



How to Offer Feedback Constructively

March 2017



“An acquaintance merely enjoys your company, a fair-weather companion flatters when all is well, a true friend has your best interests at heart and the pluck to tell you what you need to hear.”

— E.A. Bucchianeri, *Brushstrokes of a Gadfly*

Offering any kind of critique to someone else can be touchy. Emotions can fly, people can get defensive and sometimes the good intention is completely lost. But that shouldn't stop you from providing guidance when guidance is needed. There are good, constructive ways to offer criticism and get results. It's all in your delivery and the content of your message...

Set the Right Tone

For starters, **pay attention to your setting**. No one likes to be criticized in front of a large group or in an area of the office that is high-traffic and



**PRAISE
MAKES YOU
FEEL GOOD
CRITIQUE
MAKES YOU
BETTER**

Some Phrases to Start a Feedback Discussion



I know I don't have the full context here...

Something that's on my mind...

noisy. Set aside some time to talk to someone about issues they might be having in a relaxed, one-on-one setting. Make sure you allow for enough time for a comfortable conversation so the interaction doesn't feel rushed or disingenuous.

Remember to **keep your meeting as positive as possible**. People do not respond well to an accusing tone or overwhelming negativity. Instead of starting off your conversation with finger pointing, consider using an approach often called the "compliment sandwich." In its simplified form, a compliment sandwich goes like this: Begin by pointing out something good your co-worker has accomplished, then bring up one flaw that needs to be addressed, and close with a positive comment about the future. It might look something like this:

"Your report on New Product X was really well-written and easy to follow. However, the report was submitted one week late and some of our team's work had to be pushed back because of the delay. Let's talk about how we can work on meeting deadlines so you can generate the same kind of quality work, within a stricter time frame."



Focus on One, Specific Goal

Offering vague advice doesn't help anyone. If your co-worker does not have a clear idea of what you'd like to change, s/he might come away from your meeting confused and frustrated, and that doesn't accomplish anything! On the same coin, don't overwhelm your co-worker with a list of things you would like improved or modified. They are likely to become bogged down by the flood of advice and won't know how to begin to make changes.

Instead, focus on one, clear goal. Keep your meeting centered around that one objective and discuss solutions for that specific item. That way,

One of the things I want to help with is...

The Instant Feedback Formula

Here's a handy five step formula for expressing feedback in everyday situations.

- 1 **When ... happens**
Describe the behaviour
- 2 **I feel ...**
Describe your reaction
- 3 **Because ...**
Explain why you feel this way
- 4 **What I imagine is ...**
If possible show you understand what's behind their behaviour
- 5 **What I'd prefer is ...**
Suggest a different way of behaving

3 Keys to Growing From Feedback:



Be accepting of the feedback

Find something in it to agree with

Determine how it can help you in the future



Feedback
may be a gift, but
constructive
feedback
is an investment

-Brad Boyson

your team member can walk away from the meeting with a crystal clear idea of what they need to improve and the particular steps they need to take in order to get there.

Create Solutions Together

You might have some ideas on how to improve the behaviors or actions of your co-worker, but you should refrain from divulging them until you hear feedback from them. This is a two-sided meeting, after all. I guarantee the person on the other side of the table would rather contribute to the conversation instead of just sitting passively and getting a lecture. After you bring up the problem, look to your teammate for solutions. You could say something like:

“Now that you’re aware that your informal language makes some of our clients uncomfortable, **let’s talk about solutions.** How do you propose we work on this issue?”

This phrasing shows empathy and understanding, as well as respect for your co-worker’s ideas. Also, by asking an open-ended question, you open the floor to unrestricted feedback and discussion. Hopefully, your co-worker trusts you enough to talk openly about the issue at hand and come up with a realistic approach to solving it.

Follow Up!

No matter what solution to the issue you and your co-worker decide upon, be sure to include a follow-up meeting (or several) in your action plan. It helps to have specific goals that you can talk about and modify as need be.

Maybe the problem is ongoing (showing up for work on time, arguing excessively with co-workers, etc.) and requires regular check-ins throughout the year. If that’s the case, look at these follow-up meetings as opportunities rather than annoyances. They will give you the chance to have some quality one-on-one time with your co-worker and will hopefully result in a stronger professional bond.

Above all, emphasize that the reason you’re interested in correcting your co-worker’s issue is because you care. You want him or her to succeed

The next time you have the opportunity to express criticism ask yourself,

"Is this going to help the other person grow or am I expressing frustration?"

Constructive Criticism can serve you well if you let it.



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and you are willing to go out of your way to make sure that happens. Your genuine concern in your co-worker's well-being is the number one key to successful constructive criticism.

Regards,



Learn more about the keys to offering constructive criticism. Contact me!



June

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