Phorest

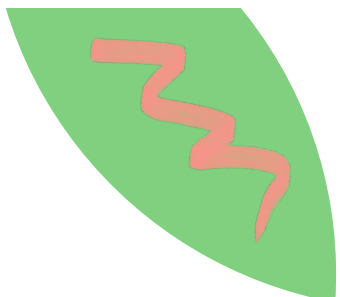# Navigating Feedback

Become a Better Leader
and Improve Your Team's Performance

About the Author: Jay Williams

In his 25+ years of experience, Jay Williams has held numerous roles, including; general manager, vice president, division manager, regional manager, facilitator, keynote speaker, principal, senior manager, and executive communications and dialogue coach. He has proven experience in creating alignment among executives and leaders to ensure clarity and focus on strategic priorities, process analysis and values, ultimately improving profitability.

Jay has worked for world-class hair brands, thriving distributors, educational institutions, and one-on-one with thousands of leaders. He examines the role of the leader using a blend of art and science, understands people's challenges and opportunities from their point of view and draws on his rich experience to help them unlock their potential and fuel their passion.

He is also the author *Leave Your Mark: The Thinking, Behaviour, and Skills of Great Influencers and This vs That: Better Thinking, Better Choices, Better Leader.*

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Introduction

Feedback is the cheapest, most powerful, yet *most underused* management tool we have at our disposal. There are two dynamics of feedback, giving and receiving feedback. Many people recoil at the thought of doing either. Most of us can think of criticism we have received before, and aren't eager to repeat that experience, or else we might not want to be the bearer of *"bad news"* for someone else. The truth is, feedback doesn't have to feel like criticism.

Feedback is just information data that can make you better.

With some practice, feedback can begin to feel less like treacherous emotional territory and more like a tool for improvement. In the first part of this ebook, we will focus on laying the foundation: how you, as a leader, receive feedback and the model you set for your team. Following that, we will discuss how you can give feedback in the most effective way. Along the way, there will be opportunities for you to assess yourself and plenty of conversation prompts you can try out in real life.

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Getting
Feedback

As a leader, we need to draw on two sets of skills: being a manager and being a leader.

Management: process and procedure
Leadership: motivating and guiding people.

And people are prone to emotional reactions.

I frequently teach workshops, host webinars and give talks. And I always ask some of the group to give me feedback. Here is an example of some recent feedback I received.

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

"Although I was encouraged by his ideas, I felt like he was not focused on one topic, and it was hard to follow him."

Seems like fair, constructive feedback, right?
Well, let me tell you, when I first read this, *I was devastated*. I experienced what is a very natural feeling for many people when they receive feedback. I felt judged, and I immediately got defensive. I didn't lash out at the person who gave me this feedback, but I sulked at home.
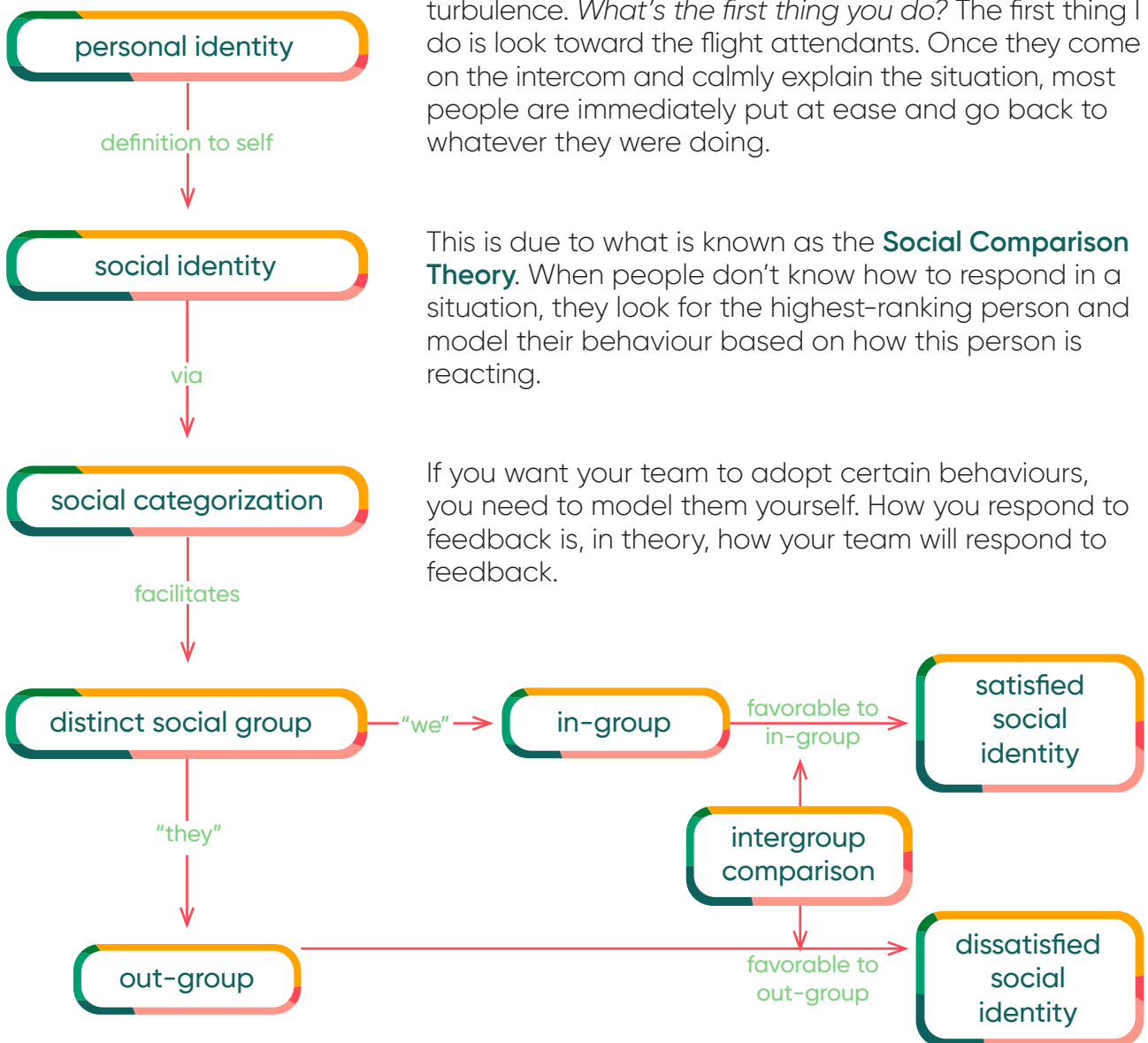
It's fair to say that I didn't immediately appreciate the potential educational value this piece of feedback could offer me. And that's okay. It's alright to indulge these normal feelings of disappointment and frustration for a minute. However, as leaders, it is important that we reel these feelings back in and move forward with a clear head.

As a leader, the way you receive feedback sets a precedent for your team

Social Comparison Theory:

```
personal identity
        │
        │ definition to self
        ▼
social identity
        │
        │ via
        ▼
social categorization
        │
        │ facilitates
        ▼
distinct social group ──"we"──▶ in-group ──favorable to in-group──▶ satisfied social identity
        │                                          ▲
        │ "they"                                   │
        ▼                              intergroup comparison
out-group ─────────────favorable to out-group─────▶ dissatisfied social identity
```

Think about when you are in an airplane experiencing turbulence. *What's the first thing you do?* The first thing I do is look toward the flight attendants. Once they come on the intercom and calmly explain the situation, most people are immediately put at ease and go back to whatever they were doing.

This is due to what is known as the **Social Comparison Theory**. When people don't know how to respond in a situation, they look for the highest-ranking person and model their behaviour based on how this person is reacting.

If you want your team to adopt certain behaviours, you need to model them yourself. How you respond to feedback is, in theory, how your team will respond to feedback.

So before you go any further, let's do some self-assessment:

On a scale of 1-10...

How good would you say you are at receiving feedback?

How good are you at giving feedback?

Now think of a significant person in your life, a partner, close friend or family member.

How would this person rate you at receiving feedback?

How would they rate you at giving feedback?

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Reasons We Don't Want Feedback

Reasons We Don't Want Feedback

1   **We are afraid of what we might hear.**
We assume it will be negative or make our jobs more difficult. This is a similar reason why many stylists avoid consultations before service with a client.
What if what they want is too complex or expensive?

2   **We don't know what to do with the feedback we receive.**
What do I do when someone tells me; *"I am not being successful in my role"*? Do I apologise? Do I ask for more information? Do I quit?

3   **It doesn't even cross our minds to ask.**
Life in the salon is busy, meaning it can be easy to fall into the habit of doing things on autopilot. When working reactively, asking for feedback may not seem relevant.

If we don't ask for it,
we are missing out
on the single greatest gift of
feedback: **improved performance**.

Feedback is like a navigation system – it's your GPS. It validates that you're headed down the right path, and allows you to course-correct before you get to the wrong destination, saving you time, energy and frustration.

The 6-Step Formula to Master How You Receive Feedback

The 6-Step Formula to Master How You Receive Feedback

1 **Asking Open-ended Questions**

2 **Listen Carefully**

3 **Acknowledge & Inquire**

4 **Own Your Sh*t**

5 **Thank Them**

6 **Follow Up**

1. Asking Open-ended Questions

Many people won't give you feedback unless you ask for it. Ask questions in a way that will elicit a thoughtful response. Here are some examples:

1. To a Client:

On a scale of 1–10...
- How is your cut/colour?
- What is your comfort level with replicating the look we created today at home?

2. To an Employee or Mentee:

- What can I do more, less or differently to support you?
- How does my communication style work for you?
- When is the best time to share feedback with you?

3. Peer to Peer

- How does my communication style work for you?
- As it relates to role modelling, how well am I doing?

4. Employee to Leader

- How does my communication style work for you?
- On a scale of 1–10, how are my soft skills as a stylist with my clients?
- As it relates to being a team player, how well am I doing?

5. Educator to Participants

- What are your takeaways?
- What will you start, stop and continue doing based on today?
- Where do you need me to go deeper?

6. *Bonus: to Your Significant Other

- What could I do differently next time to get a better response from you?
- How well did I answer your question?
- When would you like me to share news like that?
- What was missing in my response?

2. Listening Carefully

While we don't want the exchange of feedback to become overly fraught, it is still important to listen for the emotions behind what people are saying, not just what they are saying.

Listening to the emotions gives the **feedback context**.

Let me tell you a story as an example:

I was once sitting in a meeting of executives discussing the details of a corporate restructuring. At one point, the person leading the meeting asked the group for their feedback on the new arrangement. In response, a member of the group responded with a series of increasingly agitated questions and remarks about how everyone's roles and responsibilities were still unclear under the restructuring. Obviously perplexed, the meeting leader went over the details again and again, unsure of why the facts weren't coming across.

Finally, it made sense. The arrangements of the restructuring weren't necessarily unclear, but this team member was feeling vulnerable and anxious about their job security. Once they could be reassured that their job was safe, their feedback became less frantic.

genetic fallacy
meaning:

"Accepting or rejecting a claim based on its origin, instead of judging it by its merits."

Another thing to keep in mind when listening to feedback is the **genetic fallacy**, when who the person is becomes more important than the claim itself.

Let's say a new negative Google review appears on your business page, and one of your team members brings it to your attention. Is your first instinct to demand to know who this review is from?

Would there be certain clients whose criticism you would be prone to dismiss more than others? That's the genetic fallacy in action.

While there will always be expectations, it is important that you strive to afford everyone an equal opportunity to voice their feedback and have it considered.

Of 2,000 U.S. adults surveyed by Explorance, 50% reported that they had been asked for feedback from their employer in the past year. Furthermore, 45% of those surveyed said they didn't believe their feedback would lead to meaningful change even if their employer had requested it. As a result, **41% of the 2,000 questioned admitted they were looking for a new job**.
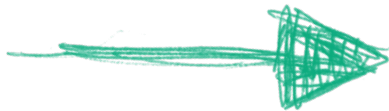
3. Acknowledge & Inquire (Never Defend & Explain)

When you receive negative feedback, it's natural that self-preservation kicks in. However, if you attempt to *"defend & explain"*, chances are the person who delivered the feedback will defend their feedback in response, thereby escalating the situation. As a leader, this is something you want to avoid.

Instead, **acknowledge & inquire** to keep a level head.

Firstly, you don't have to immediately validate the feedback, especially if you disagree with it, but you should always start by politely acknowledging it.

Sometimes their feedback is based on *their truth,* not *the truth.* Even with the best of intentions, there can be a mismatch between the experience or result a person was expecting and the result.

Here are some example phrases to help you acknowledge without necessarily taking 100% of the blame:

"We missed something in your experience."

"You didn't get the outcome you wanted"

"We weren't able to achieve the results you were looking for."

"I didn't meet your expectations"

Next, **inquire.**
Follow this with a simple phrase like

Tell me more.
Can you share some of the details?
Help me understand what happened.

This works in two ways.

1 **It buys you time to calm down in real-time.**
If you receive feedback you don't agree with and can you feel yourself about to react emotionally in the moment, the best thing you can say is *"tell me more."*

2 **It shows you are invested in having a productive conversation.**
Often someone goes into giving their feedback prepared to *"argue their case"*, anticipating your defensiveness. By showing them you are ready to hear them, you can often de-escalate the situation from the get-go.

4. Own Your Sh*t

Sometimes, it is not a misunderstanding. Sometimes there is no way around it, and you or someone else representing your business just messed up. Everyone is prone to human error. In our industry especially, which can be high-pressure and high-stress, it's normal that you sometimes miss the mark. All leaders do. It is how you respond in these situations that is a testament to your leadership.

Remember the **Social Comparison Theory**. Your team are looking to your reaction.

If **you** don't
admit your mistakes,
your **team** won't either.

Being vulnerable will, instead, draw people to you and earn their respect in the long run.

Try saying:

"I'm sorry..."

"I own that"

"My bad"

"That's on me"

"I know better than that."

1 **Be genuine.**

2 **Support your words with open body language.**

3 **Don't cheapen your apology with a promise.** Instead of "I'll never do that again," try "I'll work on that."

5. Thank Them

While it might not always feel like it, feedback is a gift. If someone has taken the time and energy to give you thoughtful feedback, say thanks.

We often use 'thank you' as a throw-away statement, attaching it to every email and text message. Revisit how you say 'thank you' and try a **power thank you**.

How to give a **"Power Thank You"**

- **Be specific:**

  For a client:
  "Hey, thank you for pointing that out. Since you've made us aware of this problem, we fixed the issue which we hope has made the customer experience smoother for everyone who visited the salon this month."

  For a team member:
  "Thank you for your feedback. Since the new process you suggested was implemented, we've been able to cut down on materials waste by 30%, which we think will save the salon a few hundred dollars a year."

- **Be personal:**
  Use their name and mention the personal significance to you or the team.
  For example: *"This is going to make my life so much easier."*
  "I'm so thankful to know this now."
  "Our team is grateful for the feedback."

- **Be authentic:**
  If you are trying to fabricate something to say, your team and clients will pick up on your insincerity. Stick to the reasons you are genuinely grateful and leave it at that.

6. Follow-up

Once you have implemented changes based on someone's feedback, monitor the benefits and keep them informed of the progress.

Let people know from the outset of the feedback that you intend to follow up with them. This is a meaningful way to signal that you are open to change and committed to improvement.

Say things like:

"How important is it to you that I follow up?"
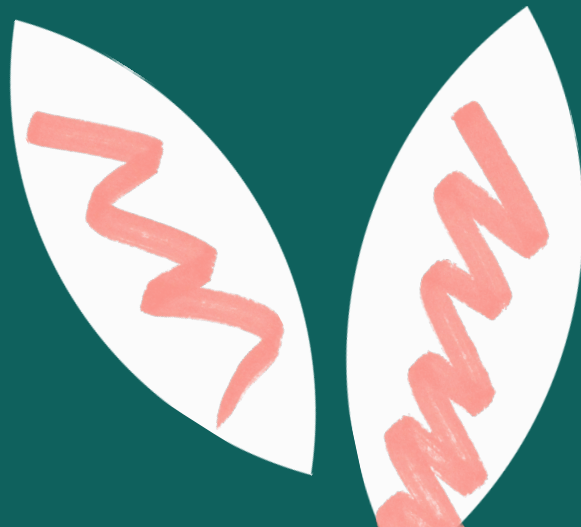
"How would you like me to follow up with you?"

"When would you like me to follow up?"

"When is the best time to pick up this conversation?"

"What would follow-up look like for you?"

Giving Feedback

Why should I give my team feedback?

Think about it. If you were driving down the highway in the wrong direction, at what point would you want to know?

Feedback encourages your team by validating and acknowledging their efforts.
It demonstrates that you are paying attention and care about whether they succeed. For younger generations especially, they want to feel like their day job matters. Taking the time to evaluate an employee's performance shows you are invested in them.

Coaching your team improves your long-term relationship by building trust.
They never have to guess where they stand with you. And they always understand the improvements they need to make to reach their goals.

By giving feedback early and often, you heavily weigh the outcome in your favour.
Plant the seed. Reinforce the progress and celebrate positive change.

Read more on the Phorest Blog:
**Reward & Retain Your Team
With Staff Goals**

https://www.phorest.com/blog/
phorest-staff-goals-feautures/

How to give feedback ✔

1. Early & Often

If something isn't working, let the person know straight away. If you wait too long, you are only delaying a resolution. You increase your chances of becoming increasingly frustrated or catching them off guard when you finally do deliver the feedback later on.

2. Focus on the Issue (and only one issue at a time)

The feedback should always be about the issue the person has caused, not an evaluation of their character. Don't save up multiple issues to discuss all at once, as this might overwhelm them. Don't *"sandwich"* feedback between good news or flattery, as this can distract from solution-oriented thinking or come across as insincere.

3. Allow a Response

Once you deliver the feedback, give them a space to share their thoughts and ask follow-up questions. i.e. how do you feel about that? On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself on what we've discussed?

4. Brainstorm Solutions

Give some examples of how they can fix the problem going forward, allowing them to contribute ideas too.

5. Offer Your Support

You are giving feedback in order to help this person improve, not to bring them down. Remind them you are here to help as they work on the issue.

6. Follow-up

Check back in to assess their progress. Thank them when they revolve the issue.

Giving Feedback: Troubleshooting

How long should you give an employee to implement feedback? Where do you draw the line when you aren't seeing a change?

A relationship ends when you can no longer trust that person. It's up to you to decide if and when you have reached this point. There isn't a hard and fast rule for how many chances to give someone, as this depends on a number of factors.

If you have given the employee multiple opportunities to fix the unwanted behaviour already, put the onus on them to come up with a solution. Be honest with the person that this is becoming more serious.
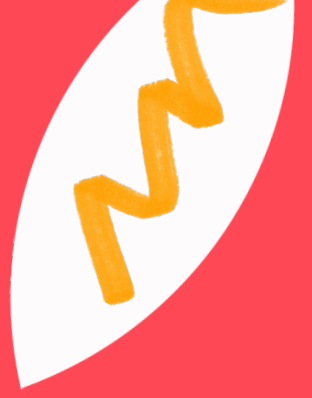
Here are a couple of phrases:

"What impact do you think this behaviour has on others?"

"What are you going to do to reduce this negative impact?"

"I have already given you this feedback, what needs to happen so that we never have to have this conversation again?"

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Conclusion

In my business, we have completely stopped doing formal annual reviews, because we have consistent open dialogues about our performance and goals. Seek feedback on a daily basis from your peers, and your team to improve your leadership skills.

This openness will send a ripple effect around your business and model the mindset towards feedback you want your team to have as well.

Jay Williams,
Author • Speaker • Executive Coach

The Right Tools to Help

Software for Leaders Manage Your Dream Team With Phorest
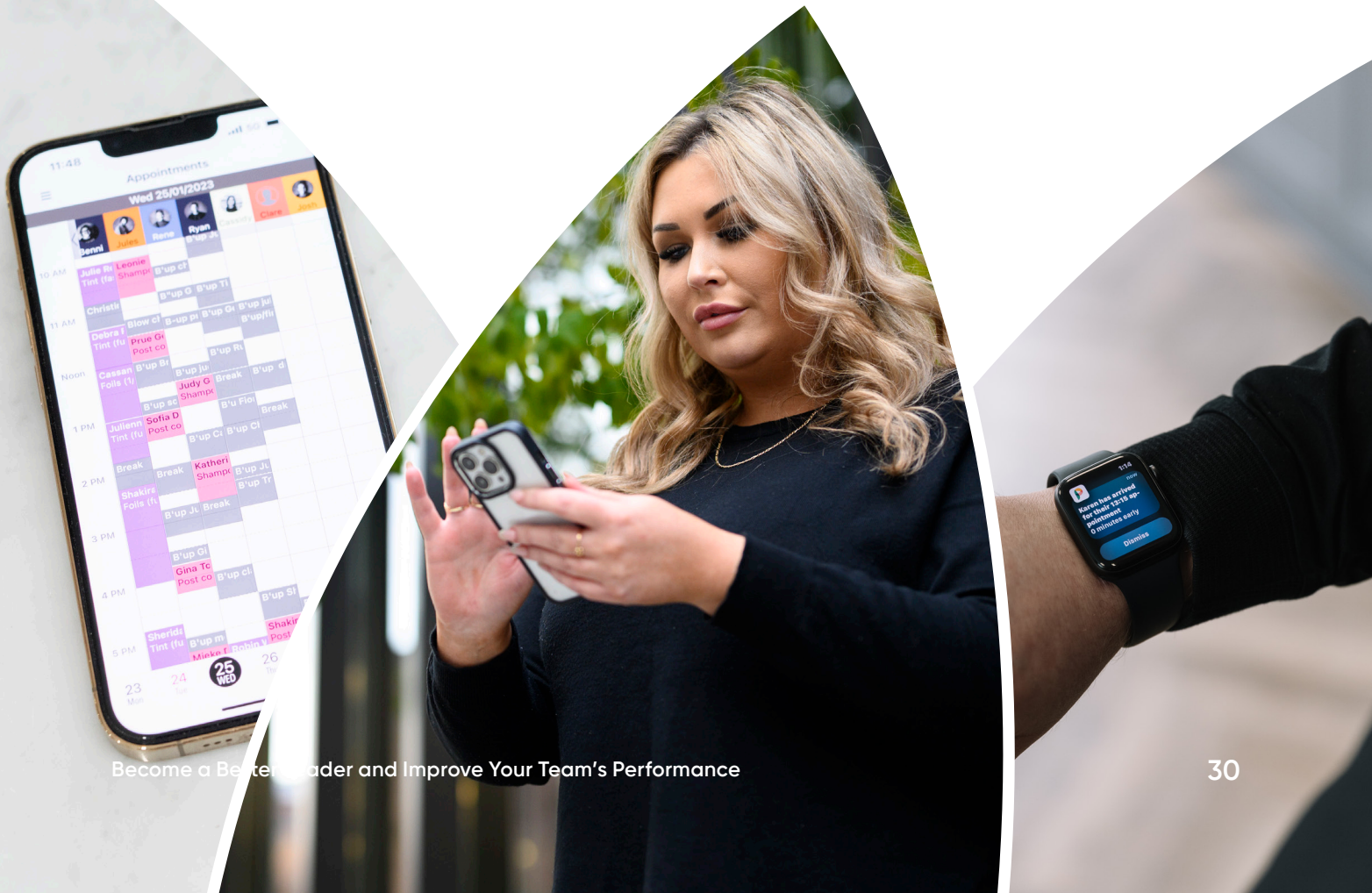
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Pick up those aftercare conversations post-appointment. Now your team can send personal, shoppable retail recommendations directly to clients through SMS. Track open rates and attribute sales to the team member who sent it.
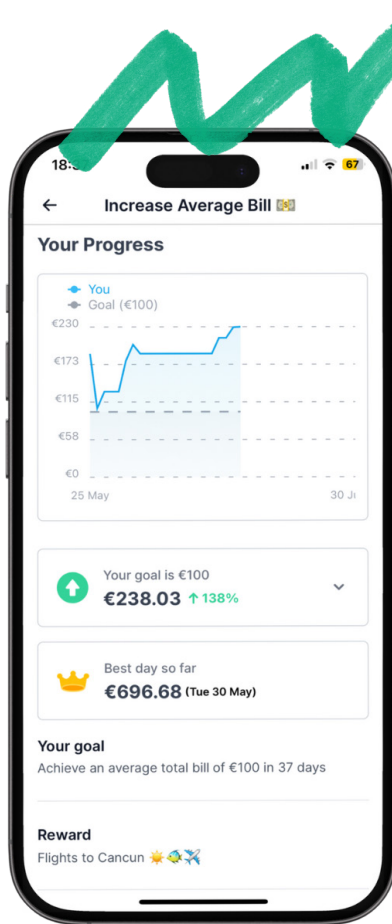
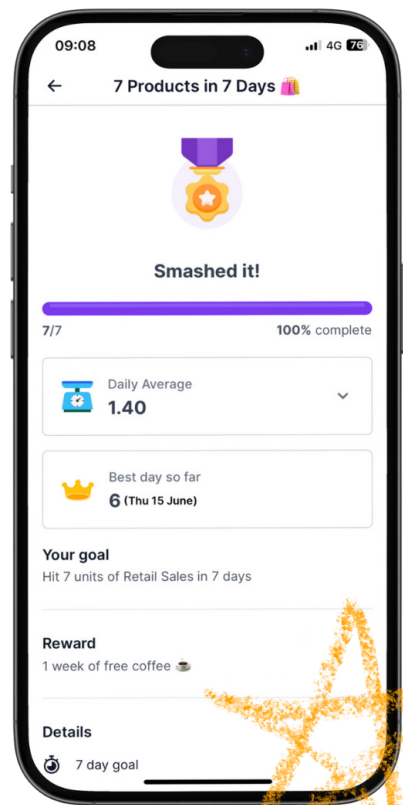# Coaching With Engaging, Individual Goals

Set targets for each member of your team and track the progress together with Phorest's Staff Goals feature.
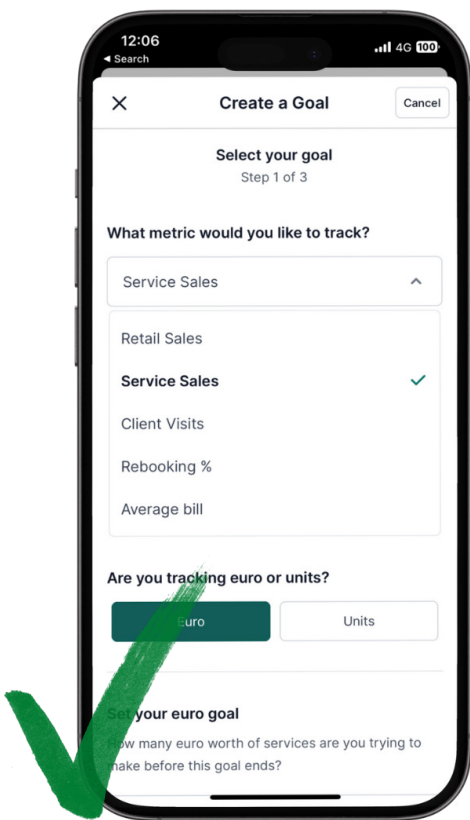
Translate your business data into individual objectives for your team...

Progress bars, badges and motivating notifications encourage them along the way..

Celebrate the wins with customer rewards!

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Born On The Salon Floor, Bred To Help You Thrive

Phorest Salon Software is used by over 155,000 hair, beauty and clinic professionals worldwide.

Phorest frees teams up to focus on their passion and business success. More creativity. Less admin. Known globally for providing the best salon marketing tools, Phorest touches every point of the salon experience, from custom salon apps, online bookings and stock control to ecommerce and payments. Founded over 20 years ago, Phorest has grown to be much more than a technology company. Today we are proud to be a life force for our industry. Our system empowers businesses to manage, market, and grow, not just through innovation in technology but also through mentoring, education, and unrivalled support.
Phorest believes in the human touch at the heart of the salon community. That's why we're the only salon software provider to connect every business with their own dedicated success manager — a committed partner for helping salon owners achieve their dreams.

Listen to founder and CEO,
Ronan Perceval, tell the origin story
of Phorest in his own words on:

PhorestFM