

# FIXING FEEDBACK

BLAH BLAH  
BLAH...

CAN YOU BE  
MORE SPECIFIC?

GEORGIA MURCH

WILEY

# FIXING FEEDBACK

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I'm delighted to see Georgia's expertise in delivering constructive feedback now being widely recognised. Early in my career, and when I then reported to Georgia, I experienced her talent in this area, firsthand. Delivering effective feedback is a misunderstood and often downplayed art; and one which we can all grow better at.

—**Matthew Chapman**, CEO, ChapmanCG

Everything you need to fix feedback is brought together into one powerful package. *Fixing Feedback* is a common sense, plain English guidebook to that most important of interactions—the feedback conversation. Georgia Murch shows us why they are important, the evidence about what works, how to approach them and how to find your flow to a high-performance workplace.

—**Paul Duldig**, Head of University Services,  
The University of Melbourne

The journey to remarkable is a revolving dance of three steps forward and two steps back. In robust style, Georgia shows how to construct and enjoy the forward steps and learn from the back steps—and perhaps sidestep them in the future. Georgia provides a wealth of contemporary thinking, accompanied by many personal and professional examples. Read, reflect and try the journey to remarkable.

—**Tim Orton**, Managing Director, The Nous Group

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Georgia is obsessed with the power of great communication. She knows how great communication leads to great collaboration and helps create outstanding cultures. She sees the profound impact communication has on the success of businesses. Remarkable conversations make businesses better.

Georgia understands the importance of delivering programs that impact the bottom line. By helping people have constructive conversations, and giving leaders the confidence to lead with ease, Georgia helps businesses become highly productive by leveraging the power of their people.

She's an expert in helping others master the art of conversation. By creating a culture based on trust and respect, she helps create environments that let clever people get on with being clever, so companies can navigate change smoothly, hold on to their brightest sparks and let their leaders spend their time on the things that matter.

Georgia has over 20 years of experience working with public and private organisations of all shapes and sizes, in Australia

and overseas. She has worked in consulting, designing and facilitating leadership, cultural change and customer-focused programs. This deep experience means she truly appreciates the diversity and challenge of complex workforces and understands the complexity of managing a business while leading change.

She now works with savvy, fast-paced organisations and leaders to help create remarkable communicators — so remarkable that people can't stop talking about them and things just get done.

Visit [georgiamurch.com](http://georgiamurch.com) to find out more about Georgia, what she does and what she's been thinking about lately. You can also find her on Facebook and Twitter (@GeorgiaMurch), and connect with her on LinkedIn.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Writing this has cemented how passionate I am about what I know. It has held me to account to be the person I challenge others to be.

Matt Church and Pete Cook—you made me do it! Thank god you did. Thank you to those leaders and mentors who lead from the space that I admire and have helped shape who I am today. Paul Jury and Tim Orton are two of the most authentic leaders I have had the privilege of working for. Geoff Morgan stayed close and reminded me that the human side of leadership wins over strategy every time. Thank you to mentors and friends like Gabrielle Dolan and Annie Layton, who challenge me in a way that inspires rather than tells. Great women who are authentic and walk the talk.

It's not just the obvious people I'm grateful for. Those who don't demand attention through their title or position have taught me just as much. Thank you to the grumpy guy at the drycleaner it took me six years to get a smile from; to the lady at the local coffee shop who always asked how I was, and meant

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And to my friends and family, who have remained gracious and patient while I continue to work on my style, my 'rightness' and my need to verbally process. Your elegance of friendship, your casual reminders and your commitment to the end makes me so proud. I am proud to be in the trenches of life with you.

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And then there's my dear old Dad. I have learnt so much from you. Many of these lessons and observations have shaped the person who I am. I hope you receive as much from this as I have been blessed to receive. I know Mum would be so proud, too.



## INTRODUCTION

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After more than 20 years working, leading, managing and consulting, it's clear to me that the number one thing that gets in the way of people being awesome is ... being a dick!

Do I really need to explain what 'being a dick' means? I did some research, and apparently 'being a dick' is a common phenomenon. It knows no bounds. It spans nationalities, cultures, industries and disciplines. When I mention the subtitle of this book, the near first thing that people say is, 'I could buy that book for someone I work with'.

We all know people who are not cool to work with. These people often say the wrong thing, lack self-awareness, let their ego walk in the door before they do, and have a natural talent for being a dick. But if we dare to be truly honest, most of us have fallen into the trap of being a lesser version of ourselves. Who hasn't walked away from a situation with regret biting at your heels, saying to yourself something along the lines of, 'What was I thinking?' or 'Why did I say that?' or (my personal favourite) 'Why did I have to be such a dick?'

Throughout the book I'll talk a lot about being a 'remarkable' colleague, leader, person and friend. So what is 'remarkable'? It is most often used to mean extraordinary, exceptional, amazing, wonderful or sensational. Getting to this level often seems near impossible. Being remarkable 100 per cent of the time is impossible. We just need to ask our spouse, parents, kids or close friends to know this is true. Aiming for perfection is not really good for us, so being remarkable, all the time, can seem an unreasonable quest.

What I am talking about when I refer to someone as remarkable is, *remark-able* — as in, that person is so good, in the way they communicate and collaborate, that people can't stop remarking on them, talking about them, referring to them. If we find something remarkable it means we want to talk about it, and in a good way. Being remarkable is the opposite of being a dick.

So how can we recognise those 'opposite' people? Those who are not impressive, amazing or sensational? Some of the obvious clues are when they:

- have too many wines at work functions and lose all ability to operate a moral compass
- give loud feedback across the open-plan office
- bark orders to people around them (especially to people they consider 'under' them)
- call their colleagues losers
- simply can't stop telling others why they are so awesome.

Unfortunately it's more common than not. And being unremarkable is not just about the obvious scenarios. There are also those who:

- don't speak up when someone needs defending
- avoid giving feedback to their team members so they are not given the opportunity to improve
- speak poorly of others behind their backs

- don't do what they say they are going to
- ask for your opinion but never heed your advice
- negotiate poor deals with customers for fear of losing them.

Unremarkable behaviour is anything that pushes people away from communicating and collaborating well with others.

I've researched the stats on disengaged employees. I was once an accountant, and I am fully aware of the costs to individuals and organisations. I've seen the impacts that unremarkable people have. It's not pretty, and unfortunately so many people accept it as the norm. 'Dicks are everywhere', people say with a sigh and resignation, or in frustration and pain.

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF BEING A DICK

We will look at the costs and impacts for organisations in the next chapter but firstly is it important to understand the effect that being a dick has on the people around us, and on our ability to inspire and lead others.

- *Dicks are people we avoid.* They push others away with their actions, their inactions or their words. They may not be included in emails, meetings, social gatherings, or asked their opinions and ideas. They may not be aware they are being bypassed, but they are.
- *Dicks are people we don't trust or respect.* Their lack of interest or excessive self-interest, lack of rapport and lack of compassion does not engender trust and respect. It has the opposite effect. When people don't respect you or trust you, good luck building meaningful and fruitful relationships.

(continued)

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF BEING A DICK (CONT'D)

- *Dicks are people that don't make the best decisions.* If they think their idea is the best idea, they pretend to include others in decision-making. If their knowledge makes them the only expert, expect flawed decision-making. After all, their truth is only one side of the story; it needs to be combined with other people's truths before the 'real truth' emerges.
- *Dicks are people that find it difficult to influence others.* The lack of inclusion, respect and compassion they demonstrate means it becomes difficult to inspire and influence others. If you can't influence others to get things done, it makes doing your job feel like pushing shit up a hill.
- *Dicks are people that push others away.* Whether they are aware of it or not, they repel others from collaborating and really connecting. When people are focused on themselves first and foremost they can push people away with their directness, 'rightness' and need to win. It comes at a cost.
- *Dicks are people at all levels.* Many people presume that being more senior, continuing to get promotions or being known for their expertise means that they must be remarkable. This is a big ego trap. There are plenty of unremarkable leaders at senior levels.

We've all worked with dicks, and if you are being honest and courageous you'll admit that you've also been one from time to time. I have been a dick at times. I wish I could turn back the clock. What I do know is that with the right self-awareness tools and regular practice, I get better every week, every month, every year. Just ask my friends and family (well, maybe not my ex). Mostly I'm improving. While this book is about tackling the arguably less complicated relationships (being those at

work, rather than those close to home), the concepts, ideas and thinking all apply to both.

I could have called this book 'Your guide to becoming a remarkable communicator' or 'Fixing Feedback: Rewiring the workplace, people's mindsets and productivity', or 'iCommunication: Moving into 21st century communication for organisations and the people'. I don't know about you, but those titles make me sleepy. I've seen them before. I know the content. It's stiff and it's safe and it's stale.

Learning how to build remarkable relationships with people is not easy and it's not a matter of creating a checklist and ticking it off. It's a matter of learning not to *tick others off* by being a dick! It's about being open enough to become remarkable — so remarkable that people can't stop remarking on how enjoyable you are to work with, how they want to get on your projects and be on your team. Because they feel respected and heard. Because they feel valued and can see that they matter.

This book is a personal and professional treasure of insights created to educate you and your organisation about how to become remarkable, high-performing and seriously inspiring. Through giving great feedback and nailing the tough conversations, you can become a truly great person to work with; and by following the same principles, organisations can become truly great places to work.

So don't be a dick! Be remarkable!

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## Chapter 1

# FEEDBACK IS BROKEN

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In order to deal with people and issues at work we need to communicate. That means having conversations. You can't do a remarkable job without having remarkable conversations. You can't have remarkable relationships without having remarkable conversations.

*New York Times* bestseller *The 4-Hour Workweek* by Tim Ferriss suggests that we can structure our lives to be successful and wealthy by only working four hours a week—it is all about spending your time wisely. Ferriss says that 'a person's success in life can be measured by the number of uncomfortable conversations he or she is willing to have'. I agree with Ferriss that pushing through your fears and doing the tough stuff is all about getting things done and moving forward. I don't think it needs to be uncomfortable though. There is an easier way.

### **It's all about your people**

You may know them as high-performing organisations, the best places to work, or employers of choice. Whatever you want to call them, all top organisations are similar in that they each recognise the power of creating and sustaining great cultures, and the power of communicating and collaborating well. They know that their main competitive edge is not their products or

services. It's their people. The people behind what they deliver. It's the people that design and make or break the next strategy. It's the people that create motivation and drive within the organisation. It's the people, people, people!

Fail to acknowledge people and you're deluding yourself (and doing them a disservice).

Think of the commonalities shared by top organisations with enormous reach. Without an incredible team of innovators, Apple would not be able to launch the Apple Watch or the next iPhone. Facebook would not be able to create such a socially engaging and addictive platform. Without remarkable people behind the scenes Virgin Galactic would not be taking people to space.

Ideas don't create themselves, nor do they implement themselves. Of course most projects have spokespeople and lead directors who drive the vision, marketing and 'selling' as they go, but they have a team behind them. Without that team, there's nothing to market or sell.

It's easy to join the dots and say that making the most of your people should be a priority: focus on your people and the business will flourish. But employers can easily lose sight of their people, especially in times of economic stress.

In the 1990s I joined an entrepreneurial, forward-thinking and fast-growing business, HR and recruitment firm Morgan and Banks. One of the largest firms of its kind in the world, Morgan and Banks led from the front in terms of innovation and development. It was workplace utopia. I was in my early twenties and had lots of enthusiasm but little experience. Little did I realise how lucky I was. Whenever I catch up with colleagues from that time we always look back nostalgically. We worked our butts off, we made good money, we loved what we did and we had a ball working with each other. It was like the gold rush days for the corporates.

Geoff Morgan, one of the cofounders, was known for understanding and verbalising the fact that Morgan and Banks's assets (its people) were going up and down the lifts all



day. Andrew Banks, the other cofounder, constantly drummed into us Peter Drucker's saying that 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'. These guys instinctively knew that the value of their business was their people and they invested in them heavily via fun and powerful inductions, pragmatic and engaging professional development, mentoring programs and annual all-of-business conferences.

After the business was sold, the focus shifted from the people to the numbers. The conversations and strategy became about needing to improve, grow, cut back, double. We were not used to this. We were used to being asked how to build capability and motivation. Unsurprisingly, productivity decreased and maintaining profits became a challenge. It became difficult to retain the star performers, and people left.

YOUR *people* ARE YOUR BIGGEST ASSETS.  
FOCUS ON THEM AND THE BUSINESS WILL  
PROSPER.

Too many companies still haven't figured out that if they want the customer to come first they need to focus on cultivating a happy workplace: it's your people who are dealing with the customers.

Zappos, the largest online shoe retailer in the world, prides itself on its company culture, and it is well known for it. Does it come as any surprise that 75 per cent of purchases are from returning customers? That's an amazing statistic and is part of the reason Zappos was able to grow so quickly. One of its core values is 'deliver WOW through service'. Zappos expects every employee to wow their customers and it does this by giving employees the autonomy to handle situations in any way they see fit.

Another organisation that is gaining more and more attention and success globally right now is Atlassian. Atlassian is a rapidly growing 'software loving' business that has won *Business Review Weekly's* 'Best Place to Work' twice, along with over 50 other awards (including top 20 Fortune Company, Deloitte