

Virtual Train-the-Feedback-Expert workshop to support 360° feedbacks with an international group of participants at Hochland



Hochland has collaborated with meta | five to develop an on-demand feedback instrument for group-wide deployment, which is used as an instrument for targeted further development of managers. To enable local, internal feedback experts to provide support to focus persons during planning, implementation, and follow-up, international HR officers from Hochland took part in virtual train-the-trainer sessions to prepare them for this new role and task.

Background: The feedback project

Based on the company's **Management and Collaboration Guidelines**, Hochland worked together with meta | five to design a 360° feedback instrument to be deployed on-demand, group-wide, and at all international locations. Focus persons receive anonymous

feedback on work-related behaviour from a range of individually definable perspectives (see graphic: superiors, colleagues, direct reports, interface partners and/or external persons). In addition, the focus persons carry out selfassessment to enable a structured comparison of assessment by themselves and other persons.

Infobox

The company

(at the time of project implementation)

Since its founding in 1927, the main business of the family-run Hochland company has been the production, refinement and distribution of cheese. With more than 5,500 employees in more than 30 countries (as of 2021), the Hochland Group develops, produces and distributes several premium cheese and quark products. In addition to its retail sales, Hochland is also a strong partner to the food industry and gastronomy sector.

The goal

To train international HR officers to become feedback experts in the framework of the Hochland 360° feedback and to prepare them to support the feedback processes and to carry out the feedback discussions.

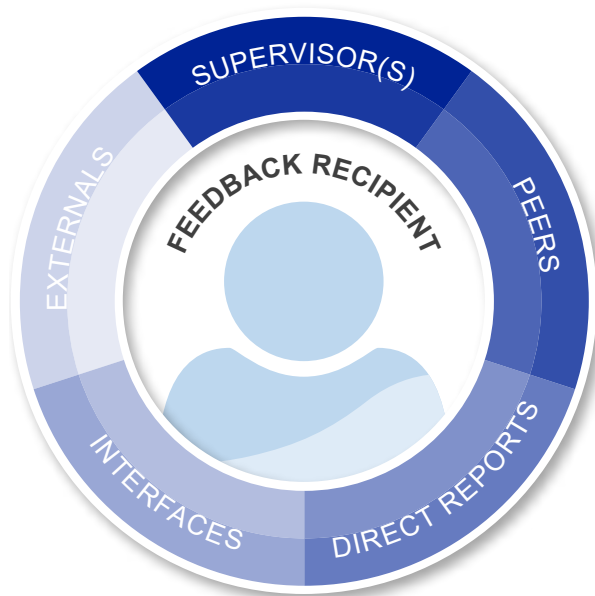
The approach

To integrate all international colleagues at the different locations, a virtual workshop concept was created. Staged over two days, a series of learning and practice sessions took place with a range of different focus topics.

The benefit

The HR officers, as feedback experts for 360°, were empowered to provide total support for processes in their own area of responsibility – from advance consulting through implementation, right up to the feedback discussion.

The instrument is available to all Hochland managers if they wish to participate as focus persons – from top managers through to project leaders without line responsibility.



The deployment of this systematic feedback pool as a **tool in the method toolbox** of HR and organisation development assists in the pursuit of individual and organisational goals:

- | Stimulus for **self-reflection** and self-awareness
- | Identification of personal **strengths and development potential**
- | Creation of a basis for one's **own further development** – including communication and collaboration with the feedback providers
- | Use of the results as **a starting point for the development of (leadership) teams**
- | Sustainable anchoring of a uniform group-wide **leadership and feedback culture**

Key role of local HR

To achieve these goals, local HR partners at all Hochland locations are to be involved in the planning and implementation of the feedback processes. These HR partners know the potential focus persons and they are familiar with the **local framework conditions**. This means that they can take account of the alignment or delimitation of feedback processes with simultaneous HR measures or PE/OE instruments in their area of

responsibility (e.g. leadership development programmes, employee surveys, instruments of the New Performance Management, etc.) when they are working on planning and individual case studies.

The tasks of the local HR partners include:

- | Before feedback collection: **Consultation** with the focus person regarding the timeline, for example, and the subsequent individual process configuration (including selection of target-oriented feedback provider groups)
- | **Creation** of the feedback process in accordance with agreement on the feedback platform
- | During feedback collection: **Main contact partner** for content or technical **queries**
- | After feedback collection: **Implementation of feedback discussions** with the focus person (strongly recommended). Alternatively, such a discussion can be held with external feedback coaches
- | Optional: **Support** and assistance to the focus person during subsequent individual and/or team-based **follow-up steps**

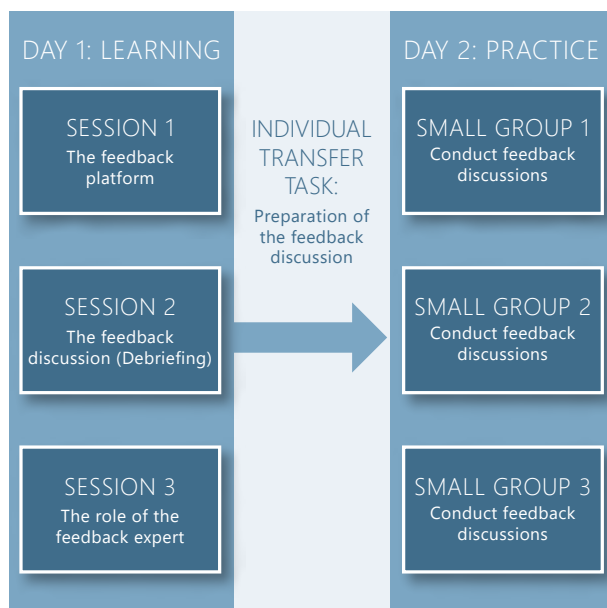
All involved HR partners were to be trained to carry out these tasks.

The challenges

In the planning and design of the **Train-the-Feedback-Expert** workshops, one of the factors to be considered was that the participants came from various **international subsidiaries** of the Hochland Group. In addition, arrangements had to be made to enable simultaneous participation, where possible, of the colleagues from the US and the managers from Russia and Australia. At the same time, the organisers had to allow for **role diversity** among the participants: Some of the attendees deal exclusively with tasks in process control (e.g. consulting with focus persons, creating and supporting processes), whereas others are primarily involved in carrying out the feedback discussions. Other participants handle all tasks at their particular locations. And finally, the participants demonstrated different levels of experience in conducting discussions, although very few had already carried out feedback discussions on the basis of 360° feedback.

The virtual workshop

A workshop concept was created, which addressed the challenges above and, at the same time, provided optimal support to the participants in reaching their individual learning goals. Staggered over two days, a series of **learning and practice sessions were held in English** with a range of different focus topics.



To allow for the **limited attention span in virtual settings**, several 2-hour sessions were held with appropriate breaks to promote higher concentration levels. Coordinated technology checks in advance ensured smooth running of the workshop.

The learning sessions were distributed throughout the first day in such a way that all international participants were able to follow **at least two events** live at their own location. All the sessions were recorded and made available immediately to all participants for online call-up. Taking account of each time zone, each participant was provided with a recommended **video schedule** to ensure that, at the end of the first day, all participants would have had access to the same content. At the beginning of each session, where necessary, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions relating to previous sessions. This meant that those who had not attended a live session could still get up to date on the content.

Day 1: Learning

The first day of the workshop focused on content input with interactive exchange and reflection phases and it consisted of the following learning sessions:

The feedback platform: The first session covered basic information relating to the instrument and the process of the new 360° feedback at Hochland. With regard to the various administrative and participant roles, the complete feedback process was explained and demonstrated, looking at where and how the online tool provides support for this process. Working with process-specific and practical examples, the participants learned to independently create, implement, and provide content and technical support for feedback processes in their area of responsibility.

The feedback discussion: The second session was only relevant for participants who were expected to subsequently carry out feedback discussions with focus persons. The core of this session consisted of a typical **discussion set-up**. On this basis, the participants jointly worked on the goals, structure, and challenges of a feedback discussion. Working individually and in groups, the participants also discussed and practiced **discussion methods and questioning techniques** that are goal-relevant in the different phases of the discussion.

Process of a debriefing talk

Time	Content	Goal	
5 min	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Talk Introduce yourself and the role as being a Debriefing Expert Highlight the confidentiality Present the structure of the debriefing talk and put it into context of the overall process (Ask for expectations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevance and structure of the conversation and your role as Debriefing Expert are clear Rapport is made 	

5 min
 • Line
 • Res
 • Cl
 • De
 • Log

Process of a debriefing talk

Time	Content	Goal	
10 min	Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint deriving of conclusions from the meeting Define what feedback recipient wants to work on (e.g. change behaviour, monitor own perception, manage expectations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipient has developed an understanding of the results 	
5 min	Definition of the next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define tasks and responsibilities for further action in the overall process Discuss possible assistance for the conversation with supervisor / team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipient has defined the next steps 	

| **The role of the feedback expert:** In the third and final session, the workshop participants focused on their own understanding of their role as feedback coach, in particular in the Hochland context. They spoke about the challenge of approaching a feedback discussion with an open mind even though the internal feedback coaches are already familiar with the focus persons and have already formed an initial impression. They also considered those cases in which it is not advisable to conduct a feedback discussion (e.g. with immediate colleagues or their own manager). There was input on basic systemic principles and on discussion preparation techniques with the aid of a fictitious feedback report. Another focus point in this session was the joint discussion and consideration of difficult discussion situations and appropriate solution options.

After the final session, the participants were given an **assignment for individual learning transfer:** Using a fictitious but very realistic 360° feedback report - based on the Hochland questionnaire - the participants were asked to prepare themselves to conduct a feedback discussion.

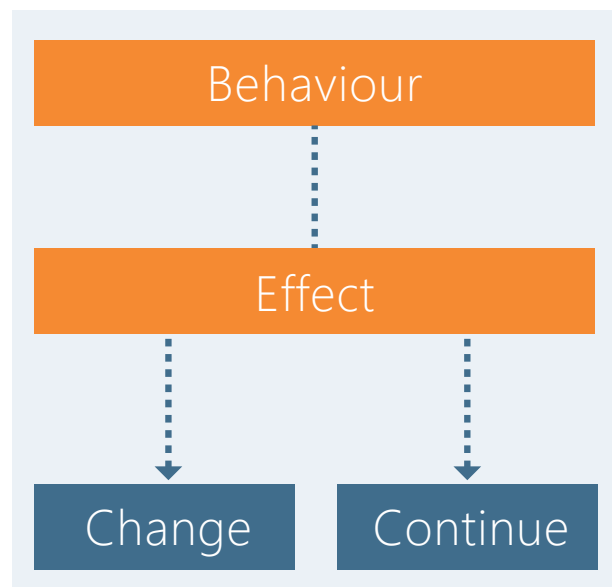
Day 2: Practicing

The second workshop day consisted of a practice session for all participants. The focus was on the concrete **application of what had been learned** and on self-reflection and external reflection on the selected procedure. With regard to the different levels of experience, it was intended that the participants learn from each other and together as a peer group. The small groups for this exercise were put together taking account of the experience level of the individual members, and also of the time zones from which the participants in the virtual session were logged on. In the resulting **learning trios**, each participant had an opportunity during the session to practice conducting the discussion and to observe the other participants as they led the discussion.

The meta | five trainer was integrated in all group sessions as an observer and feedback expert (and as a role player if required) and was thus able to provide immediate feedback on how the participants conducted the

discussions. In parallel, the other members of the small groups also provided **peer feedback** on the discussion behaviour they observed.

The workshop participants did not carry out a two-hour discussion of course but had the opportunity to practice specific challenging situations. Following feedback from the group on the practical effects of their discussion behaviour, they had the opportunity to adapt their approach and experience the situation a second time. This procedure was enriched with a cooperative dialog regarding past experiences in similar discussion situations.



Successful implementation

In the meantime, most of the workshop participants have provided support for several feedback processes in their area of responsibility and have reported positive experiences, as the following quote from one of the participants shows:

"The new 360° feedback has been very well received as it effectively maps the core elements of our corporate culture. The fact that many colleagues are opting for an internal feedback discussion is another indication of the quality of the tool and also of how well meta | five has enabled us to provide support for the feedback processes."

(Heidi Früh,
International Coordination Human Resources)

From the focus persons themselves, throughout the organisation, the response to the tool and, in particular, to the feedback discussions by the internal feedback experts has been very positive.

meta | five supports all internal feedback experts with an offer of regular supervision and an opportunity to share experiences where required.

Infobox

Contact us:

||| meta | five | gmbh
human performance consulting
deutz-mülheimer str. 183
d | 51063 köln

phone +49 | 221 | 71615 | 0
info@meta-five.com

Further informations:

www.meta-five.com

About us:

meta | five is a business consultancy with a team consisting of psychologists, economists and IT-experts. Our service portfolio ranges from the development and realisation of strategies and processes to the design and implementation of tools for personnel diagnostics and development to analyses of "soft" factors of success and aspects of organisational development. We always execute these tasks taking into account our customers concrete objectives and framework conditions. All trainers and consultants from meta | five have extensive experience from various projects for customers from diverse business areas.