Providing feedback has long been considered to be an essential skill for leaders. As you strive to achieve the goals of the organization, employees need to know how they are doing. They need to know if their performance is in line with what is expected. They need to know what they have done well and what they need to improve. Marshall Goldsmith, well known executive coach, has talked about “feedforward” to focus on the future, and he suggests you try this exercise. Bring at least six of your employees together for a 15-minute exercise. You may wish to participate, too. Follow these steps:

- First, ask people to select one behavior that they would like to change. Suggest that they select a behavior that will make a significant positive difference in their lives.

- Second, have everyone stand in an area where they can move around. Each person should have a notepad and pen to write ideas.

- Third, have participants move from one person to another and state what it is they are trying to change. After they state what it is, the other person begins to make suggestions while the first writes the ideas on the notepad. Suggestions are only allowed for the future; they may not comment on the past.

- Fourth, the individual who is asking for suggestions writes the ideas on the notepad and is not allowed to say anything except “Thank you for the ideas.”

- Fifth, after two minutes of idea-generating time, have them switch roles; the other person states the behavior he or she is trying to change and the opposite person makes suggestions. At the end of two minutes have them switch partners and repeat the process. Have them switch partners at least four more times so that each person receives feedback from five people.

At the end of the exercise ask them to provide one word that best describes their reaction to this experience. Expect to hear, “useful,” “helpful,” and “energizing.”