

Thank you for all of your continued support and business. As a token of appreciation, we want to share our latest article on how to give difficult feedback. It is chock full of easy to follow tips. Please feel free to forward it to any of your colleagues, or to use it for a team discussion. If you send us an e-mail to [leadershiptips@theconsultingteam.com](mailto:leadershiptips@theconsultingteam.com) describing your favorite dos and don'ts of giving feedback, your name will be entered in a drawing to win a copy of my audiocassette, *Using Stress and Conflict Positively*. To unsubscribe reply to this email and type "**unsubscribe**" in the subject line, or use this link: **unsubscribe**.

Warm regards,  
Marilyn Manning, CEO

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## June 2008 Leadership Tips

### Giving Difficult Feedback

**Most of us avoid giving feedback. This article provides tips on coaching, giving feedback, and crucial conversations.**

With floods of e-mails, voice-mails, telephone, and electronic meetings, we are experiencing less face to face communication. Where are the days of meeting for coffee, or ducking into someone's cubicle to chat, or the luxury of a "business" lunch? We are victims of information overload, yet don't have crucial conversations that keep us connected in more meaningful ways. Less personal communication can cause diffused focus and little in-depth dialogue, thus dehumanizing our environment. Most of us need frequent feedback and discussion with others to benefit from different perspectives, to work more effectively, and to reach our fullest productivity.

The Wall Street Journal recently published an article about major problems conflict avoidance can cause in the workplace, especially avoidance by supervisors, managers, and leaders. A good way to overcome this overwhelming desire to avoid conflict and tough conversations is to practice giving feedback regularly. We all need feedback. We can't improve in a vacuum. Give your feedback face-to-face, not via email.

Like successful projects, successful feedback needs to be planned. We need feedback skills like we need project management and other core skills. Try these simple steps.

#### **Step One: Establish strengths and needs for people you give feedback to and the benefits of their receiving it**

- List the key people you supervise or work with closely.
- List their strengths and areas they could improve or develop.
- List what you think they need to reach their potential. (e.g. assessments, training, feedback on their style or work habits)
- List benefits for giving them constructive feedback and coaching.

- Determine your targets and timelines for giving regular feedback.

Design a personal plan dedicating time to coach and give feedback. Who will you coach and how often? Would weekly meetings provide enough coaching for each of your employees? Can you have a meaningful dialogue in 30 minutes? There are many informal occasions to give feedback, and those are often the best moments, but carefully planned feedback can be powerful and effective. We can all benefit from both. You may want to work with a professional coach to get started.

## **Step Two: Prepare the way for feedback**

Strongly commit to coach and mentor your employees. Review and record their past successes and challenges. What obstacles have they overcome? Document their successes at making big changes, and when they failed and why. Make a list of those who know their work and can accurately give feedback to them. Make a list of who would give candid feedback if asked.

Do your employees have accurate pictures of their strengths and weaknesses? Would they be open to a 360° assessment and getting feedback from others?

Your feedback is essential, but if the person is open to hearing from others too, you might encourage that. More feedback increases one's self-awareness and willingness to make important changes.

Ensure your employees are onboard with your coaching. Spell out that you will give feedback regularly so they understand what to expect. Ask them to reflect on what they need from coaching and how it will benefit them.

## **Step Three: Goal clarity**

Research supports that mission-driven projects are more successful than rule-driven projects. Treat coaching like a mission-driven project: agree on a clearly defined mission with each person you coach. Create a vision for success.

**Using a 360° assessment:** Once you have attained buy-in, a 360° report offers helpful insights to aid in articulating clear, measurable goals for personal development plans. We recommend you use a professional for this process. There are several varieties of 360 assessments. The Consulting Team, LLC uses the EQ-i (Emotional Quotient Inventory) and the DISC (communication and leadership styles).

The 360° report feedback is fairer than typical boss-only reviews. It places emphasis on what individuals do well; often areas we need to develop are our strengths used to excess. In a 360° report individuals get feedback from many people they work with. The perspectives of subordinates, peers, bosses, and self can be instructively different.

The 360° report is usually more accurate than self-ratings. High self-ratings often do not correlate with success. The 360° report can accurately give a sense of one's performance. Neither a boss-only review nor an employee self-review can give the entire performance picture. The 360° report establishes a credible reference point of necessary changes and progress.

## **Step Four: Formal feedback sessions**

After utilizing an assessment for professional development, your job as a supervisor is to provide coaching, suggesting options and processes for improvement. You may expand feedback by providing external coaching. Different coaches can address different issues: e.g. behavioral changes, project skills, organization strategies and initiatives, or work-life balance.

Regular ongoing coaching can provide feedback, reality checks, and a sounding board the employee may need. Coaching sessions can put you, as coach, in a neutral position, where it is safe for the employee to express doubts, worries, and ambitions. Use these opportunities to explore career advancements, training needs, and special assignments to develop your staff.

"Coaching has helped me in virtually every phase of my job. From more effective presentations to a better understanding of people's working styles, I am a far more successful manager today than ever before. Coaching is also helping me and my management team to achieve our goals and create a work environment that retains and attracts staff." — From an executive we have coached.

As a coach you can give acknowledgment and encouragement as well as a “kick in the pants” to motivate personal changes in your staff necessary to maximize their potentials. Unfortunately, most will wait until they face a crisis to make significant personal changes rather than practicing *continuous self-improvement*. Busy trying to succeed and accomplish goals, they often ignore or deny their own weaknesses and lack of balance.

Rapid change cycles are a fruitful time for coaching. If leaders recognize indicators of increased staff stress and signs of diminishing trust, enthusiasm, or participation, they can implement a sound coaching plan to help individuals and teams navigate change through positive modifications. Make time to continue your coaching efforts, especially in busy times.

## **Step Five: Communication**

Manage your employees' expectations of coaching sessions. If you must cancel one, immediately calendar another session. Cancelled one-on-one sessions can send a message that the employee isn't a high priority.

Build follow-up into each coaching session. Through e-mails have employees send what they accomplished between sessions and what they want to focus in for their next sessions.

Equally important, tell your boss you are regularly coaching your staff and share the success you are observing. Your boss may support further training in coaching techniques and approaches you may want.

Whether you use coaching to mediate conflict, modify styles, sharpen skills, or to be a neutral, empathic ear, help your employees design personal plans to maximize results. Establishing and reinforcing clear goals and using effective communication are crucial to a successful coaching endeavor.

Feedback and coaching sessions can be a mutually enjoyable learning process.

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## **\*Great leaders aren't born, they're coached!**

Due to tight budgets we would like to offer a **10% discount** to new clients on our coaching sessions and 360° Feedback assessments until September 15th. Take advantage of this limited time offer today! Please mention this offer to receive the discount.

## **Getting Help**

Are you realizing your leadership potential? Whether you are a seasoned executive, or if you are just starting your career there is no greater skill than being able to recognize that you need help.

Experts agree that people can significantly enhance personal effectiveness by honestly evaluating their behavior and selecting self-management strategies that maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses.

Check out our **Conflict Mediation** and **Leadership Coaching** services to see how we can assist you in your work.

## **Related Assessments**

In addition to our services we offer products that help you to understand yourself as a leader.

### **DiSC® Classic Profile**

*DiSC Classic* has 30 years of proven reliability and over 40 million users, and remains the most trusted learning instrument in the industry. It is used worldwide in dozens of training and coaching applications, including organizational development and performance improvement. *DiSC Classic* can help improve communication, ease frustration and conflict, and develop effective managers and teams. **Get it Now**

### **360° DiSC® Behavioral Profile**

Experts agree that people can significantly enhance personal effectiveness by honestly evaluating their behavior and selecting self-management strategies that maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses. Organizations around the world use the *360° DiSC Behavioral Profile* to improve effectiveness in four

main areas: self-awareness and self-management, peer relationships and team building, performance coaching and managing others, client relationships. **Get it Now**

## **EQ-i BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory**

The EQ-i measures 15 aspects of emotional intelligence that correlate to personal and professional success. As part of an executive development and/or coaching program you and your coach are provided with information that can be used for development and improvement. The BarOn EQ-i® is the most comprehensive, practical and widely-administered tool in the field of emotional intelligence (EQ). Failure to adapt socially and emotionally to your surroundings is a leading cause of career derailment.

## **About Dr. Manning**

Dr. Marilyn Manning, CSP, CMC\*, and international author of seven business books, resolves difficult organizational and people problems. She specializes in Leadership, Teamwork, Conflict Mediation, Executive Coaching, Meeting Facilitation, Change, Strategic Planning, and Communication. Over 94% of Dr. Manning's work is repeat business.

\*CMC (Certified Management Consultant) is a certification mark awarded by the Institute of Management Consultants USA and represents evidence of the highest standards of consulting and adherence to the ethical canons of the profession. Less than 1% of all consultants have achieved this level of performance.

For more information go to: **[www.theconsultingteam.com](http://www.theconsultingteam.com)**.

## **About Leadership Tips**

Leadership Tips is a periodic newsletter aimed to help individuals deal with the difficult issues they face in today's busy and often hectic work environment.

We deal with topics such as conflict, anger and stress management, team building, change management, how to become a better communicator, and how to developing leadership skills. To view past and present Leadership Tips newsletters go to **Newsletters**.

## **Drawing**

Send us an e-mail to [leadershiptips@theconsultingteam.com](mailto:leadershiptips@theconsultingteam.com), describing your favorite dos and don'ts of giving feedback and your name will be entered in a drawing to win a copy of Dr. Manning's audiocassette, *Using Stress and Conflict Positively*.

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\*If you know someone who would benefit from reading *Leadership Tips*, please feel free to forward this email to them.