Leadership Is a
Contact Sport Spotlight

Two comprehensive studies were carried out by Marshall Goldsmith and Howard Morgan. The first one was in 2004 with 86,000 executives globally. The second was completed in 2014 with 248,000 people. The study basically followed the Stakeholder Centered Coaching process and was essentially as follows:

The Process

1. Every leader received 360 feedback from their coworkers.

2. Every leader picked 1–2 areas for improvement to focus on.

3. Every leader was asked to involve their co-workers through regularly asking for feedback and feedforward.

These leaders were asked to go to their stakeholders every couple of months and have a conversation along these lines:

"As you know, I am working on becoming a better listener. You gave me some suggestions last month. Please give me some feedback on how I did and some suggestions for the next month."

We did mini-surveys with the stakeholders during and at the end of the process, asking whether the leader had improved in their chosen area of growth using a -3 to +3 scale:

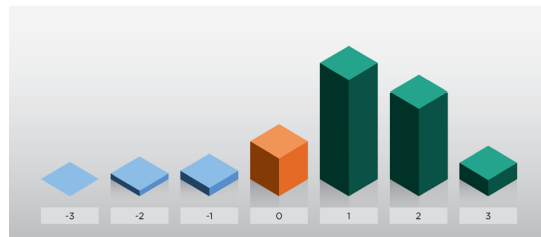|	
-3	Much Less Effective
-2	Noticeably Less Effective
-1	Little Less Effective
0	No Change
+1	Little More Effective
+2	Noticeably More Effective
+3	Much More Effective

Results

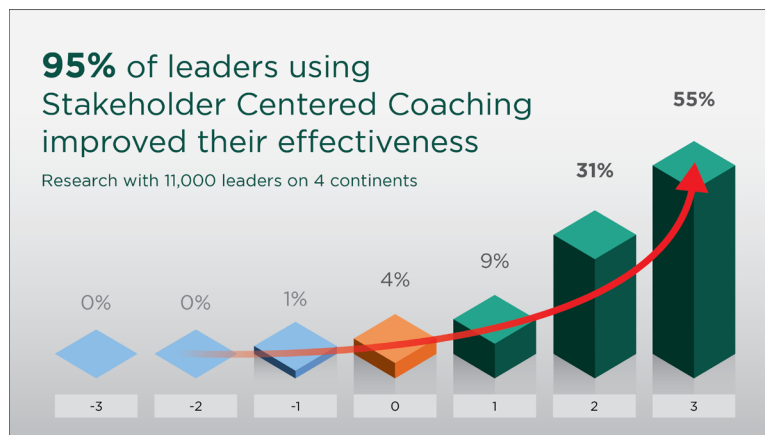In both studies the results came out the same:

When leaders did no follow-up with stakeholders the perceived leadership growth was random chance at best:
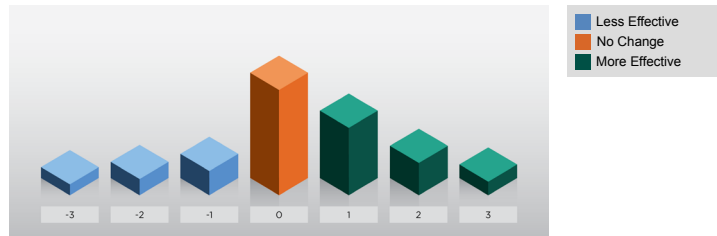
Even a little follow-up produced considerable change:

Consistent follow-up resulted in a huge perceived improvement:

95% of leaders using Stakeholder Centered Coaching improved their effectiveness

Research with 11,000 leaders on 4 continents

Conclusion

The results are in fact highly intuitive. We all tend to see people in a manner that is consistent with our previous opinions and we "look" for behaviors that confirm our opinions. A leader may have actually improved, but without involving and following-up with others the improvement is not perceived.

Two important questions leaders and organizations must ask are:

1. Who actually decides whether a leader is effective or has improved? The leader him or herself, or those who work with that leader?

2. How effective and resource-efficient are leadership development initiatives that don't change the perceptions of those who work with the leader?