because not many people complain about it? Ugh, well done..?

There is only one way to know if your performance management process is working.

### Get feedback on the feedback

After your performance review/ appraisal/ evaluation/ reflection process (whatever wording you've chosen), take time to pause and let employees respond to these questions anonymously:

## Feedback-squared

### Thinking back to our recent 360-feedback/ performance review process:

- 1) In general, **how helpful** was the feedback you received? (Not very helpful, Somewhat helpful, Very helpful)
- 2) Do you feel **more or less valued** after reading your feedback? (Less, Same, More)
- 3) Do you feel **more or less confident** after reading your feedback? (Less, Same, More)
- 4) Which questions were **most helpful** to have received feedback on?
- 5) Which questions were **least helpful** to have received feedback on?
- 6) Is there anything you want to do differently or work on as a result of the feedback you received? (No, Yes)
- 7) Want to be brave and say what your **key learning** was? (Optional)
- 8) Any other suggestions or comments about this recent performance management process? (Optional)

## #7 FEEDBACK SQUARED

In 2019 we were approached by a business with 84 employees that wanted to use their traditional set of 21 feedback questions, but have their 360 process automated via Howamigoing.

We said OK...

...So long as we could run the above survey afterward. And so long as we could choose the questions for their 2nd 360.

**Turns out that over 50% of their feedback questions were considered unhelpful by staff.**

We were able to increase the overall "helpfulness" of their performance management process while reducing their 360 feedback template to 6 questions.

A little sharpening of the wording to align to best-practice psychology helped :)

Now they do a short and sharp 360 feedback cycle every 4 months, rather than every 12, because it takes less time and is more rewarding.



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well, it was blank, until we wrote about it being blank. that's all :)

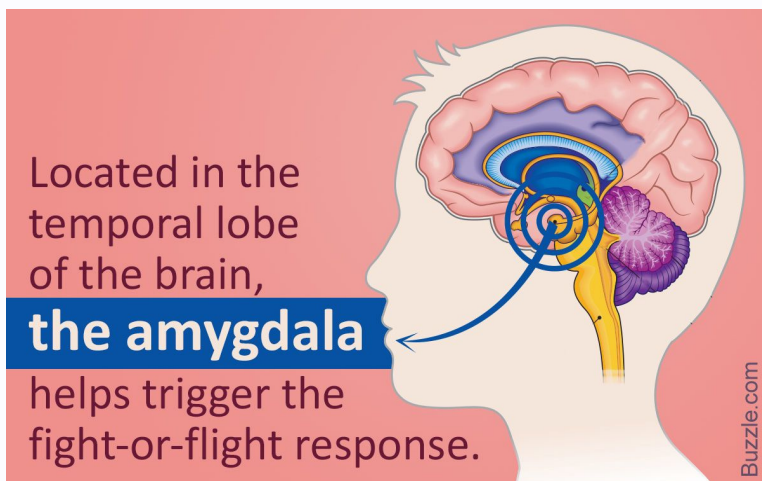


## #8 WHY YOU NEED ANONYMITY

We have this thing called the amygdala in our brain. It's tiny, the size of an almond. It controls fight or flight.

And while society has come a long way over the past few thousand years, our brain has not.

Our amygdala can't tell the difference between a saber-tooth tiger and an uncomfortable conversation with a colleague.



It just thinks “THIS COULD GET UGLY!” and decides to:

- Get angry and argue (fight) or
- Stay quiet and bottle it up (flight).

Faced with potentially damaging an important relationship, we choose the latter.

**And so it's really hard to get honest feedback from someone who reports into you, or a colleague that you get along with really well.**



## #8 WHY YOU NEED ANONYMITY

Only when we feel that we can speak without impacting our social situation will we be honest.

And if feedback is not honest, then it's not that valuable.

Feedback that is "watered down" or sheet-sandwiched wastes time and leads to frustration. Enter the "tick the box" performance management process.

**The necessary condition for our amygdala to let its guard down, for feedback to be honest, is psychological safety.**

You get psychological safety with anonymity.

I'm not saying that you should let anybody in the business anonymously put sheet on anybody else without warning. Unsolicited feedback is, by definition, not invited, and therefore usually not wanted.

I'm saying that you should:

A - Let people choose the 3-5 people to give them tough love

B - Let those 3-5 people give feedback with their names removed from comments, so they can be as honest as possible without hurting feelings

**When feedback comes from people we trust, in a format we trust, then we really listen to it.**



## #9 ONE TRICK TO RULE THEM TOWN HALLS

### **The silent treatment**

Done well, Town Halls allow employees to raise questions or concerns.

This helps leadership uncover blind spots and avoid making bad decisions.

However, few employees actually take the step of asking a question during the meeting.

In the words of a COO we interviewed:

*"We'd have our bi-weekly team meeting, and nobody ever asked any questions. It was really frustrating!"*

### **Making it safe**

To overcome this, a lot of companies have started letting employees submit anonymous questions during a Town Hall Meeting.

This is a good solution as it makes it safe for people to "speak up".

But there is a great solution that takes less time to administer and is more effective: Let your people submit anonymous questions to any person, at any time, not just during or before a Town Hall.

Then give leadership the choice to:

A - Ignore said question

B - Respond in private (i.e. going back to the anonymous questioner)

C - Respond in public, if it concerns something that affects many people

This carries 3 key benefits:

- It's more flexible vs a forced window to ask questions
- It's more robust as questions can cover anything
- It's more streamlined as you don't need a "gatekeeper" to triage all the questions when they come in. Those receiving questions manage their own responses

(cont.)





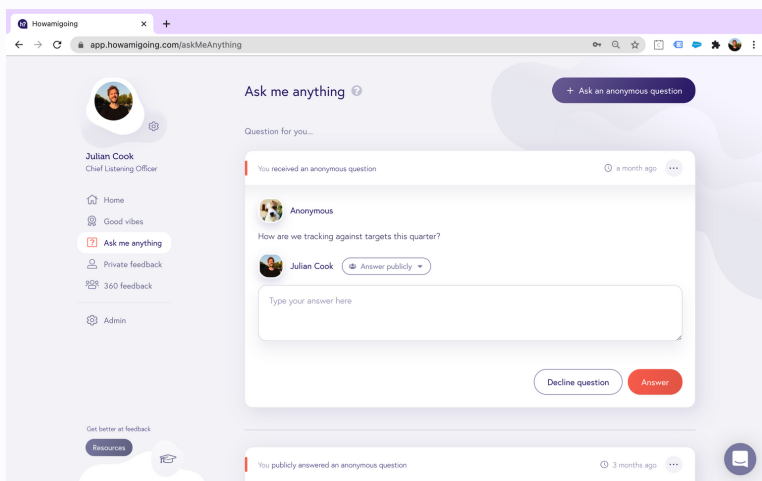
## #9 ONE TRICK TO RULE THEM TOWN HALLS

### Ask me anything

One of Howamigoing's products does just that, and it's called Ask me anything.

(Yes yes I've just put my Sales hat on. Sorry!)

Here, any employee can send an anonymous question to anyone else, at any time.



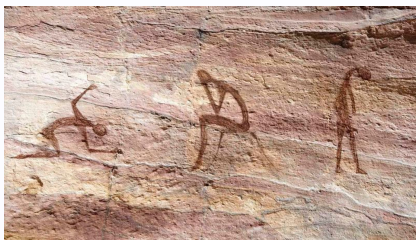
It's super simple to get started... we promise :)

## #10 HOW COLOURS AFFECT YOUR FEEDBACK

Ever been to a museum? Drawn a picture? Painted something? Of course you have. That's why art is a thing.

**Humans are very visual animals.**

In fact, many linguists believe that human language was born out of cave-wall paintings.



Colours, images and sounds have an unrivalled ability to immediately change our emotional state.

**That's why we use purple hues across the Howamigoing platform.**

Why purple hues? Of all the colours, these evoke a sense of

- Sensitivity
- Kindness
- Worth
- Value
- Calm

Because getting people engaged in your performance management process means appealing to their feelings and emotions.

A complex, cluttered, greyscale platform won't excite anyone.

Design matters when it comes to your performance management software!

**~over and out~**

If you liked this and want to know what else we  
can share with you, just flick an email to  
[julian@howamigoing.com](mailto:julian@howamigoing.com) :)