The Credibility Test

Three questions to ask before launching any feedback process — Chapter 5

Before you launch any feedback process — formal or informal — ask yourself how your team would answer these three questions. If there is doubt about any of them, the process and the team environment needs more work before you launch it.

1

Is this process actually safe for us to be honest in?

Do people believe that their responses are genuinely anonymous or confidential? Have they seen a leader react defensively to criticism in the past? Even subtle dismissiveness teaches people that honesty comes with a cost.

2

Will this feedback be used constructively?

Do people understand the purpose is development, not evaluation? Do they believe the feedback is for the leader to learn and grow — not to be judged, ranked, or managed out?

3

Does this leader genuinely want to hear the truth?

Have people seen visible follow-through from previous feedback? Leaders who respond to feedback with genuine curiosity teach people that honest feedback is welcome.

No survey or assessment tool, no matter how well designed, can compensate for a process that people do not trust. The good news is that getting to 'yes' on all three questions is achievable for most leaders. It requires deliberate effort and consistency over time.