

The Feedforward™ Model

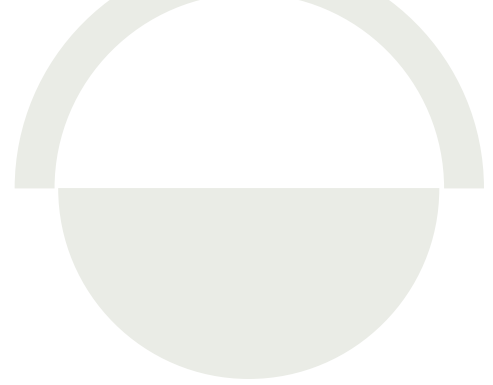
A technique for getting
constructive responses rather
than critical feedback



The Client
Relationship
Consultancy

Who should read this?

Anyone whose client has a tendency to give unstructured and unconstructive critical feedback.



The Feedforward™ Model

A future-focused approach to reviewing feedback

Negative or confusing feedback is deflating. Good, strong, potentially great ideas are often lost, because inadequate feedback leaves the owner of the idea feeling demoralised — unsure what to do next and without the energy to create something better.

When responding to an idea, or indeed anything that requires feedback, the challenge is to identify your feelings and then express them in a manner that is both clear and motivating.

The concept of ‘feedback’ invites a review of what has been suggested or what has occurred. You literally ‘feed backwards’, thereby creating a barrier for the future.

By contrast, the Feedforward™ model is designed to help provide an effective response to a new idea or stimulus. It works particularly well with advertising agencies, design companies and PR teams, who will tend to be passionate about their idea, and for whom an accurate understanding of your response is vital. Feedforward™ creates an open loop, a virtuous circle, which builds on an idea

by inviting positive thought and action in the first instance. It defers critical and judgmental thoughts (that can disable an embryonic idea) away from the first response, and channels them instead into a constructive framework.

The key to good Feedforward™ is to start by getting in touch with how you feel about an idea, in other words what your gut reaction is.

The key to good Feedforward™ is to start by getting in touch with how you feel about an idea; in other words what your gut reaction is. This is the first and most critical part of the process, and has nothing to do with the strategy or the brief. Note how you respond, as a human being, to the idea. First feelings are a useful guide that should be recorded without judgement. (“Made me feel anxious or uncomfortable” feelings are okay. They may provide a clue that you have a new, different or strong idea on your hands. It can be appropriate to acknowledge discomfort and to value this

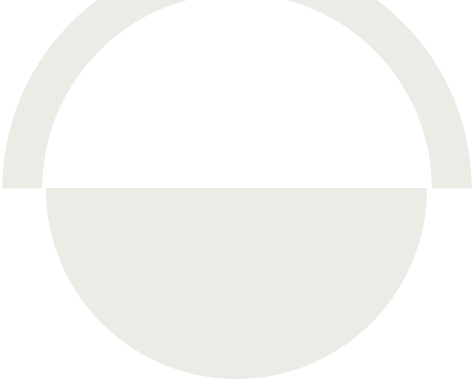
response as a positive just as much as a potential negative.) The requirement is to identify your feelings about the idea.

Note how you feel about an idea before you review it from the

position of the target consumer, and from the standpoint of the brief as a marketing person. Use each of the headings in the Feedforward™ box to note your initial feelings, subsequent feelings and finally cognitive responses using the evaluation model.

The most important aspect of the process is to be totally (that’s 100%) honest with yourself, with colleagues with whom you might share the feedback and with your agency. (Do not discuss the idea with others until your thoughts are written down — the comments of others may tend to distort your





initial feelings and these are the most valuable.)

Clarity of communication is critical. The 'idea generator' needs to fully understand your response, know which direction to explore and be motivated to develop the idea in a way that accommodates your feelings and thoughts about it.

Following the four question sequence outlined in the Feedforward™ model gives a structure that will help enable a considered, comprehensive and constructive review of the idea.

Four Feedforward questions

1. What inspires, excites you or moves you?

It could be an idea, a line, a colour, a picture. If something inspires you — whatever it is — then note it. If nothing 'does it for you' then leave the box empty.

2. What works?

Record here what is okay. This is your opportunity to acknowledge the positive aspects of the idea that are good, but not 'stirring.'

3. What's missing?

Here you can give useful guidance to the agency — it could be what's missing is 'an exciting thought' or it could be more mundane like 'the mandatory inclusions in the brief'.

4. What would make it bigger and better?

This is your opportunity to become involved with the idea and help build on it. It is an opportunity for you to communicate your thoughts on future areas for the agency team to consider.

