



Leadership Tips

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The

Give and Take

of Effective

FEEDBACK

Part II

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Tips on Effectively Receiving Feedback



One of our consultants was delivering a breakout training session at an association's annual conference when everything that could go wrong did. The handouts were lost, the slides malfunctioned, the room had horrible acoustics. Our consultant's confidence wavered as several of his stories landed poorly.

At the end of the training instead of attendees approaching afterwards to compliment the trainer just one came forward. The gentleman introduced himself as a fellow trainer. He began by declaring "Wow, what an interesting training. There was kind of a disconnect in the middle of your program today. What do you think went wrong?"

The consultant's thought of dissecting his own presentation in the minutes after it ended just seemed too soon. He was still shell-shocked and felt vulnerable. More time was needed to analyze how the wheels had fallen off before he could conduct a post-mortem with a stranger. He promised to seek the audience member out the next day for a frank discussion. The next day they had a productive conversation. Our consultant was then able to listen with an open mind, without becoming defensive. For effective feedback, timing is everything.

The Value of Receiving Feedback

Receiving feedback can be helpful in understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. Outside data points can help us learn how we came across and what resonated with or confused others.

Take this quiz to determine your openness to receiving feedback.

Quiz: When receiving feedback...

1. ____ Do you discount, devalue or ignore positive feedback and instead dwell on negative feedback you receive?
2. ____ Do you reply by downplaying positive feedback (saying "It was nothing" or disagreeing with the praise given) or minimizing your contributions?
3. ____ Do you neglect to thank the donor for their willingness to share negative or positive feedback?
4. ____ When you get negative feedback do you negate the value of the feedback if you "don't like" the person giving it?
5. ____ Do you immediately try to defend your actions or give your rationale when you receive negative feedback and criticism?

How did you do?

If all your answers were NO, you are a seasoned and sensitive receiver of feedback. Congratulations.

Each answer of YES represents an error in terms of how to receive effective feedback. Each of the above practices is generally considered to be either ineffective, inappropriate or unproductive, whether between friends, colleagues or between supervisors and direct reports.

Quiz Tips: When Receiving Feedback

1. Truly **internalize the positive feedback** you receive. Breathe it in. Soak it up. Take a bow, internally. It's OK to bask in the praise from others. Always say "Thank you."
2. Feedback is a gift, so **don't minimize positive feedback**. If you don't know how to respond in the moment, simply smile and say "Thank you." If you try to deflect it or say "It wasn't anything," it's like telling someone you don't like their gift.

3. It often takes caring and courage for someone to provide you constructive feedback. **Recognize** their good intentions and candor. **Acknowledge** it. Thanking them doesn't mean you necessarily agree with the content. After thanking them, you let them know how much you appreciate their caring and concern.
4. Try to avoid ignoring feedback just because you don't like or respect the person issuing it. **Strive to evaluate feedback on its merits** and separate the message from the source. Consider it, even if it upsets you. You might also dissect their feedback, or agree or find value with part of it. It is OK to separate what's useful or true for you and discard the rest.
5. **Know yourself. Allow yourself a grace period** after a presentation or a meeting to process your performance for yourself before you listen to others' perceptions, perspectives or recommendations. When asked if you'd like to receive feedback in the moment, it's OK to smile and say "Thank you for asking. I'd actually appreciate some time to reflect before hearing your feedback." Or simply smile and say, "Not today. It's too soon. Could we set a time to talk tomorrow?"

How to respond when the feedback feels wrong or inappropriate

When the feedback stings or is inappropriate, depending on whether or not you want to continue the conversation, you might respond with one of these phrases:

- "That's an interesting perspective. Thank you for sharing it."
- "You might be right."
- "What's your basis for that observation/opinion?"
- "I'll consider your feedback. Thank you."
- "Why do you ask?"
- "What are you trying to say exactly?"
- "What's your point?"
- "Tell me more..."

- "Could you give me a specific example?"

Sometimes others give feedback because of their own needs, and not for the betterment of the recipient. We may not know their agenda, but you should consider the feedback that you are receiving may be saying more about them than you. In such a case it's easier to dismiss. They may have an axe to grind, or a personal experience of their own that's coloring their perspective which they are foisting upon you.

The key is to not take such feedback personally or allow it to shake your own confidence in yourself or your performance.

Don't Fear Receiving or Giving Feedback

Feedback is invaluable in overcoming blind spots, entertaining different perspectives and gathering data points about your impact on others. Be open to listening with an ear toward self-improvement. Some feedback is music to our ears; some of it is hard to listen to but important to consider; and some feedback is just noise. Take what's valuable and let go of what's not relevant. Remember: Feedback is a gift, so be generous with it to others and to yourself.



Related assessment and coaching resources of The Consulting Team to help you deliver more effective feedback:

ASSESSMENT TOOLS:

DiSC® Classic Communication Style Assessments

Emotional Intelligence Executive Coaching and Assessment

RELATED TRAININGS:

Resolving Conflict with Difficult Behaviors

Using Assertiveness to Diffuse Difficult Situations

Enhancing Trust by Communicating with Tact and Professionalism

Supervision and Management 101

Credibility: How to Earn It, How to Keep It

Think On Your Feet: Develop Your Ability to Think, Stand and Speak in Spontaneously

COACHING:

Do you have a leader or employee in need of **coaching** to improve their leadership, communication skills (including listening skills), emotional intelligence or customer service? **Let us help.**



Contact The Consulting Team to learn more about training and consulting assistance and also one-to-one coaching for leaders and employees.

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