



From Feedback to Innovation: Using Frontline Insights to Improve Experiences

By Kelly Beattie (Beyond Connections Consulting)

In tourism, experience is everything. And no one understands that experience better than the people closest to the guests. Yet frontline insights are often the most underused source of improvement and innovation. When leaders

rely only on procedures, metrics or operational demands, without equal or greater attention to people, they miss the human stories, real-time feedback and practical wisdom frontline staff offer everyday.

Innovation starts with the people who meet your clients and guests every day.

Frontline employees are closest to that experience. They hear feedback in real time, notice the friction points and constantly adapt to make experienced smoother and warmer. But even in well intentioned organizations, frontline insights can get lost in the pace of daily operations.

Time pressures, competing demands and unclear authority can silence valuable observations and change. People hesitate to speak up for fear of being seen as complaining rather than contributing. When feedback isn't acknowledged or acted on, people stop offering it.

The Role of Leadership: Creating the Conditions for Insight - Leaders don't generate innovation, they unlock it

People speak up when they feel:

- **Safe** – their honesty won't be punished
- **Seen** – their perspective matters
- **Valued** – their ideas can influence change

Human-centered leadership creates these conditions through:

- Visible presence without micromanagement
- Curiosity instead of defensiveness

- Timely, specific appreciation
- Clear communication about what happens next

When trust and connection are present, insights flow more freely and more honestly. When people feel they matter, not just included, but significant, they act like they matter, stepping forward with ideas and taking ownership of problems and possibilities.

Frontline Innovation Loop

A practical framework for turning insight into action.

Invite - Create intentional space and clear expectation for frontline insight. Ask open questions and signal that speaking up is part of the role - not a risk.

Notice & Name - Listen beyond the surface.

Acknowledge what's working, where guests are getting stuck, and where staff are compensating for friction.

Capture - Don't let insights disappear in conversation. Use simple, visible ways to record observations so they can be revisited and acted upon.

Decide - Every idea receives a response: yes, not now, or here's why not. Shared clarity builds ownership and trust.

Act & Appreciate - Take visible steps forward, even small ones. Follow up so people know what happened, and

express genuine appreciation for their observation and care. Reinforce that their insight matters.

Reflections for Leaders to Consider:

- How often do you intentionally invite frontline input?
- How safe do people feel being honest with you?
- What's one insight you've heard recently that deserves action?

Start small. One conversation. One change. One moment of appreciation.

Innovation doesn't begin with a system.

It begins with listening.

When leaders lead with both head and heart, frontline voices become a powerful driver of better experiences for guests, teams, and the organization as a whole.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly Beattie

Kelly Beattie is the founder of Beyond Connections who has a passion for helping others grow and develop. She is a leadership mentor and consultant who spent more than two decades leading frontline teams in dynamic, high-accountability environments. She is known for her relatable storytelling, practical tools, and heart-forward leadership philosophy. Her work bridges people, process, and purpose - helping organizations strengthen teams, improve systems, and create cultures where frontline voices are valued. Kelly believes innovation starts with listening and that exceptional experiences are built when leaders lead with both head and heart.