

perpendicular angel design

organizing and simplifying, one illumination at a time

AN EVENT APART OT 2021: THE CRAFT OF FEEDBACK BY ERIN CASALI

Next up: Erin Casali covers how to give and get feedback in The Craft of Feedback.

Because this year I used Twitter's threading / topics feature, it's giving me 2 tweets in each embed I do here. I'm embedding every other tweet for readability. There's a PDF at the bottom of the page in case this all collapses.



zeldman 
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☆ Poor or unstructured feedback can hurt good work and wreck team morale. But delivered with the right principles, feedback can be a positive force for change. Erin [@Folletto](#) Casali shares how as [#AEAOT](#) Fall Summit Day 2 rolls on.

[@AnEventApart](#) [@AListApart](#) [#design](#)

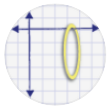


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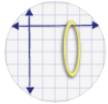
Anne Gibson @perpendicularme · Oct 12, 2021



Replying to @perpendicularme

Erin is going to reframe feedback for us.

Let's say you are giving people positive feedback and the next time they grow worse. But when you give negative feedback, they grow better. This is a regression to the mean, which gives a false bias for the negative. [#aeaot](#)



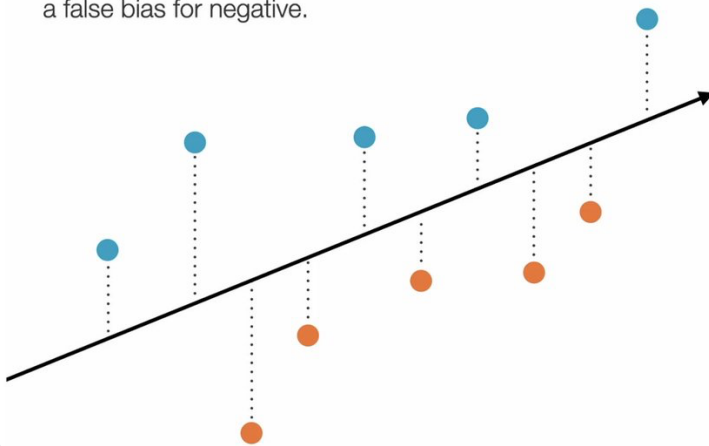
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In both scenarios the feedback worked, but people will return to their average, even as their average is growing.
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Regression to the Mean

Regression to the mean creates a false bias for negative.



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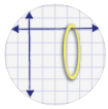


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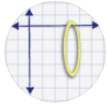
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Praise is not the same as positive feedback. We should use the same frameworks for both positive and negative feedback.
"Good job" isn't positive feedback.

Negative feedback is about change. Positive feedback is about confirmation. [#aeaot](#)



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high performing teams share nearly six times more positive feedback than average teams - Christine Porath, HBR [#aeaot](#)

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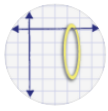


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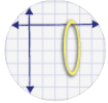
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Giving feedback

Content

Tone

Format. #aeaot



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Content: one framework is
observation + impact + question = actionable feedback.

Observation is non-judgmental. What would a camera
see? #aeaot

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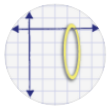


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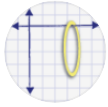
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Explicit assumptions. Clarify your perspective, where you're coming from.

Impact: could be usability testing (what happened in the scenario) or in the situation of a behavior you're providing feedback on. [#aeaot](#)



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You could provide a request - "this is what I'd like you to do" or "this is the preferred approach".

Or provide a question - "how can we solve x?"

Request is prescriptive, question is an open way to present feedback. [#aeaot](#)

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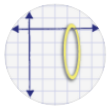


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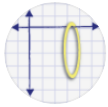


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Open framing could be viewed as not sincere by people who are experienced in receiving feedback. [#aeaot](#)



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Tone: the receptivity equation

Timing + attitude + form = respectful feedback

If the receiver is not framed to accept your feedback it's not going to go through.

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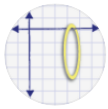


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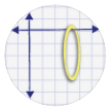


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Nobody likes to do rework. Give feedback when someone's working on the part of the design the feedback is about.

[If you're looking for feedback, make sure to ask while your work is incomplete! it's hard! but better than rework!]

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If you're talking with someone about a presentation, don't wait too long that you both begin to forget what the presentation experience was.

But also, don't kill a "win" moment. Allow to enjoy success *then* give the feedback.

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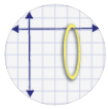


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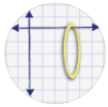
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"They never listen to my feedback!"

If your feedback is coming in right before the product ships, you're not going to be heard. They want to get the thing out the door.

Change the moment to give feedback earlier. It can transform the project and feedback completely

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Rude is NOT a synonym of Sincere.

You don't need to be brutal.

Don't be as rude as possible.

Critical feedback is hard to receive even when you're compassionate.

Don't make power plays.

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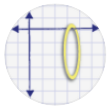


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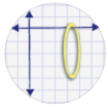
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What can you say that will help someone else to get better, not just the design?

if your attitude is not just feedback it's the person beyond the feedback, it's more effective.

[As someone who's neurodivergent I find it really *really* challenging.]

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Between people there are differences in communication protocol, negotiation, language nuances, cultural differences, and trip words.

Trip words are the words that someone else has a bad experience with, you might not know that it's going to trip up the conversation [#aeaot](#)

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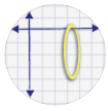


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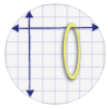
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Anything can be misinterpreted. Do we disagree on the content, or do we disagree because we're not communicating well?

if there's miscommunication, switch levels for the conversation - async is the easiest to misunderstand. [#aeaot](#)



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Communications from highest (least miscommunication) to lowest (most miscommunication):

Video call

Voice call

Private chat

Public chat

Asynchronous message

If you think there's miscommunication, go up a level.

Honor discomfort with video chat. [#aeaot](#)

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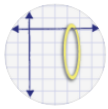


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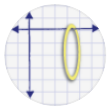
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Trip words. "Every time you start a sentence with 'Oh...' I feel stupid."

Be willing to change to meet your audience.

[Another one is "just" as in "if you just..."]

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Give context to your feedback. That doesn't mean serve a shit sandwich.

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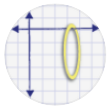


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Giving context is saying 'this is the baseline upon which I'm going to give you feedback.

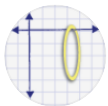
"This could be better"

Before was X - now it's $X+1$ - Could be $x+2$

"This is bad"

Before was X - now it's -1 - Could be $X+1$

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Don't make it personal. Swap "you" for "this". This choice, this strategy, this behavior [#aeaot](#)

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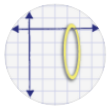


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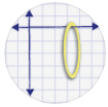


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Itemize the feedback - split different actions to different items.
You can use it to review later. [#aeaot](#)



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Tag your feedback with the four emojis:



blocking issue



should be changed



positive confirmation



we should explore, discuss, i'm unsure

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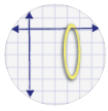


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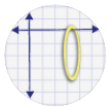


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Receiving feedback!

Question
iteration
Review

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The worst possible way to ask for feedback is “any feedback?”

[Guilty as charged.]

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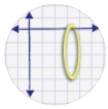


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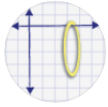
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If you're early in the project you can go deep in the project, if you're late you're probably can't go as deep because you can't absorb as much.

Use the elements of UX by @jjg to help drive the conversation
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No generic words - good, well, nice, bad, ok, cool.

[In writing we call them weasel words.]

Can you replace them with something more specific when you ask for feedback? [#aeaot](#)

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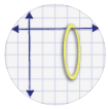


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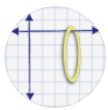
Iteration: any good designer works in iterations.

You can do iteration posts asynchronously. (Email, Teams, Slack, whatever.)

Structure:

What is the goal you've got? What is the design? What changes did you make? What are your questions about this iteration?

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Iteration posts provide both transparency and a set of snapshots of the work as it goes. (Feedback can still happen in between iteration posts.) This stable rhythm can give the team a way to iterate effectively. Also allows you to track decisions.

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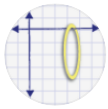


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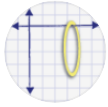
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Iteration posts are also about the discussion in the post.

Iterations don't have to be complete. You don't have to wait until the whole thing is done.

[In fact, don't.]

They can be about unblocking you when you're stuck.

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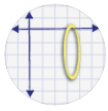


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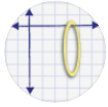
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What tool do you use for asynchronous conversation?
Wordpress, Confluence, Facebook Workplace, Microsoft Yammer, Abstract, Notion... all good places to have conversations where you can then store the history.

Written feedback automatically tracks decisions. [#aeaot](#)



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Review:

Breathe. What you get may be challenging and tough to receive. (Also true in life.)

Approach it like research. We can apply our research skills to feedback. That mindset can be super useful.

Collect, summarize, review.

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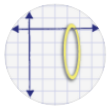


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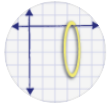


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Collecting and summarizing feedback are not about responding - they're just collecting data, they're objective.

Reviewing is when you apply your judgement. Test out with someone.

If you're embracing iteration posts, you have the summary of changes that reflect back [#aeaot](#)



Anne Gibson

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You don't have to answer everyone.

Not all feedback is equal.

BUT acknowledge the people who gave you feedback as people and the value they bring to you.

If you're feeling defensive, remember that people value that you listened and acknowledged them. [#aeaot](#)

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