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When looking to improve workplace performance, people often seek third-party input by asking for feedback. However, we propose that asking for feedback might not be the most effective way of soliciting critical and actionable input. We offer a simple yet powerful alternative: ask for advice instead. Across four experiments (N=1,438), including a field experiment, we show that people offer more critical and actionable input when they are asked to provide advice (versus feedback)—even when they are asked to provide comments on identical output. When asked to provide feedback (versus advice), givers focus too much on evaluating the recipient, which undermines their ability to generate constructive (i.e. critical and actionable) input. Our findings suggest that framing feedback provision as advice provision may be a promising way of soliciting constructive third-party input. (132 words)

Key words: feedback; advice; performance; personal development; evaluative mindset

(5593 words)

1. Introduction

To identify opportunities for improvement, employees frequently solicit feedback, or third-party insights about their performance (Ashford and Tsui 1991, Ilgen et al. 1979, Kluger and DeNisi 1996, Larson et al. 2013). In some cases, seeking third-party feedback is a wise strategy; feedback has the potential to promote development across diverse domains ranging from simple motor skills (Wulf et al. 2010) to complex negotiations (Thompson and DeHarpport 1994). Feedback improves outcomes by helping individuals more accurately assess their performance (Latham and Locke 1990, Prue and Fairbank 1981), identify ineffective strategies (Ilgen et al. 1979), and discover novel approaches for improvement (Allen et al. 2010). Yet, a landmark meta-analysis of 607 empirical studies found that receiving feedback often has no—or even a negative—influence on recipients' performance (Kluger and DeNisi 1996). Why does feedback often fail to have its desired effect? We propose that one answer to this important question is that the way feedback is solicited often prevents feedback givers from generating constructive insights.

Prior research highlights two key characteristics of effective feedback: criticality and actionability. We define critical feedback as feedback that highlights what the recipient can improve on as opposed to what they already did well (Bond and Anderson 1987). Critical feedback can motivate performance improvement by highlighting a gap between the current and desired performance level (Fishbach et al. 2010). Actionable feedback is defined as feedback that offers clear guidelines regarding *how* the recipient can improve (Allen et al. 2010, Goodman et al. 2004). Actionable feedback can provide employees with a clear path forward for development (Cannon and Witherspoon 2005). Despite the importance of receiving critical and actionable insights, little is known about how people should communicate with third parties to elicit useful input. This question is important in light of the fact that most employees feel that the feedback they receive is overly positive and lacks usefulness (e.g., Jampol and Zayas 2016).

In this paper, we argue and find evidence that a common strategy that employees use to solicit external input on their performance—explicitly asking for feedback—can undermine the constructiveness (i.e. criticality and actionability) of the input they receive. Most prototypical feedback-provision situations are paired with an evaluation of how well the recipient has performed. At work, feedback

provision commonly occurs during annual or quarterly review sessions along with assessments for awards and promotions (DeNisi and Pritchard 2006). Similarly, at school, feedback is often provided in the context of receiving grades (Taras 2005). As a result, employees likely associate feedback provision with *evaluation*, or assessing someone's overall level of performance.

We propose that an input giver's focus on evaluating their recipient will compromise the constructiveness of their input. By definition, evaluation involves the assessment of how the recipient *has* performed in the past (Boswell and Boudreau 2002). When focusing on an evaluation of past performance, input givers are less likely to consider how the recipient *could* perform better in the future (Black and Wiliam 2009). As a result, evaluation-focused input givers might be less likely to provide input that highlights areas where the recipients can improve in the future (Roese 1994). Furthermore, while focusing on evaluating what the recipient *has already done*, which represents only one of the many different ways that a task can be completed, input givers could also be more likely to see a task in a more fixed way. That is, they would be more likely to have a fixed understanding of the key objectives of the task and how to achieve them. This fixed understanding of the task could prevent feedback givers from providing input that generates novel, actionable strategies to optimize the recipient's future performance (Zhang et al. 2018). In sum, we hypothesize that asking for feedback, which prompts givers to adopt an evaluative mindset, will likely compromise the constructiveness of the input one receives.

2. An Alternative Way to Solicit Constructive Input: Asking for Advice

If feedback is not an optimal strategy for seeking constructive input, how can employees elicit this valuable information? Although requesting feedback is perhaps the most common way employees solicit constructive third-party input about their performance, it is not the only means. In the current paper, we propose an alternative strategy: asking for advice. Researchers have studied advice primarily in the context of judgment and decision making (e.g. Yaniv, 2004). However, the colloquial use of the term "advice" spans a larger range of third-party input that someone can use to improve future behavior (Cross et al. 2001). When we surveyed people about their most recent experience of soliciting advice at work, the majority of respondents (53.7%) reported inquiring about task performance (versus 20.4% asking for

decision support; see supplementary materials). Thus, like asking for feedback, asking for advice may also be a viable means to solicit third-party input to help improve one's performance.

We believe that asking for *advice* will effectively counter the evaluative focus that often occurs in the context of feedback provision. Unlike feedback provision, prototypical advice provision does not typically happen in an evaluative setting (Bonaccio and Dalal 2006). Moreover, advice provision emphasizes thinking about possible future actions as opposed to evaluating past actions, as commonly exemplified in recent advice-giving research (e.g. Brooks et al. 2015, Levari et al. 2019). For instance, in one study, advice givers commented more often on what the recipients *should do* than what they *did* themselves (Levari et al. 2019). Accordingly, we suggest advice givers will be more likely than feedback givers to consider specific future actions recipients could take (See Figure 1 for our conceptual model).

This work contributes to the research on workplace communication in at three ways. First, our work expands the literature on feedback by proposing a novel psychological factor that impacts feedback quality: the giver's focus on evaluation. Second, we propose a conceptual link between two prevalent workplace communication processes—feedback and advice—to our knowledge for the first time, offering insights about when it may be helpful to frame communication as one or the other. Third, our research highlights the downstream consequences of employees' mindsets about feedback and advice—showing how employees' associations with these organizational processes can potentially shape their effectiveness.

3. Research Overview

Across four studies, including a field experiment, we test whether asking for advice (versus feedback) about one's task performance yields more critical and actionable input across a diverse range of contexts, samples, and activities. In Study 1A ($N = 200$), we evaluate our primary hypothesis in the context of a familiar work task on which people often seek input—a job application cover letter (Grant et al. 2011). In Study 1B ($N = 194$) we assess the robustness of this effect by testing our hypothesis across a variety of real-world requests between actual work colleagues. In Study 2 ($N = 309$), we test our hypothesis with a field experiment in an educational setting. In Study 3 ($N = 735$), we evaluate our proposed mechanism: that advice givers offer more constructive feedback because they are less evaluation-focused. Data,

stimuli, and data analysis code for all studies (including measures not included in our report), and the preregistration documents are available through the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/v3c4k/?view_only=a281d4e32761446e911a1764b5f26019).

4. Comment Coding Strategy

All of our studies followed the same basic structure: participants were assigned to provide feedback or advice about someone's task performance. Then, we assessed the criticality and actionability of each comment using a coding scheme adapted from Milkman, Rogers, and Bazerman (2009) and an analytic approach proposed by Biesanz and Human (2010), described below.

To rate each set of comments generated by our experiments, we recruited independent online coders who were blind to our study hypotheses through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which offers access to a more diverse sample than more traditional university participant pools (Buhrmester et al. 2011). In exchange for $1.20, coders received training and rated ten randomly chosen comments on the dimensions described below (i.e., criticality and actionability). These ratings served as our dependent variables of interest. For each study, we aimed to recruit 8-10 coders per comment.[1]

Criticality. As a measure of criticality, for each comment, raters counted how many unique points were dedicated to describing "what the recipient did not do well" (# criticism) and "what the recipient did well" (# praise). We then calculated a *criticality ratio* for each comment using the proportion of criticisms (i.e. $\frac{\#\ criticism}{\#\ criticism + \#\ praise}$).[2]

Actionability. As a measure of actionability, raters counted how many of the unique comments were dedicated to "making suggestions on what the recipient should do" (# suggestions). We also assessed input actionability by averaging the online raters' responses to a three-item actionability scale (e.g.

[1] See supplementary materials for a table of the means, standard deviations, and coder reliability for each comment characteristic by study.

[2] See supplementary materials for a comparison of the proportion of praises and criticisms across conditions for all studies.

"Compared to the average comment, the comment is clearer on what actions the recipient should take to improve his/her cover letter") using a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*)).

Analysis Strategy. Following Biesanz and Human (2010), we treated each rating as an observation made by an independent subject and used a hierarchical linear model (HLM) to analyze the effects of advice- versus feedback-provision on comment characteristics (criticality and actionability). We included a random intercept term to account for natural variance across raters (Moneta et al. 2010). Thus, across our studies, we report the marginal estimated means and standard errors.

5. Study 1A: Cover Letter

5.1 Participants and Procedure

In Study 1A (and Study 1B), we targeted a sufficiently large sample size to detect a medium-size effect (N=100 per condition). In Study 1A, we successfully recruited 200 adults (38.0% female; M_{age} =34.7 years, SD_{age} = 10.2) from MTurk. All participants read a job application letter, answered a survey, and were randomly assigned to "give the writer your feedback (advice)" using an open-response format (adapted from Grant et al. (2011)). The comments averaged 194.35 characters (SD = 208.92). In this and all subsequent studies, the number of characters did not significantly differ between conditions (see supplementary materials). We assessed the comments using the comment coding procedures outlined above with 244 raters (35.5% female; 11.27 raters per comment, SD = 1.15).

5.2 Results and Discussion

Consistent with our main hypothesis, participants who were randomly assigned to provide advice provided more critical comments (M = 0.75, SE = 0.02) than participants who were randomly assigned to provide feedback (M = 0.56, SE = 0.02), b = 0.19, SE = 0.03, 95% CI [0.14, 0.25], p < .001. Advice givers also provided significantly more suggestions (M = 1.84, SE = 0.08) than feedback givers (M = 1.24, SE = 0.08), b = 0.60, SE = 0.10, 95% CI [0.40, 0.80], p < .001. The composite measure of perceived actionability yielded similar results (M_{Advice} = 2.55, SE_{Advice} = 0.06; $M_{Feedback}$ = 2.25, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.06), b = 0.30, SE = 0.07, 95% CI [0.16, 0.44], p < .001. A summary of the main results from all studies can be found in Table 2.

Study 1A finds initial evidence that givers provide significantly more critical and actionable comments when asked to provide advice rather than feedback[3]. In Study 1B, to assess the external validity of the results, we aimed to replicate our main effect across a variety of real-world performance contexts in which the giver and recipient knew each other.

6. Study 1B: Real World Colleague's Work Task

6.1 Participants and Procedure

We recruited 194 employed adults (39.7% female; M_{age} = 36.08 years, SD_{age} = 10.66) to answer a survey about their workplace experience. We asked respondents to reflect on the most recent time they observed a colleague complete a work task where they could have assessed their performance. They described their relationship with this person, the task they observed, and the person's performance using an open-response format. The task descriptions averaged 58.8 characters (SD = 46.32), and participants described a wide variety of tasks, ranging from "putting labels on items" to "creating a new marketing strategy." Participants were then randomly assigned to "provide feedback (advice) to your colleague about the performance you described" using an open-response format.

We assessed the comments using the procedures outlined above (N = 160 raters; 42.1% female; 8.16 raters per comment, SD = 1.36). To ensure that any difference in comment constructiveness across conditions was not driven by differences in the situations that participants recalled, we measured and controlled for several characteristics of the recipient and their tasks: their rank relative to the giver, their interpersonal closeness to the giver (adapted from Aron, Aron, and Smollan 1992), and the quality of their performance. Our results were robust controlling for these measures as well as givers' gender and age[4].

6.2 Results and Discussion

Consistent with Study 1A, colleagues who were asked to provide advice (versus feedback) wrote comments that were more critical (M_{Advice} = 0.60, SE_{Advice} = 0.02; $M_{Feedback}$ = 0.35, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.02), b =

[3] See supplementary materials for replication of this study in an interpersonal task: conversation with strangers.
[4] The data and code for these robustness checks can be found in our OSF repository. See supplementary materials for descriptions on how perceived performance quality moderated the effect of asking for advice (versus feedback).

0.25, SE = 0.02, 95% CI [0.32, 0.39], $p < .001$, contained more suggestions (M_{Advice} = 1.60, SD_{Advice} = 0.07; $M_{Feedback}$ = 0.94, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.07), b = 0.65, SE = 0.05, 95% CI [0.55, 0.75], $p < .001$, and were rated as more actionable (M_{Advice} = 3.00, SE_{Advice} = 0.06; M = 2.45$_{Feedback}$, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.06), b = 0.54, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [0.43, 0.66], $p < .001$, as well as more specific (M_{Advice} = 3.80, SE_{Advice} = 0.07; $M_{Feedback}$ = 3.47, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.07), b = 0.32, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [0.18, 0.47], $p < .001$(see Table 2). Thus, asking for advice (versus feedback) resulted in significantly more critical and actionable comments, even between colleagues who knew each other and were providing input across diverse real-world workplace situations.

7. Study 2: Course Evaluation Field Experiment

7.1 Participants and Procedure

In Study 2, we conducted a field experiment to explore the effect of advice-framing in a frequent feedback solicitation setting—course evaluations of professors. We recruited 72 executive education students (51.0% female; 80.6% non-U.S. residents; 55.6% private sector) from a global two-week leadership course to complete an end-of-course evaluation survey. Executives were randomly assigned to receive an anonymous link to an evaluation form in which the comment box at the end of the form prompted them to provide "Feedback for [Instructor Name]" or "Advice for [Instructor Name]" for all 18 instructors (38.9% female) they had throughout the course. Sixty-two students completed the evaluation, yielding 309 comments. We assessed these comments using the procedures outlined above with 278 adult raters (54.7% female). This procedure yielded an average of 9.00 raters per comment (SD = 1.99).

7.2 Results and Discussion

Replicating our findings from Studies 1A and 1B, students who were asked to provide advice provided comments that were more critical (M_{Advice} = 0.37, SE_{Advice} = 0.01; $M_{Feedback}$ = 0.33, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.01), b = 0.04, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.01, 0.06], p = .014, and more actionable (M_{Advice} = 2.35, SE_{Advice} = 0.07; $M_{Feedback}$ = 2.22, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.07), b = 0.13, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.05, 0.21], $p < .001$ as compared to students who were asked to provide feedback. However, students did not provide more suggestions when asked to provide advice (M_{Advice} = 1.88, SE_{Advice} = 0.51; $M_{Feedback}$ = 1.96, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 5.50), b = -0.08, SE = 0.22, 95% CI [-0.51, 0.35], p = .744. We believe the lack of difference in the number of suggestions may

have been driven by students generally being less likely to offer suggestions to instructors, who typically have greater expertise in teaching than they do. Taken together, Study 2 replicates the effectiveness of soliciting advice instead of feedback in an authentic organizational setting when individuals do not know that their behavior is being studied.

8. Study 3: Mechanism

We have argued that asking for feedback (versus advice) results in less critical and actionable input because it encourages givers to focus on evaluating the recipients' performance. In Study 3, we formally test our model by redirecting the givers' evaluation focus. Thus, in addition to assigning some participants to provide *feedback* or *advice* on an identical task output, we added two new conditions.

First, to redirect feedback givers' mindsets away from evaluation, we assigned some participants to provide *feedback focusing on the development* of the recipient. Developing the recipients' performance is understood as one of two key functions of feedback along with evaluating the recipient (Boswell and Boudreau 2002, DeNisi and Pritchard 2006).We hypothesized that, when evaluation focus was tempered through an explicit alternative focus, feedback givers would provide input that was equally as constructive as that from advice givers. Second, to explore whether asking advice givers to focus on evaluating their recipient would mitigate the benefits of asking for advice instead of feedback, we assigned some participants to provide *advice focusing on evaluating* their recipient. As advice provision typically emphasizes focusing on the possible future actions of the recipient (Brooks et al. 2015), we speculated that input givers may persist in being more constructive when asked to provide advice rather than feedback, even when explicitly instructed to focus on evaluating the recipient. If such is the case, framing feedback as advice should be an effective means to yield constructive input even in circumstances that require the giver to evaluate the recipients' performance (e.g. annual reviews). This study was preregistered through aspredicted.com (http://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=we3vd7).

8.1 Participants and Procedure

We recruited 735 participants (57.7% female; $M_{age} = 37.87$ years, $SD_{age} = 11.78$) from MTurk. As in Study 1A, participants read and provided comments on another person's cover letter. In addition to these

participants, 66 people were excluded due to low-quality responses (e.g. failed attention check) as per our a priori decision rule outlined in our preregistration. Our main results were robust to these exclusions. Participants viewed the job posting and cover letter from Study 1A and were randomly assigned to provide the applicant with comments according to one of four conditions: 1) provide feedback, 2) provide advice, 3) provide feedback with a "focus on *developing* the writer's performance" (*non-evaluative feedback*), or 4) provide advice with a "focus on *evaluating* the writer's performance" (*evaluative advice*).

As a manipulation check, participants were also asked to report the extent to which they were focused on evaluating the writer's performance while providing their input on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal) (adapted from Day and Sin (2011)). The survey was either presented before or after participants provided their feedback (advice) (presentation order did not impact our results).

We assessed the characteristics of the comments using the procedure outlined above with 615 adult raters (42.6% female). This procedure yielded an average of 8.35 raters per comment (SD = 1.87).

8.2 Results

Manipulation Check. Our manipulation was successful: feedback givers reported having a significantly lower evaluative focus when assigned to focus on developing the recipient ($M_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 5.34, $SD_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 1.49) versus not ($M_{Feedback}$ = 5.78, $SD_{Feedback}$ = 1.27), $t(371) = 5.71$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.32$. Additionally, advice givers exhibited a significantly higher evaluation focus when assigned to focus on evaluating the recipient ($M_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 5.74, $SD_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 1.23) versus not (M_{Advice} = 5.30, SD_{Advice} = 1.40), $t(360) = -3.15$, $p = .002$, $d = -0.33$. Evaluative advice givers and feedback givers with no assigned focus reported equal levels of evaluative focus, $t(367) = 0.36$, $p = .720$, $d = 0.04$.

Criticality. Consistent with our conceptual model (Figures

Figure ***1***), feedback givers provided more critical comments when they were instructed to focus on developing the recipient ($M_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 0.76, $SE_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 0.01) versus not ($M_{Feedback}$ = 0.62, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.01), $b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.17], $p < .001$. Furthermore, non-evaluative feedback givers provided input that was similarly critical as that of advice givers (M_{Advice} = 0.77, SE_{Advice} = 0.01), $b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.01], $p = .275$.

Consistent with our conceptual model, advice givers provided less critical input when instructed to focus on evaluating the recipient ($M_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 0.73, $SE_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 0.01) versus not, b = 0.12, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.09, 0.14], p < .001. However, the comments provided by evaluative advice givers were still more critical than that of feedback givers without an explicit focus, b = 0.11, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.09, 0.14], p < .001. (A graphical description of our findings from Study 3 can be found in Figure 2).

Actionability. Further supporting our hypothesized mechanism, feedback givers provided more suggestions when assigned to focus on developing their recipient ($M_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 2.61, $SE_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 0.28) versus not ($M_{Feedback}$ = 2.34, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.28), b = 0.27, SE = 0.12, 95% CI [0.04, 0.50], p = .024. In line with our preregistered hypothesis, non-evaluative feedback givers provided as many suggestions as advice givers (M_{Advice} = 2.69, SE_{Advice} = 0.28), b = -0.08, SE = 0.12, 95% CI -0.31, 0.16], p = .526. Furthermore, evaluative advice givers provided as many suggestions ($M_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 2.81, $SE_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 0.28) as advice givers with no explicit goals, b = 0.12, SE = 0.12, 95% CI [-0.12, 0.35], p = .324, suggesting that soliciting advice can be an effective means to generate actionable input, even when the giver must focus on evaluating the recipient.

The composite measure of perceived comment actionability (α = 0.94) revealed similar findings. In line with our conceptual model, feedback givers provided more actionable input when assigned to focus on developing the recipient ($M_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 2.80, $SE_{Non\text{-}evaluativeFeedback}$ = 0.04) versus not ($M_{Feedback}$ = 2.57, $SE_{Feedback}$ = 0.03), b = 0.23, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.16, 0.31], p < .001, though still less actionable than that of advice givers (M_{Advice} = 2.90, SE_{Advice} = 0.04), b = -0.10, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [-0.18, -0.02], p = .011. Furthermore, evaluative advice givers provided comments as actionable as those from advice givers ($M_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 2.90, $SE_{EvaluativeAdvice}$ = 0.04), b = -0.01, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [-0.09, 0.07], p = .829.

8.3 Discussion

Study 3 provides support for our hypothesis that feedback givers provide less constructive input than advice givers because they focus more on evaluation. Although feedback givers were more evaluation-focused than advice givers, when we diminished people's focus on evaluation, they behaved similarly to advice givers: providing comments that were as critical and actionable as advice givers. Study 3 also

demonstrated that framing the feedback giving process as advice giving promoted constructive feedback even when the giver were asked to focus on evaluating the recipient. Taking on an evaluative focus reduced advice givers' comment criticality, but it had no impact on the actionability of their input.

9. General Discussion

Employees often solicit feedback from other people, expecting constructive insights. Findings from four experiments suggest that asking for feedback may inadvertently prevent givers from delivering useful input. When asked to provide feedback across a variety of work-related tasks—whether they were asked to evaluate a stranger's cover letter (Study 1A), a colleague's work performance (Study 1B), or an instructor's teaching (Study 2) — people provided less critical or actionable input than when they were asked to provide advice. Asking for feedback focused the givers' attention on evaluation, which hindered constructive feedback delivery. In contrast, advice givers persisted in providing more constructive input even when they were prompted to focus on evaluating the recipient (Study 3). These results suggest that asking for advice could be a powerful way to solicit constructive comments, even in cases where evaluation must accompany input, such as during annual reviews that require performance-based ratings.

Our findings contribute to the literature on feedback and advice in several ways. First, propose a novel psychological factor that impacts feedback quality: the giver's focus on evaluation. Prior research demonstrates how relatively chronic traits, such as the givers' growth-mindset (De Kraker-Pauw et al. 2017), the nature of the established relationship between the recipient and the giver (Finkelstein et al. 2017), and the givers' care for the recipient's feelings (Dibble 2018) can influence the quality of the input people provide. We expand on this work by highlighting a simple intervention that can improve feedback quality: encouraging feedback givers to focus less on evaluation by framing their input as advice.

This research also offers one of the first comparisons between two primary means of soliciting third-party input: asking for feedback and asking for advice. In doing so, this research generates actionable insights for designing communication processes with differing goals. For instance, Schroeder and Fishbach (2015) propose that critical feedback may be more effective when it is used to motivate experts who are already committed to improving their performance, whereas positive feedback may better

motivate novices who are not yet committed to their performance goals. Relatedly, our results suggest that people who are novices or who are low performers might want to solicit feedback (versus advice) to minimize criticality and encourage task persistence. Future research could test this possibility as well as other situations in which the solicitation of feedback or advice could be especially beneficial.

Although the present work sheds light on the provision of constructive comments from the *giver's* perspective, future research examining *recipient* reactions to constructive input framed as "advice" or feedback" could also yield useful insights for performance improvement. Recipients of critical feedback often discount the information they receive (Podsakoff and Farh 1989) and dislike its givers (Blakely 1993, John et al. 2019). This is because people often infer that constructive comments indicate negative evaluations about themselves (Blaine and Crocker 1993). However, if the same information is framed as "advice" rather than "feedback," recipients may be more willing to heed it because they are less likely to associate the information with evaluation. In the current paper, we have presented evidence that seekers of constructive feedback may benefit from asking for advice instead. If recipients are more accepting of "advice," this could further strengthen the value of framing feedback exchange as advice.

10. Conclusion

Despite the popularity of asking for feedback, we find evidence that soliciting third-party input in this way often generates insufficiently constructive comments. Across four experiments, we provide evidence that asking for advice is an effective alternative way of soliciting useful insight. These findings suggest that asking for advice, compared to feedback, reduces the giver's evaluative focus, yielding more constructive input. Thus, seekers of constructive feedback may benefit from framing their request as seeking out advice.

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Tables

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation of Key Variables

	Study 1A			
	Mean (SD)	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**
Criticality	0.65 (0.42)			
# Suggestion	1.51 (1.65)	0.36***		
Actionability	2.39 (1.18)	0.32***	0.60***	(0.96)

	Study 1B			
	Mean (SD)	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**
Criticality	0.22 (0.34)			
# Suggestion	1.02 (4.96)	0.19***		
Actionability	2.08 (1.21)	0.42***	0.30***	(0.95)

	Study 2			
	Mean (SD)	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**
Criticality	0.35 (0.37)			
# Suggestion	1.92 (9.78)	0.09***		
Actionability	2.28 (1.24)	0.32***	0.25***	(0.96)

	Study 3			
	Mean	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**

	(SD)			
Criticality	0.72 (0.36)			
# Suggestion	2.61 (7.24)	-0.02		
Actionability	2.79 (1.21)	0.20***	0.23***	(0.96)
Evaluation Focus	5.54 (1.37)	0.00	-0.01	-0.01

Note: Cronbach alpha indicated in the diagonal cells

Table 2: Key Results

		Study 1A		
	Feedback	**Advice**	***b***	**95% CI**
Criticality	0.56 (0.02)	0.75 (0.02)	0.19*** (0.03)	[0.14, 0.25]
# Suggestion	1.24 (0.08)	1.84 (0.08)	0.60 *** (0.10)	[0.40, 0.80]
Actionability	2.25 (0.06)	2.55 (0.06)	0.22*** (0.06)	[0.10, 0.34]

		Study 1B		
	Feedback	**Advice**	***b***	**95% CI**
Criticality	0.35 (0.02)	0.60 (0.02)	0.25*** (0.02)	[0.32, 0.39]
# Suggestion	0.94 (0.07)	1.60 (0.07)	0.65*** (0.05)	[0.55, 0.75]
Actionability	2.45 (0.06)	3.00 (0.06)	0.54*** (0.06)	[0.43, 0.66]

		Study 2		
	Feedback	**Advice**	***b***	**95% CI**
Criticality	0.35 (0.02)	0.60 (0.02)	0.25*** (0.02)	[0.32, 0.39]
# Suggestion	1.24	1.84	0.60 ***	[0.40, 0.80]

	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.10)	
Actionability	2.25 (0.06)	2.55 (0.06)	0.22*** (0.06)	[0.10, 0.34]

	Study 3							
	Feedback	**Non-Evaluative Feedback**	***b (SE) / d***	**95% CI**	**Advice**	**Evaluative Advice**	***b (SE) / d***	**95% CI**
Criticality	0.62 (0.01)	0.76 (0.01)	0.14*** (0.01)	[0.11, 0.17]	0.77 (0.01)	0.73 (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	[-0.07, -0.01]
# Suggestion	2.34 (0.28)	2.61 (0.28)	0.27* (0.12)	[0.04, 0.50]	2.69 (0.28)	2.81 (0.28)	0.12 (0.12)	[-0.12, 0.35]
Actionability	2.57 (0.04)	2.80 (0.04)	0.31**	[0.11, 0.52]	2.80 (0.04)	2.90 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	[-0.09, 0.07]
Evaluation Focus ※	5.78 (1.27)	5.34 (1.49)	-0.36***	[-0.57, -0.16]	5.30 (1.40)	5.74 (1.24)	0.33***	[0.12, 0.54]

Note: All results, unless otherwise indicated, are outputs from hierarchical linear model (HLM) controlling for rater random intercept. We report estimated marginal means and their standard errors.

※ Results from two-sample t-tests

CI = confidence interval.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

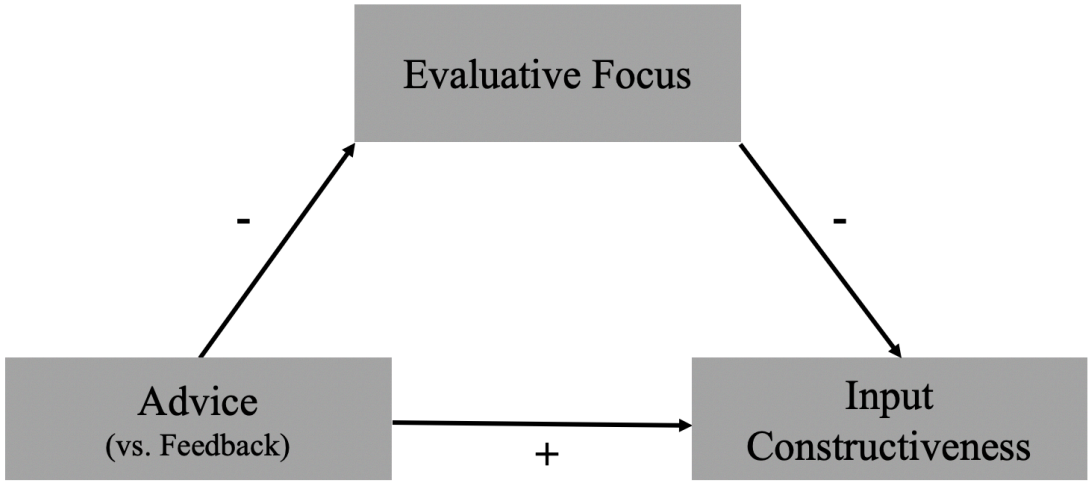
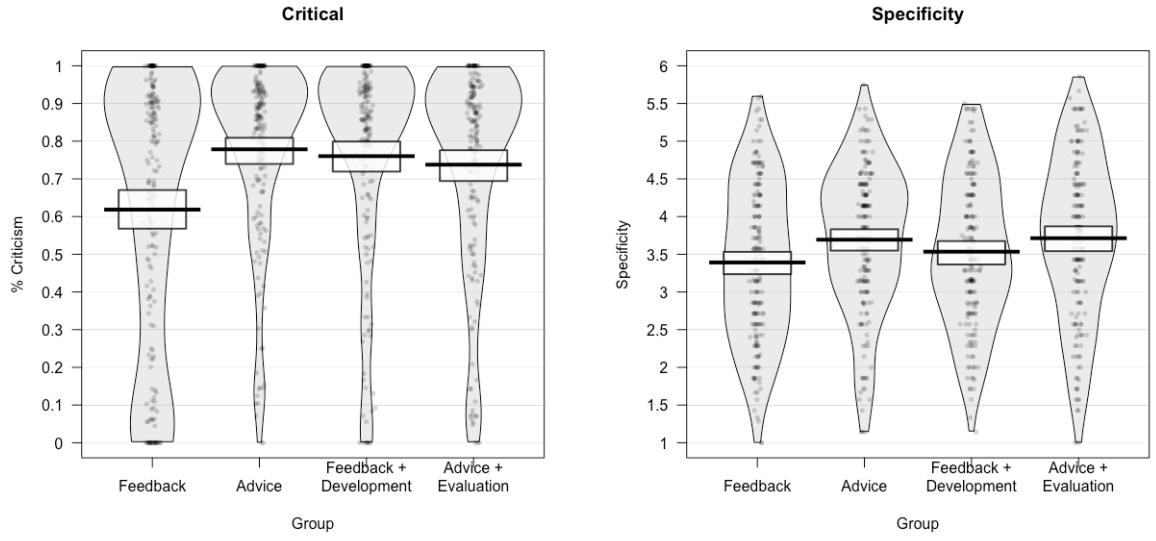
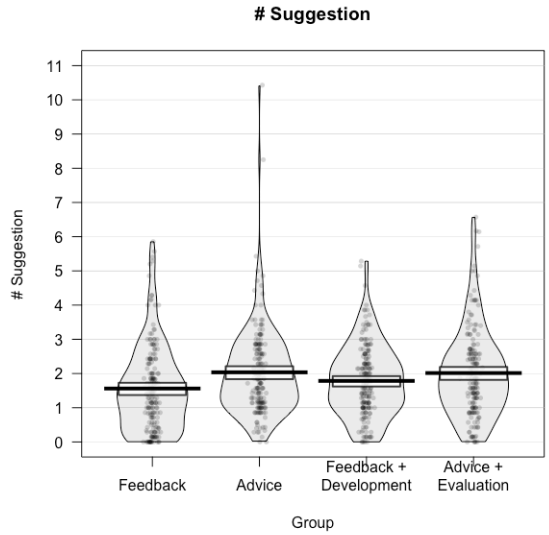
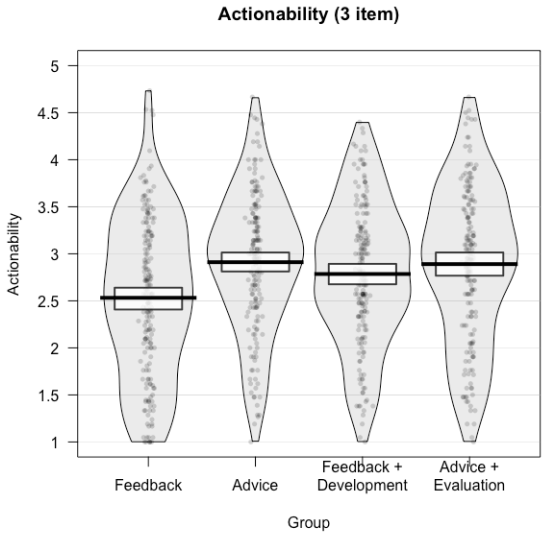


Figure 2: Study 3 Results




Suggestion
Suggestion
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
Feedback
Advice
Feedback + Development
Advice + Evaluation
Group


Actionability (3 item)
Actionability
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
3.5
4
4.5
5
Feedback
Advice
Feedback + Development
Advice + Evaluation
Group