

Reviewing for Development

by Roger Greenaway

If your work is about personal development, social development, team development, leadership development, management development, or 'anything' development you should find some useful ideas and tips in this article about reviewing for development.

Much advice about reviewing (or debriefing) assumes that the main purpose is to facilitate LEARNING. So what should you do differently when the emphasis is on facilitating DEVELOPMENT?

One (partly right) answer is that DEVELOPMENT arises as a direct result of what is experienced during the 'activity' and that LEARNING mostly happens after the activity when reviewing the experience. For example, the sense of achievement on completing a rock climb happens as the climber completes the final move. Such achievements have an impact on DEVELOPMENT - whether or not much LEARNING arises directly from the achievement. It is during reflection and review after the climb that the climber can LEARN more from the experience than was possible while engrossed in the climbing. The climber may learn through feedback during a review that their communication was poor or that their recklessness was endangering others, or during a review they may learn how they can also control other fears in other situations. A review can take LEARNING in many directions that were not fully apparent at the time of the DEVELOPMENTAL experience.

The above description is only 'partly right' because it is by no means always true that development happens during 'the experience' and learning happens during 'the review'. Many exceptions spring to mind. But more important than recognising exceptions is to recognise the flaw in the original proposition.

What flaw?

The flaw is thinking of a review as a period during which experiencing is switched off. It is my belief that the experience of a review is at least as important as the experience of the event being reviewed. (How can you advocate learning through experience without paying attention to the experience of learning?)

It is easy to see how this flaw has come about. When reviews are designed for learning from an experience that has just happened, the experience of the reviewing process is given little (if any) attention. But if you want to use both the activity AND the review for DEVELOPMENT, it is important to consider the quality of experience THROUGHOUT the whole process.

The tips that follow about 'reviewing for development' are based on the belief that the quality of experience during reviews can have a significant impact on growth and development. If participants feel valued, respected, responsible, listened to, cared for, and have these and other needs met during review time, the experience of reviewing is likely to be contributing to their growth and development.

There are many theories about the kinds of experiences that are most critical for development. Some models are arranged in hierarchies meaning that some needs have to be met before other 'higher' needs can be met. Other models simply suggest that you pay most attention to the greatest need. Other models suggest the opposite - that you play to people's strengths. Other models bypass needs assessment altogether and simply aim to provide a nourishing environment with an abundance of opportunities for development.

Whether you follow a model or just do what feels right, the following tips list should open your eyes to some of the possibilities of using

reviewing (or debriefing) sessions for achieving developmental aims.

Does that mean putting LEARNING objectives on one side while you attend to DEVELOPMENTAL aims? Probably not. Many reviewing techniques can work well at both levels simultaneously - especially if your own mind is working at both of these levels and is in touch with what people are EXPERIENCING during the review as well as with what they are LEARNING during the review.

That's the explanation. There now follows a list of ways in which you can meet a whole range of developmental needs while reviewing. This way of thinking about reviewing will increase the developmental impact of your programmes. It will provide a solid base for facilitating more specific kinds of development (such as team development or leadership development). And as a bonus you will also have created a wonderful climate for learning! In other words, even if your main focus is LEARNING you should achieve more and better learning if you use the twin track approach of using reviews for both learning and development.

REVIEWING FOR DEVELOPMENT: EXAMPLES

We can respond to the need for ...

... BELONGINGNESS

by ensuring that no-one is just listening, or feels left out or is isolated during a review. Use techniques that encourage everyone to tell their story so that everyone gets listened to. Use small group tasks during review so that everyone has something to do and is included. Have a rule that encourages anyone to speak up if they are feeling left out or ignored e.g. 'by playing the joker'.

... ACCEPTANCE

by accepting people as they are. This need probably has to be met before the individual

will consider change. So feedback sessions should initially encourage reflective feedback (as in holding up a mirror) rather than judgemental feedback (as when stating opinions or giving advice). By rotating paired reviewing tasks everyone ends up doing paired work with everyone else. Acceptance at one-to-one level leads to feelings of acceptance at the 'group' level.

... CARE AND FRIENDSHIP

by using reviewing tasks in which people get to know each other better. This is more likely to happen in twos and threes than in the large group. The empathy test (a paired exercise) is a fun and intuitive way of guessing what the world looks like in your partner's shoes. Care and friendship are unlikely to develop until people know each other well, so use buddy systems for reviewing and use prediction exercises as a way of testing how well people know each other.

... PRAISE AND RECOGNITION

by using rounds in which the whole group are asked to praise each individual (in turn) for something specific they said or did or did not do during the event being reviewed. Limit points to a suitable number (e.g. 5 per person). Follow with a round in which each individual states something they deserve praise for that was not noticed. Many other feedback exercises are described in the Active Reviewing Guide.

... RESPONSIBILITY

by giving participants responsibility for some (or all) aspects of reviewing. A half way house is to set up reviews as independent tasks. With groups of all ages, I have found that participants behave particularly responsibly when a group of around 10 is split in two with each 5 preparing feedback for individuals in the other 5. Also ... people have a greater sense of responsibility in reviewing if they are given choice (e.g. to create their own questions) and have advance warning and some preparation time.

... SELF-RESPECT

by giving participants reviewing exercises in which they evaluate their own performance and share this in the group. For some groups (of any age) simply asking them to write and read out 'My Ten Best Points' can be quite an experience. By making 'respect' a ground rule (or similar) it is easier for the facilitator or participants to challenge if it is felt that anyone is failing to respect themselves or others. A facilitator who upholds the rights of individuals to opt out or speak up will be helping to develop respect as a group norm.

... CREATIVITY

by directly encouraging creativity in reviewing. Being a creative facilitator is not enough. Encouraging participants' own creativity is different. So give half ideas, not full instructions. Ask for suggestions. Invent a rule that states 'we will not use the same reviewing technique twice'. So if you want to use rounds for a second time, ask the group to suggest a variation. Arts based reviewing exercises help to meet this need, but the need for creativity is much more than being 'arty'. New ideas and innovative thinking belong to all subject disciplines.

... ACHIEVEMENT

by (very occasionally) making a review a race against time. The 'Survey' method works well in a tight but realistic time scale. In a group of 20 with 5 issues to review, 5 groups of 4 specialise in one issue, simultaneously conduct a survey throughout the whole group and report back on their findings. Also ... after a particularly good or intensive review (such as a review session with a high quality of feedback) be sure to give credit to the group for what they have achieved in the review.

... NEW EXPERIENCES

by pointing out to the group that reviewing sessions are a time for new experiences. The new experience might be the responsibility of

observing and reporting back, or of facilitating a discussion, or of giving and receiving feedback, or doing 'Action Replay' or 'Guided Reflection'. You can use 'Activity Map' for quickly finding out what kinds of reviewing methods participants have experienced before and how they responded. If you are using methods from the Active Reviewing Guide with people who normally review using group discussion, then nearly all your review sessions will be new experiences!

... CONNECTION

"Personal growth can be viewed as making new connections in any of several directions: UPWARD to achieve one's full potential; OUTWARD to make contact and encounter others; INWARD to increase our awareness of who we are, and what we want, need, sense, feel, think, and do; and DOWNWARD to touch earth, to be grounded, and to connect." (Giges and Rosenfeld, 1976)

Examples of reviewing methods that help people to connect in all four directions are described in 'In Search of Respectable Adventure' at <http://reviewing.co.uk/outdoor/respctad.htm> [These 'outdoor' examples can be translated into indoor settings.]

... SIGNIFICANCE

by reviewing 'leadership' or 'influence' and helping everyone to become more aware of how what they say and do or don't do affects others. Freeze a reviewing discussion and review the review. Ask everyone to look around and think about how each other person is influencing what they are saying or doing or not doing. Then go round the group and ask, one at a time 'How is [this person] influencing you or the group?' Or, at the end of a review, finish with a round of appreciation for each individual about the part they played in the review.

... CERTAINTY

by announcing the structure and purpose of the review and explaining what you can and cannot guarantee about the process that lies ahead. Agree the latest finish time. If you have prepared a tightly structured session that provides each person with equal airtime, then say so. If it will be a more flexible session in which suggestions are welcome and in which everyone has a right to leave, then remind them this is so. If you need to make or remake a contract with the group, then consider writing it down and keeping it in view.

... UNCERTAINTY/VARIETY

by explaining that 'experiential learning and development' (or however you describe what you do) is really a voyage of discovery. The start and finish of the journey is fairly well charted, but the middle is not mapped out because it is a dynamic process that turns out differently every time. By using 'Metaphor Maps' each person can trace their journey during the programme. If it is clear from this process that they are staying in safe and familiar territory, ask if they are staying in this territory out of choice and if there are any parts of the map that they are curious about visiting. [This is a richer version of 'Comfort Zone'. I find that 'variety' is often a more attractive destination than 'discomfort'.]

... GROWTH

by providing support, space and room to move. This can be mental space or physical space, but somehow physical space helps to create mental space, just as physical movement helps to create mental movement. 'Guided Reflection' can help to create mental space. Slightly active methods such as 'Revolver' or 'Horseshoe' create strong associations between mental positions and physical positions. 'Action Replay' and 'Active Force Field Analysis' and 'Future Walking' take such associations much further.

... CONTRIBUTION

by creating opportunities for participants to help each other within the reviewing process - as facilitators, buddies, mentors, or coaches. If we have a developmental need to help others, then by helping others we help ourselves. The challenge in review design is to create suitable opportunities for everyone to 'help others'. Try exploring the slogan 'the more you give, the more you get' and through discussion work out what 'giving' in reviews would look like for each group and individual you work with. You can then help participants turn a nice slogan into practical and specific action.

... FUN

by including playful exercises such as 'Empathy Tests' or 'Fortunately, Unfortunately' (an alternating round), or by including independent reviewing tasks that end with a performance such as a poem, a song, a replay, a dramatic presentation. Of course, the best fun just happens, but it helps if you create expectations that reviewing sessions can be both fun and serious. Better still if you avoid associating 'serious' with learning and 'fun' with energisers! Techniques like 'Revolver', 'Action Replay' or 'Gifts' tend to generate a healthy mixture of fun and serious within the same technique. Now that's what I call 'blended learning'!

... FREEDOM

by creating time and space and choices within reviews, and by giving as much responsibility to learners as you dare (or by taking as little as you can). The 'Joker' (the wild card) in the 'Active Reviewing Cycle' was intended to give facilitators the freedom to work intuitively and not becoming too dependent on keeping to this model (or any other). Some trainers have gone further and take the 'Joker' into the group setting with the rule that anyone can interrupt the process when they hold the 'Joker'. This symbol can be used as a safety valve or a spanner in the works. Either way, it gives participants who

need freedom a way of finding it before a crisis develops.

... POWER

by disempowering ourselves. This is the advice given in 'Learning by Doing and Sharing' by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) at <http://digbig.com/4cdak>

"Disempower yourself as facilitator. To do this, you can:

- decentre – move away from the spatial focus of authority;
- sit down, instead of standing while others sit;
- keep quiet;
- initiate self-organising processes;
- hand over to a participant (e.g. to chair a feedback session);
- refer questions back to groups;
- ask for contributions from others;
- start individual reflection in buzz groups;
- go away."

... SURVIVAL

This should not be an issue during reviewing! But when reviews go wrong people can feel very threatened, especially if feedback sessions go awry. That is why I developed 'Warm Seat' on discovering that 'Hot Seat' methods could easily become threatening and unproductive. 'Warm Seat' allows the person receiving feedback to stay in control. They are free to leave the seat if it becomes too hot. Other measures also need to be in place to make such sessions enjoyable, warm and valuable.

In 1993, I wrote: "By reviewing activities we show that we care about what people experience; that we value what they have to say; and that we are interested in the progress of each individual's learning and development." (Playback, page 21)

If participants feel cared for, valued and important during reviews, you will have succeeded in creating a climate in which they are more likely to learn and develop. This article has shown how you can build on these principles to achieve an even more developmental climate when reviewing.

REFERENCES

The list above draws together the work of Maslow (1954), Lindgren (1956) and Kellmer-Pringle (1965). Similar needs have been identified by Carl Rogers (1969) as being critical needs to satisfy in order to create the "freedom to learn". Anthony Robbins' Human Needs Psychology (HNP) identifies 6 Human Needs - 1:Love & Connection 2:Significance 3:Certainty 4:Uncertainty/Variety 5:Growth 6:Contribution. Fulfillment depends on meeting the needs for Growth and Contribution. William Glasser's 5 Needs are Fun, Freedom, Power, Belonging and Survival. He refers to them as 5 legs of a stool, not as a hierarchy.

References to methods such as 'Revolver' or 'Warm Seat' can be followed up by entering their names in the search box at <http://reviewing.co.uk>

The theme of learning versus development is also explored in 'In Search of Adventure' at <http://reviewing.co.uk/outdoor/respectad.htm>

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