

"Excellent!"
—DR. MARSHALL GOLDSMITH,
NYT bestselling author of *The Earned Life*

Feedback Reimagined

Transform Your Organization
through **POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**
and **SOCIAL SUPPORT**

Peter Berridge Jen Ostrich

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

Feedback Reimagined

“Positive feedback loops are crucial for creating virtuous cycles. Anyone interested in becoming better and bringing out the best in others, start here. *Feedback Reimagined* is a well-researched and practical guide for putting humans back into the equation for happiness and success.”

—**SHAWN ACHOR**,

NYT bestselling author of *Big Potential* and *The Happiness Advantage*,

—**MICHELLE GIELAN**,

bestselling author of *Broadcasting Happiness*

“What the authors have accomplished here is incredibly profound while at the same time being simple and direct. Shifting away from peer criticism and lack of individual commitment, this approach teaches leaders and team members alike to hone their personal awareness, participate in the development of others, and collectively drive success as a team. I’ve seen nothing like it, and it is effective.”

—**SCOTT HOLSTINE**, President at Teleflex

“I was a skeptic who respectfully argued that feedback should be anonymous. I was wrong. I’ve seen the difference in how people’s eyes light up when they receive Shift Positive Method feedback. *Feedback Reimagined* is a brilliant catalyst to challenge your feedback ideas and to help people make long-lasting changes.”

—**SENIA MAYMIN**, Chief People Officer and co-author of
the bestselling book *Profit from the Positive*

“Excellent! Engaging stakeholders has never been more critical in coaching for the client's success and increased trust for their team. The Shift Positive Method perfectly captures this by creating a social

system of support and will leave you with the actionable steps to start implementing this today!”

—**DR. MARSHALL GOLDSMITH**, Thinkers50 #1 Executive Coach and
NYT bestselling author of *The Earned Life*, *Triggers*,
and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

“What a refreshing method of feedback for leaders and teams today. *Feedback Reimagined* breaks down what makes feedback feel hard while paving the way for a different experience that’s energizing and effective, reinforcing a culture of trust and psychological safety.”

—**MIKE ROBBINS**, author of *We’re All in This Together*

“I had the pleasure of experiencing the Shift Positive Method while leading People, Talent and Culture at Wieden+Kennedy. The mindset shift is built upon principles I believe in, arranged in a manageable framework. As an HR executive, there are so many models to consider; this is one of the few that leads to culture adoption and change. I couldn’t recommend it more to other CHROs or CPOs.”

—**KEESHA JEAN-BAPTISTE**,
Executive Level People, Talent and Culture Leader

“Once I was trained in the Shift Positive Method and learned the science and research behind what makes it so powerful, I made it the chosen method our coaches use with clients. I am thrilled that Pete and Jen have made Shift Positive even more accessible by writing *Feedback Reimagined*. Shift Positive is our go-to feedback tool for leaders wanting greater psychological safety, more engagement, enhanced collaboration, better performance, and stronger teams. I will be sharing this book with all of our HR partners!”

—**ILENE SCHAFFER**, MA, PCC, CEO and Executive Coach,
Silicon Valley Change Executive Coaching

“When offering career advice over the years, I have often said, ‘Know what you are good at, but more importantly, know what you are passionate about.’ It was difficult for me to explain ‘why’ to people until I experienced the formal coaching around strengths-based feedback and took my team through the Shift Positive process. It’s a breakthrough in getting alignment, positive energy, and motivation for yourself and your teams!”

—**TY R. SILBERHORN**, President & CEO, Apogee Enterprises

“My leadership strengths were crystalized and deepened with the Shift Positive Method. The process was a two-way mirror; it at once affirmed my self-awareness and offered insight into how others experience me. Armed with this profound knowledge, I see the possibility for my personal growth with greater clarity, optimism, and conviction to grow into my next leadership frontier.”

—**JENNY RAO**, Head of School, Emma Willard School

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*To my catalyst for change,
my post-traumatic growth compass, my inspiration:
Kathleen Grow Ostrich.
I hope you can see me now, Mom.*

—**Jen Ostrich**

For Jenny, tu blave.
—**Peter Berridge**

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Preface

I remember vividly when I first learned about the Shift Positive methodology. I had flown to Portland just a week after hearing from a dear colleague that the Shift Positive system of feedback was everything I had been searching for. I sat in a room with other coaches listening to the pure brilliance of the approach and felt like the negative feedback clouds had parted and the sun was shining, illuminating a new way of constructive feedback.

I had spent my 20-year career in corporate America and then as an executive coach watching the 360 process turn exceptional leaders into 5th graders. I witnessed leaders attach to the negative, anonymous comments and wonder who said what and why. It was derailing for my client and the coaching process. Sadly, traditional feedback approaches work against people's psychology instead of with it and are counterproductive to leadership and behavioral change.

When I learned about the Shift Positive methodology and the intelligence of each question in the process, I knew I had found something extraordinary for my clients. Not only was it an approach founded in research and evidence, but it was also an approach that helped people truly transform. As a CEO coach, I have had the opportunity to use the Shift Positive methodology across numerous Fortune 500 companies and see the incredible positive impact on leaders and the organization. I have watched clients in high-pressure positions flourish with this feedback system and build deeper relationships. I have seen decades of

empty, confusing feedback turn into tangible behavioral change with this methodology.

I am grateful that this book shares the science and physiology of feedback, the tools to deliver it effectively, and the reasons constructive feedback is critical to building psychologically safe cultures. *Feedback Reimagined* illuminates how deeply important feedback is within an organization and how, when done right, we can create cultures of human thriving.

As a coach who has used this methodology for years, I am thrilled to see this book come to life, allowing everyone to imagine a new way to elevate people. This is the book we need to give to every coach, leader, and organization.

—Jamie Shapiro, CEO of Connected EC, PhD, ABD
Positive Organizational Psychology and author of *Brilliant:
Be the Leader Who Shines Brightly Without Burning Out*

Foreword

There are moments in life and your career when you experience something new that shifts your perspective forever. Doors open, and ideas swirl. A whole new way of thinking—*of being*—emerges. The content of *Feedback Reimagined* has been that for me, not just in my professional life but in my personal life as well; ask my kids. This book provides a revolutionary way of seeing how we can move people through successful development in a constructive and supportive way. This approach considers the whole person, intending to understand how that person lives and interacts with those around them. It empowers both the giver and the receiver of feedback to have interactive and constructive dialogue, build a better understanding of what is essential to success, see how that success can be achieved in partnership, and, most importantly, build allyship. I am grateful for Jen and Pete's work and the impact of their Shift Positive methodology on the business and coaching worlds.

My journey to the Shift Positive Method was paved by years of inadequate and disheartening feedback experiences for the individuals and businesses I supported. As a Human Resources practitioner and coach who's worked across billion-dollar industries from food manufacturing to medical devices and with individuals at all levels of the organization, I was desperate to provide feedback to leaders in a way that each person could hear, understand, and then be empowered by to take meaningful action. I was in a rut using the same bag of tricks wrapped in

different packages. Inevitably, the feedback was rarely absorbed or taken as a “gift.” A leader once told me, “*I know feedback is supposed to be a gift, but I would like to return this for an emotional refund.*” I remember this as the quintessential moment I felt utterly defeated as one of the people responsible for giving feedback in the company.

Those who have gone through traditional 360s have likely felt the same way. Often, the individual is left wondering who said what, what circumstances are being considered, and if everyone they encounter sees their deficits. The receiver of feedback usually glosses over identified strengths. They, in turn, fixate on the comments or numerical values that make them feel inadequate, resulting in an experience that is not as developmental or supportive as intended.

The Shift Positive Method changes the game. It offers support while creating a valuable impact for the individual and the people around them. When I began using the Shift Positive methodology in my work, I started providing in-depth, one-on-one interviews on behalf of the individuals on my leadership team. These interviews created an extensive report detailing individual areas of strength, articulating how these strengths have been used to create shared success. It then went further, naming the behaviors each person felt would make that leader more effective, which the leader could adopt immediately. The most unique aspect of the Shift Positive Method is that the feedback is *not* anonymous. This went against every traditional 360 report and tool I had used or been exposed to in my 20 years of working with teams and leaders. Though somewhat uncomfortable initially, this transparent way of providing feedback

was fascinating. It later became evident that transparency is the secret sauce.

Throughout this book, the authors generously show how their method creates connection, alleviates fear, and provides strengths-focused feedback while naming new, more effective behaviors. Transparency and allyship allow for open dialogue about everything—both the good stuff and the tough stuff. The Shift Positive Method creates ownership of the message and openness to receive it. You'll learn in these pages why it is easier to develop new habits than to break negative behaviors.

A seismic shift occurred for me when I became the receiver of feedback in my own Shift Positive 360 report. I understood how I was viewed by my peers and teammates, what was working well, and how I could apply my strengths to improve outcomes and working relationships. I then had a clear picture of where I could adjust my approach. I also knew I could call on my allies to acknowledge and encourage my new behaviors.

Some of the most impactful conversations I have had in my career came from this process. Since the feedback came with the name of the person who gave it, I could go deeper with that individual. I better understood my impact on that person, both positively and, at times, not so positively. Simply put, it strengthened our two-way communication. The process enabled me to share the moments when I tend to withdraw and solicit ally support during those times. The Shift Positive Method helped our team see each other differently. We became allies in order to enable our shared success.

The lessons I have learned from the Shift Positive Method are innumerable and continue growing as I engage with colleagues,

family, and friends. I have seen firsthand how this new way of feedback can be a gift worth giving and receiving. And I hope you do, too, as you embark upon the journey of *Feedback Reimagined*. If you're like me, you'll find yourself reaching for this wise approach to feedback again and again—in all facets of life.

—Lindsey Bauer, HR Business Leader,
Executive Coach & Developer of Human Potential

Introduction

We all share basic human drivers including *competence*—wanting to be good at what we do; *significance*—making a difference; *belonging*—being connected to others; and *autonomy*—having a sense of control over our lives. We see our goal as executive coaches as helping people achieve these innate drivers. When you see something that gets in the way of another’s energy and purpose and ability to contribute, it’s very disheartening. When you can create something that opens up the possibilities for meeting these basic human drivers, it is so rewarding and you want to share it. Feedback is one of those things. Done well, it can lead to growth and engagement. Done poorly, it can be devastating.

Our approach to feedback is intended to be about employee development—not evaluation. We’ve grounded our method in research and refined it through trial and continual feedback. The result—the Shift Positive® Method—helps to build trust, direct communication, two-way accountability, and social support. Through hundreds of coaching clients over the last eight years, it’s been proven to create sustainable professional growth. We jokingly describe it as teaching dialogue skills disguised as feedback. We continue evolving our approach based on the experiences of those who use it, experience it, and share their insights.

There’s a lot of information on feedback that we think is wrong. Certainly, not sharing feedback can be detrimental. There’s also

the idea that if you just tell people straight, they can take it. That being brutally honest is the best way to help others grow. But giving brutally honest feedback misses the mark. The feedback provider has a responsibility to see how their actions reinforce the actions of the other person. To see how their expectations are simply their own expectations, not truth. And when they go further to do the hard work of identifying what it is that they want rather than what they don't, they move from direct, brutally honest feedback to specific and constructive behavioral feedback.

We want to bring our method to HR leaders, learning and development professionals, and entire companies, so that leaders don't feel the frustration and hesitance of not knowing how to provide effective feedback to employees, and staff to each other. We want to take away the pain that the existing systems have created.

As executive coaches, we are also motivated to support other coaches. Conducting narrative 360 interviews is a common practice for coaches. However, coaches get stuck in an in-between place. They gather information from colleagues, summarize it, and then deliver it to the client. They become the courier of good and bad news. This is not a comfortable place to be. Yet, it doesn't have to be that way. Through our method, a coach can see their role in a new way. The role is not to gather information to provide to their client, but rather to work on behalf of the client to nudge the stakeholders (those peers, direct reports, managers, and others being interviewed) to become an ongoing system of support.

This creates much greater leverage for the client because they are no longer working with the coach in a vacuum. Instead,

the client is engaging their whole people system to reinforce new behaviors as they happen. Clients are looking for this new approach. It's what companies are looking for to retain, develop, and grow their leaders of tomorrow. It's what today's workforce is wanting when they say, "Coach me; don't criticize me."

So, what led to us create this new way to address the challenges of traditional feedback? Our unique and multifaceted backgrounds have given us valuable insight into the importance of giving effective feedback. We understand its impact throughout an organization when it comes to employee engagement and growth, as well as the pain experienced because of feedback done poorly or insufficiently. Let us share more.

Pete grew up in the field of Human Resources, becoming Executive VP of Human Resources at a renowned health care organization serving people with disabilities. Among the HR functions was talent development, which included designing feedback systems—performance reviews, competency systems, talent planning, 9-box exercises, etc. Then, later, he was an executive coach, using 360-degree feedback tools. When offering feedback, he used to really plan out how to hold the conversation with people. He was one of the folks who said, "Feedback is a gift; you only get it a few times in your executive career." Or "This is confidential." "Don't give too much credence to one comment." Regardless, no matter how much good there was in the comments and results, the people would focus on what was wrong or the "opportunities." Pete recalls huge narrative reports from some of his client's 360 systems. Every time, the client would be concerned about who said what, distracted by trying to understand what it means, and left feeling like "I've already been working on this; maybe I can't change."

In 2010, Pete enrolled in the Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) program at the University of Pennsylvania, studying under the world's leading Positive Psychology researchers, such as Martin Seligman, Adam Grant, Angela Duckworth, David Cooperrider, and Ed Diener. Learning more about the concepts of strengths, Appreciative Inquiry, energy, motivation, social network analysis, negativity bias, and Human Systems was thought-provoking.

Through Positive Psychology concepts and research, he knew there would be applications to coaching and feedback. When he read in a meta-analysis that found that, alarmingly, more than one-third of feedback systems led to poorer performance and relationship breakdown, it really hit him. The intention of any HR leader and coach had always been to help people to grow and develop. This analysis, however, showed the results could be the exact opposite. So, what to do?

Pete studied and experimented. He looked at the basic assumptions and norms of feedback. He looked into solution-focused coaching and feedback methods and research. He networked with people steeped in solution-focused approaches. Then, he experimented by drafting new questions, digging into strengths, helping stakeholders reframe their perspective, and using the word “love” in interviews. He asked the stakeholders about themselves and their goals and dreams, focusing on the dynamics between the stakeholder and client. He asked them to imagine themselves in a better future and describe it. He asked the stakeholder how the client raised or zapped their energy.

Pete created a narrative 360, titled it the “Positive Approach 360,” and began. And, it worked. People liked it. Pete started to get

new clients from the people he had interviewed as stakeholders for other clients. At the close of the interview, the stakeholder would commonly ask, “How did she get one of these? How can I get one?” That was a huge aha—people actually wanted to get a 360. Kind of weird—it was like asking for a performance review! That’s when Pete knew he had the start of something that could really change the feedback experience.

Cue Jen. Jen spent 14 years working in the advertising industry. From New York City to Philadelphia to Los Angeles, she spanned eight agencies, each with its own complex human system. During that time, she can recall only two experiences where a manager walked her through a written feedback report, both early on in her career. Not too long after that, Jen became a manager and ultimately a VP, the head of a department and responsible for her group’s development. She remembers spending hours at night carefully writing what she hoped would be thoughtful yet helpful performance reviews. She was motivated to give them what she never had—specific examples, context, transparency on where comments were coming from, and optimism and support to reinforce that each of us can learn and grow.

Jen ultimately decided to change careers in 2012 to pursue entrepreneurship as a leadership coach. She had developed a strong interest in Positive Psychology after reading author and researcher Shawn Achor’s work. Jen wanted to ensure any client that she worked with received the level of feedback they deserved. She was on the hunt for a 360 approach that felt different, yet effective. Jen’s belief has always been you learn best through conversation, so she was interested in a narrative approach. In addition, when looking through a Positive Psychology lens, most survey-based 360s seemed harsh to her.

In 2013, Jen and Pete crossed paths at one of the annual Hudson Institute learning conferences for alumni. Pete was there to speak about Positive Psychology and coaching, and Jen was there to speak about building your brand as a coach. They met up for breakfast and shared their individual presentations, and that was the beginning of a friendship that was rooted in mutual respect and admiration for each other's strengths.

Jen saw Pete's deep expertise in the fields of Positive Psychology and Human Resources, and his ability to connect the two through simple application. Creating content—including both written and visual communication—and identifying smart ways to strategically position brands for growth are among Jen's greatest strengths, as Pete noticed. Recognizing their individual strengths and imagining the potential for collaboration led Pete to call Jen and ask, "Would you be interested in partnering up to share this 360 approach with coaches?" Jen paused for about five seconds and said, "Sure, let's do it." She immediately saw how to position this approach inside the "white space" of feedback, Positive Psychology, and corporations, and how to help others understand the inherent benefits of changing the way we experience feedback today. A partnership was born by the end of 2015.

Since then, hundreds of coaches have been certified in the Shift Positive 360®, and we love seeing them thrive as they bring the Shift Positive Method to their clients and companies. We enjoy seeing how this new approach to feedback makes them smile, brings relief, and launches them with fortitude to go out and use it with their clients. We love empowering learning and development professionals and HR leaders to rethink their

entire collection of feedback and development tools to incorporate these concepts. And, we love seeing leadership teams prosper while modeling a new way of constructively engaging one another. This book is our way of sharing the method we've created to help organizations and employees overcome the inherent drawbacks of traditional feedback. Beyond being more effective, you'll see how the Shift Positive Method is actually energizing, helping you and your teams to truly grow and thrive. You will reimagine your feedback experience as you know it.

We have organized this book into three main parts. Part 1 sets the stage on feedback today. We'll cover the impact of ineffective feedback, discuss what makes feedback hard, and offer an invitation to see feedback in a new way. Then, part 2 dives into the details of the Shift Positive Method, explaining the core components and providing opportunities for you to reflect, practice, and apply in your situation. Finally, in part 3 we'll explore the future of feedback and what's possible when you build your entire company culture to align with the Shift Positive Method.

Throughout parts Two and Three, you will find some reflective prompts at the close of each chapter. We invite you to keep a companion notebook nearby where you can respond to the questions, practice the exercises, or journal your own thoughts on this approach to feedback.

If you fall into any of these roles, we know you'll find value in this book:

- ❖ A Human Resource Business Partner (HRBP) who's tried every approach to feedback and talent development with little success.

- ❖ A leader who's had a terrible or traumatizing feedback experience and wonders if there's a better way.
- ❖ A manager who can relate to seeing the problems of a peer or direct report but is not sure how to provide good feedback or is hesitant to provide feedback.
- ❖ A coach who's looking for a more effective way to bring feedback to light for their client.
- ❖ A CEO hoping to shift and strengthen their culture to meet the needs of today's workforce, driving more engagement and retention.
- ❖ An individual looking for a less intimidating, more human way to provide someone with constructive feedback.

We wrote this book because we care deeply about providing value—we truly want to make a difference in people's work lives and relationships. We believe that even one small shift can create seismic impact. So, as you read through the following chapters, we hope you'll identify one small shift you are willing to commit to in the spirit of creating more safe, energizing, and effective feedback experiences for all.

Let's dive in!