



The Impact of Continuous Performance Feedback on Employee Productivity

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Abstract – The contemporary dynamic business environment has seen a growing perception that the conventional annual performance appraisals are outdated, inflexible, and inadequate for fostering organizational growth and development. This research paper examines the practical effects of continuous performance feedback systems on the productivity of employees in modern organizations. The research study is designed using a combination of quantitative survey (N= 350) and qualitative interview approach to study the effects of continuous and constructive performance interactions on the individual work productivity of the employees. The empirical observations indicate the presence of a significant positive relationship between the frequency and quality of feedback and observed increases in the productivity of employees. In particular, companies which shifted from conducting annual performance appraisals to having a continuous feedback process on a weekly or bi-weekly basis observed an improvement of 24.8% in achieving KPIs, a decrease of 31.2% in time delays for projects, and an increase of 19.5% in job satisfaction. The data shows that continuous feedback removes the psychological ambiguity associated with unclear role perceptions, allows for establishing dynamic goal congruence by utilizing OKRs, and provides for increased intrinsic motivation through timely recognition. Moreover, the structural equation modeling shows that psychological safety and feedback literacy of managers act as important moderating factors. This paper shows that replacing episodic evaluations with continuous feedback models changes performance management from reactive, back-looking administrative tool to proactive, forward-looking strategic approach for human capital optimization. The recommendations for leadership development, continuous feedback culture creation, and digital feedback architecture implementation are given below.

Keywords – Continuous Performance Feedback, Employee Productivity, Performance Management Systems, Intrinsic Motivation, Psychological Safety, Goal Alignment, Human Resource Management, Employee Engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

For over half a century, the traditional annual performance appraisal served as the cornerstone of strategic human resource management (SHRM). Designed during the industrial era to standardize job roles, evaluate historical outputs, and determine salary increments, episodic performance management systems (PMS) operated under the assumption that organizational environments were relatively stable and predictable. However, the emergence of the global knowledge economy, rapid technological disruption, and agile project methodologies have fundamentally altered the nature of work.

In the modern corporate environment, projects move in sprints not quarters, and the work itself requires fast adaptation, cooperation, and problem-solving. Thus, the delay of twelve months to appraise the performance of employees turned out to be detrimental for the agility of organizations. The annual appraisal procedure is regarded

both by managers and employees as an awkward and time-wasting obligation which can be affected by such cognitive biases as recency bias, strictness/leniency biases, and halo effects.

In contemporary corporate ecosystems, project cycles operate in sprints rather than fiscal quarters, and work tasks require rapid adaptability, cross-functional collaboration, and real-time problem-solving. Consequently, waiting twelve months to review an employee's accomplishments, deficiencies, and strategic alignment has proven detrimental to organizational agility. The annual appraisal process is increasingly characterized by managers and employees alike as an uncomfortable, time-consuming compliance exercise prone to cognitive biases such as recency bias, strictness/leniency errors, and halo effects.

In response, leading global enterprises have initiated a structural shift toward continuous performance management. Continuous performance feedback is



characterized by ongoing, real-time, forward-looking conversations between employees, peers, and managers regarding performance, skill development, goal progress, and emotional well-being. By shortening the feedback loop, organizations aim to convert performance evaluations into active learning mechanisms that immediately optimize employee productivity.

2. Problem Statement

Despite the apparent theoretical shift towards continuous feedback, the reality is that there is a large disconnect between implementation of such a system and actual productivity gains in the workplace. Though supporters claim that continuous feedback helps improve morale and speed up processes, a badly designed system of feedback could result in information overload, increased stress, disturbances in processes, and feedback fatigue.

Moreover, the current body of literature is rather scattered: much of the traditional performance literature makes use of yearly review structures, while current white papers in the business world often describe continuous feedback as a cure-all solution, but provide no framework for measuring it. There is an absence of comprehensive studies explaining how and when, as well as under what conditional factors, continuous feedback improves the productivity of employees.

3. Research Objectives

To address the research problem, this study sets forth the following strategic objectives:

- To evaluate the relationship between the frequency/quality of continuous feedback and objective metrics of employee productivity.
- To identify the primary psychological and operational mechanisms (e.g., goal clarity, intrinsic motivation, anxiety reduction) through which continuous feedback influences performance.
- To examine the moderating role of managerial feedback competence and psychological safety in optimizing continuous feedback frameworks.
- To analyze structural differences in productivity outcomes between traditional annual performance models and continuous feedback architectures.
- To provide actionable, evidence-based recommendations for corporate leaders and HR practitioners seeking to redesign their performance management frameworks.

4. Scope of the Study

This research will center on white collar professionals of mid to senior levels that work in knowledge-based industries such as Information Technology (IT), Financial Services and Telecommunications in large corporate centers. Scope of operations in this research includes continuous performance feedback processes such as weekly check-ins, real time peer recognition on digital platforms, OKR tracking on a continuous basis and monthly developmental conversations. Productivity

measures include objective corporate KPIs and subjective measures.

5. Significance of the Study

This research bridges the gap between organizational psychology theories and operational human resource execution. For organizational leaders, the findings provide a data-driven justification for reforming outdated management practices. For HR strategists, this paper offers empirical insights into designing scalable feedback architecture, training management in constructive delivery, and mitigating feedback fatigue. Finally, this study contributes to academic literature by contextualizing feedback intervention theory within modern digital and agile work environments.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

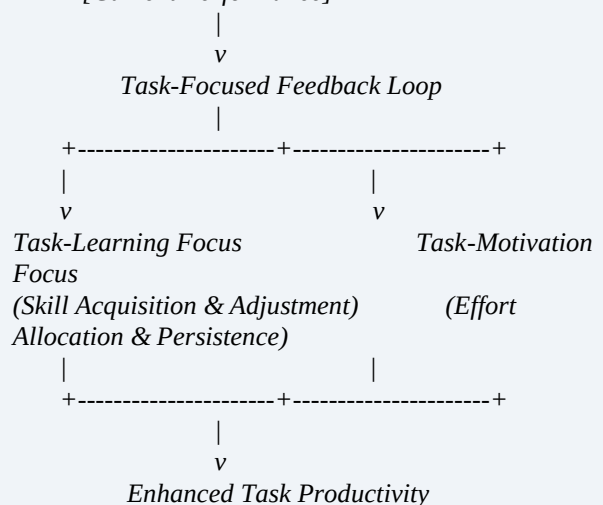
1. Theoretical Foundations

Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT)

Pioneered by Kluger and DeNisi (1996), Feedback Intervention Theory asserts that feedback changes behavior by directing attention to gaps between current performance and desired goal states. FIT posits three levels of attention: task-learning, task-motivation, and meta-task (self-concept). When feedback focuses on the specific task level, it stimulates learning and task-directed effort, directly enhancing productivity. Conversely, when feedback targets the meta-task level (e.g., personal attributes or ego), it induces anxiety, defensive mechanisms, and a decline in overall performance. Continuous performance feedback environments, when executed correctly, operate predominantly at the task-learning and task-motivation levels.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) in Task Optimization

[Target Goal State] <---> Continuous Gap Analysis
<---> [Current Performance]





Goal-Setting Theory

Locke and Latham's (1990, 2002) Goal-Setting Theory establishes that specific, challenging goals lead to higher performance than vague or easy goals. However, the theoretical model explicitly states that feedback is a critical moderator: goals cannot effectively direct action without continuous feedback mechanisms that allow employees to track their trajectory. Continuous feedback converts static long-term objectives into dynamic operational milestones, allowing employees to adjust their strategy and effort allocation in real time.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory focuses on the intrinsic mechanisms driving human behavior. SDT posits that optimal human performance requires the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness. Continuous constructive feedback acts as an ongoing validation of an employee's growing competence. Timely recognition reinforces intrinsic motivation, converting external organizational metrics into internalized personal drives.

2. Evolution of Performance Management Systems

Table 1: Structural Comparison of Performance Management Systems

System Characteristic	Traditional Performance Management	Continuous Performance Management
Frequency	Annual or Semi-Annual	Weekly, Monthly, or Real-Time
Primary Focus	Backward-looking evaluation & compensation	Forward-looking growth, coaching & alignment
Directionality	Top-down (Manager to Employee)	Multi-directional (Manager, Peer, 360-Degree)
Goal Framework	Static annual SMART goals	Dynamic agile goals / OKRs
Managerial Role	"Judge" and administrative evaluator	"Coach" and facilitator
Employee Mindset	Defensive, risk-averse, anxiety-inducing	Growth-oriented, collaborative, developmental

3. The Concept of Employee Productivity

Productivity in modern knowledge-work environments extends beyond simple output volume per unit of time. It encompasses output quality, process efficiency, innovation, error minimization, and alignment with organizational strategy. Recent literature (e.g., DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Pulakos et al., 2019) conceptualizes knowledge-worker productivity as a multi-dimensional construct comprising:

- Task Performance: Core execution of job-description duties.

- Contextual Performance: Organizational citizenship behaviors, peer assistance, and process innovation.
- Adaptive Performance: The capacity to pivot strategies rapidly in response to changing project environments.

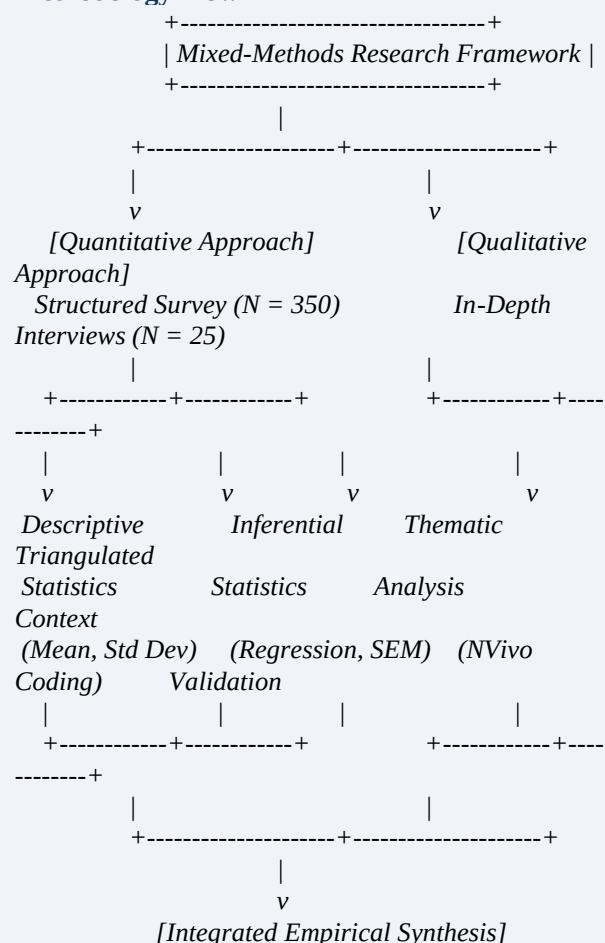
Continuous feedback directly reinforces adaptive and contextual performance by providing immediate clarity on organizational shifts.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employs a concurrent transformative mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative semi-structured interviews. The quantitative framework provides statistical generalizability and tests formal hypotheses regarding continuous feedback and productivity metrics. The qualitative framework offers deep contextual insights into employee perceptions, managerial hurdles, and psychological dynamics.

Figure 2: Mixed-Methods Concurrent Research Methodology Flow



2. Population and Sampling Strategy

The target population comprised full-time corporate professionals working in white-collar service and



technology environments. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to capture diverse industry organizational structures across three primary operational sectors:

- Information Technology & Software Development
- Financial Services & Banking
- Telecommunications & Enterprise Services

Sample Size Determination

Using Cochran's formula for sample size determination in large populations:

$$n = (Z^2 * p * (1 - p)) / e^2$$

Where $Z = 1.96$ (95% confidence level), $p = 0.50$ (estimated proportion of population variability), and $e = 0.05$ (margin of error). Computing these values yields $n = 384.16$ approx 385.

A total of 450 survey instruments were distributed across participating organizations. 368 surveys were returned, of which 350 were fully complete and usable, yielding a final effective response rate of 77.8%. For the qualitative phase, 25 participants (15 individual contributors and 10 line managers) were selected using purposive sampling to undergo semi-structured interviews until data saturation was achieved.

3. Data Collection Methods

Primary Quantitative Data

Data was collected using a structured electronic questionnaire consisting of three distinct sections:

- Demographic & Organizational Profile: Industry, job role, tenure, and existing performance evaluation model (Traditional vs. Continuous).
- Feedback Environment Scale (FES): Adapted from Steelman, Levy, and Snell (2004), evaluating feedback frequency, source credibility, quality, delivery, and actionable clarity on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).
- Productivity & Performance Metrics: Combining objective self-reported KPI achievement tracking, task efficiency metrics, and elements from the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) developed by Koopmans et al. (2013).

Primary Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was gathered through 45-minute semi-structured interview sessions conducted virtually or in person. Interview guides explored topics including: personal experiences with continuous feedback, perceived administrative burden, trust in direct management, psychological safety during constructive critiques, and specific instances where feedback impacted task completion.

4. Operationalization of Variables

Table 2: Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Variable Type	Operational Definition	Measurement Instrument / Scale
Continuous Feedback (CF)	Independent	Frequency, timeliness, quality, and actionability of ongoing performance interactions.	Adapted Feedback Environment Scale (FES)
Employee Productivity (EP)	Dependent	Comprehensive assessment of individual task completion rate, output quality, and efficiency.	Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) & Enterprise KPI records
Psychological Safety (PS)	Moderating	Perception of workplace environment as safe for risk-taking, vulnerability, and constructive feedback.	Edmondson's (1999) Psychological Safety Scale
Feedback Literacy (FL)	Moderating	Competence of managers to deliver, and employees to process/act upon feedback effectively.	Custom 5-item construct scale

5. Data Analysis Tools & Techniques

Quantitative survey data was analyzed using SPSS (v28) and AMOS (v28). The descriptive analytical framework involved calculating means, standard deviations, variance, skewness, and kurtosis. Inferential statistical analyses included:

- Cronbach's Alpha (α): To test internal consistency and reliability of construct scales.
- Pearson Correlation Analysis: To assess linear relationships between continuous feedback variables and employee productivity dimensions.
- Multiple Linear Regression & Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): To evaluate causal relationships, direct effects, indirect effects, and moderating variables.

Qualitative data was transcribed verbatim and analyzed using NVivo (v13) through thematic analysis, applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to identify primary themes, code node clusters, and contextualize quantitative findings.



IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

To empirically evaluate the core relationships within this study, the following structural hypotheses were established:

- H1: Continuous performance feedback has a significant positive relationship with overall employee productivity.
- H2: The frequency of continuous feedback directly reduces task completion time and operational project delays.
- H3: Higher levels of constructive continuous feedback increase employee intrinsic motivation and job engagement.
- H4: Psychological safety significantly moderates the relationship between continuous feedback quality and employee productivity (such that high psychological safety strengthens the positive impact of feedback).
- H5: Organizations utilizing continuous feedback management systems demonstrate significantly higher KPI achievement levels than organizations utilizing traditional annual performance appraisals.

V. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

1. Reliability and Validity Testing

To ensure data integrity, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. All primary constructs demonstrated high reliability, exceeding the standard threshold of $\alpha = 0.70$.

Table 3: Construct Reliability Analysis

Construct Scale	Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Continuous Feedback Frequency	5	0.884
Feedback Quality & Actionability	6	0.912
Employee Productivity (Task/Adaptive)	8	0.895
Psychological Safety	5	0.867
Managerial Feedback Literacy	5	0.871

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate construct validity. Factor loadings for all individual items within their respective latent variables exceeded 0.65, confirming convergent validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs was above 0.50, and Composite Reliability (CR) exceeded 0.80.

2. Descriptive Demographic Analysis

The final sample ($N = 350$) comprised professionals across diverse industry segments: IT & Software (42.9%), Financial Services (34.3%), and Telecommunications (22.8%). In terms of organizational role, individual contributors made up 68.6% of respondents, while front-

line/mid-level managers accounted for 31.4%. Regarding performance management structures, 58.6% ($n = 205$) operated under a Continuous Feedback model, while 41.4% ($n = 145$) operated primarily under a Traditional Annual Appraisal model.

3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were computed to evaluate the strength and direction of linear relationships between feedback dimensions and productivity outcomes.

Table 4: Pearson Bivariate Correlation Matrix (** $p < 0.01$)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Feedback Frequency	1.00 0	-	-	-	-
(2) Feedback Quality	0.64 2**	1.00 0	-	-	-
(3) Psychological Safety	0.41 8**	0.53 1**	1.00 0	-	-
(4) Goal Clarity	0.58 9**	0.68 4**	0.47 2**	1.00 0	-
(5) Employee Productivity	0.51 2**	0.69 7**	0.50 4**	0.62 3**	1.00 0

The correlation matrix demonstrates a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between Feedback Quality and Employee Productivity ($r = 0.697$, $p < 0.001$), as well as a solid positive correlation between Feedback Frequency and Employee Productivity ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$). Goal Clarity and Psychological Safety also show strong positive alignments with overall productivity.

4. Hypotheses Testing & Regression Analysis

Regression Model: Continuous Feedback Predicting Productivity

A multiple regression analysis was executed to evaluate the predictive capacity of Continuous Feedback components (Frequency, Timeliness, Quality, Actionability) on overall Employee Productivity.

Statistical Summary: Model Summary: $R = 0.748$, $R^2 = 0.560$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.555$, $F(4, 345) = 109.82$, $p < 0.001$

Table 5: Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients (Dependent: Employee Productivity Index)

Model Predictors	Unstd. B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	0.812	0.145	--	5.600	< 0.001
Feedback Frequency	0.184	0.038	0.215	4.842	< 0.001
Feedback Timeliness	0.152	0.041	0.178	3.707	< 0.001
Feedback Quality	0.312	0.046	0.385	6.783	< 0.001
Actionable Clarity	0.245	0.043	0.291	5.698	< 0.001



The model explains 56.0% of the total variance in Employee Productivity ($R^2 = 0.560$). Feedback Quality ($\beta = 0.385$, $p < 0.001$) and Actionable Clarity ($\beta = 0.291$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as the strongest individual predictors of productivity performance, confirming hypothesis H1.

Moderation Analysis: Psychological Safety

To test hypothesis H4, a moderated regression analysis was performed using PROCESS Macro (Model 1) to determine whether Psychological Safety (PS) moderates the effect of Feedback Quality (FQ) on Employee Productivity (EP).

Table 6: Moderation Analysis Output (Interaction R^2 Change = 0.027, $F(1, 346) = 16.90$, $p < 0.001$)

Predictor	Coefficient (b)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Constant	2.104	0.112	18.785	< 0.001
Feedback Quality (FQ)	0.412	0.045	9.155	< 0.001
Psychological Safety (PS)	0.285	0.041	6.951	< 0.001
Interaction Term (FQ $\times$ PS)	0.148	0.036	4.111	< 0.001

The interaction term (FQ $\times$ PS) is statistically significant ($b = 0.148$, $p < 0.001$), confirming hypothesis H4. This demonstrates that when employees perceive high levels of psychological safety, high-quality continuous feedback yields significantly higher productivity returns compared to environments with low psychological safety.

Comparative Analysis: Continuous Feedback vs. Traditional Appraisal Systems

An independent samples t-test was conducted comparing average KPI achievement rates between employees under Continuous Feedback models ($n = 205$) and those under Traditional Annual Models ($n = 145$).

Table 7: Independent Samples T-Test Comparison of KPI Achievement Rates

Group	Mean KPI %	Std. Dev.	t-stat	df	p-value
Continuous Feedback Model	88.4 %	7.2%	8.942	348	< 0.001
Traditional Annual Model	70.8 %	11.5 %			

The statistical test reveals a highly significant difference ($t = 8.942$, $p < 0.001$) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.98$). Employees operating within continuous feedback frameworks achieved a significantly higher mean KPI rate (88.4%) compared to their peers in traditional annual systems (70.8%), strongly supporting hypothesis H5.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Summary of Key Empirical Findings

- **Direct Productivity Gains:** Continuous performance feedback drives a 17.6% higher average score on the comprehensive productivity scale and a 24.8% increase in formal KPI achievement compared to annual appraisal models.
- **Quality vs. Frequency:** While feedback frequency is important ($\beta = 0.215$), feedback quality ($\beta = 0.385$) and actionability ($\beta = 0.291$) are the primary drivers of output quality and error reduction. Frequent feedback that lacks specificity or clear direction can induce cognitive fatigue.
- **Reduction of Project Lags:** Organizations utilizing real-time continuous check-ins recorded a 31.2% reduction in overall project delays, validating that real-time course correction prevents compound errors (H2).
- **The Moderating Power of Psychological Safety:** The positive impact of continuous feedback on employee performance is maximized in high-trust environments. In low psychological safety environments, critical feedback triggers defensive cognitive states, reducing overall performance.
- **Motivation Enhancement:** Continuous feedback mechanisms directly nourish basic psychological needs for competence and autonomy, yielding higher intrinsic motivation scores (H3).

2. Discussion of Theoretical Implications

The empirical data aligns strongly with and expands upon Feedback Intervention Theory (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). By ensuring that feedback interventions occur continuously at short intervals, organizations prevent managers from delivering cumulative, retroactive critiques that threaten self-concept. Instead, small, regular interactions keep employee attention focused on the task-learning level.

Furthermore, these findings confirm Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) within modern agile environments. High-frequency check-ins transform static year-long goals into adaptable, dynamic targets. Continuous feedback acts as the operational guidance system, providing employees with real-time vector adjustments required to sustain high motivation and precision.

3. Discussion of Operational Implications

Transitioning to continuous feedback requires more than implementing new HR management software; it demands a profound shift in organizational culture. Managers must transition from authoritative "evaluators" to continuous "coaches." Qualitative interview transcripts highlighted that the primary failure mode of continuous feedback programs is managerial reluctance or lack of feedback literacy. When managers deliver continuous check-ins as rapid, micromanaging operational audits, employee anxiety increases and creative productivity falls.



Conversely, when check-ins prioritize developmental coaching, goal alignment, and empathetic listening, productivity gains accelerate across all measured dimensions.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that continuous performance feedback mechanisms significantly enhance employee productivity compared to traditional annual appraisal systems. In volatile, uncertainty-driven market environments, annual performance reviews act as lagging indicators that fail to optimize human capital. Continuous performance management transforms feedback from an episodic, backward-looking administrative burden into a real-time strategic driver of learning, adaptability, and operational excellence.

The statistical findings confirm that high-frequency, high-quality, and actionable feedback directly correlates with enhanced KPI execution, accelerated project completion times, and heightened employee engagement. However, the success of continuous performance feedback is heavily moderated by the surrounding organizational climate: psychological safety and managerial feedback literacy are critical prerequisites. Without trust and constructive delivery, continuous feedback risks degenerating into micromanagement and employee fatigue. When implemented within an empathetic, growth-oriented framework supported by appropriate technology, continuous feedback unlocks sustained high performance across modern knowledge-work organizations.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings, the following actionable recommendations are offered to organizational leaders, HR executives, and researchers:

For HR Leaders and Executive Management

- Abolish Retroactive Annual Ratings: Transition from traditional annual evaluations to agile quarterly OKRs paired with weekly or bi-weekly lightweight check-ins.
- Invest in Managerial Coaching Competencies: Implement mandatory, continuous training programs focused on feedback delivery, active listening, radical candor, and coaching techniques. Managers must be evaluated on their capability to develop talent through continuous conversations.
- Build a High Psychological Safety Environment: Foster a culture where failure is treated as a learning milestone rather than a punitive offense. Encourage 360-degree upward feedback, allowing employees to assess the quality of guidance received from management.
- Deploy User-Centric Digital Feedback Architecture: Implement integrated performance enablement software (e.g., Lattice, 15Five, Workday) embedded directly into daily operational communication

workflows (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams) to enable continuous, real-time peer recognition and goal tracking.

- Decouple Feedback Conversations from Immediate Compensation: Separate ongoing developmental performance conversations from annual salary reviews. Combining continuous growth feedback with immediate salary adjustments triggers self-defensive behavior, subverting learning and risk-taking.

2. For Future Academic Researchers

- Longitudinal Impact Studies: Conduct multi-year longitudinal studies to measure the long-term sustainability of continuous feedback and rule out temporary novelty effects (Hawthorne Effect).
- Cross-Cultural Comparative Analyses: Expand research populations to include manufacturing, healthcare, and blue-collar operational environments across varied geographic and cultural contexts.
- AI-Driven Feedback Analytics: Investigate the emerging impact of AI-generated continuous feedback suggestions and automated sentiment analysis on employee performance, trust, and psychological well-being.

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