

FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK

K. Crawford



Movie actors are fortunate. Not only are they able to see themselves perform on film, but they also have the luxury of having acting coaches and directors whose responsibilities include observing the actors, with an eye toward improving their acting abilities.

The giving and receiving in information related to communications skills is called feedback. It is a vital element of the communication process. It is a way of letting the sender know how their message is being received and it it should be altered.

How to Develop your Leadership Skills (Scriptographic Booklet by Channing L. Bete Co., Inc. South Deerfield, MA 01373, 1987)

Categories

Feedback may emerge in a number of ways:

- conscious or unconscious - nodding assent or falling asleep
- spontaneous or solicited - "Thanks a lot" and "Yes, it did help"
- verbal or non-verbal - "no" or leaving the room
- formal or informal - evaluation form or applauding

Effects

Feedback can have the following helpful effects:

- reinforces - feedback may confirm behavior by encouraging its repetition ("You really helped then when you clarified that.")
- corrects - feedback may help bring behavior in line with intention ("It would have helped me more if you had stood up to talk.")
- identifies - feedback may help identify persons and their relationship ("Joe, I thought we were enemies, but we're not, are we?")

Criteria

FEEDBACK ...

Helpful feedback is:

- **descriptive** - it is descriptive rather than evaluative. By describing one's own reaction, it leaves the recipient free to use it or not. By avoiding evaluative language, it reduces the need for the individual to react defensively ("Susan, I want to be sure to hear you. could you raise your voice a bit please?" This gives a different feel from the statement, "Henry, you talk too low." The latter sound condemning and puts all of the responsibility on Henry. The former shares the situation between Susan and the speaker and contains a complimentary rather than accusative note.
- **specific** - it is specific rather than general. To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told that "just now when we were deciding the issue I felt forced to accept your arguments or face rebuttal from you."
- **appropriate** - meaning descriptive and logical, not emotional. It takes into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of feedback. Feedback can be destructive when it serves only one's own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end.
- **usable** - it is directed toward the behavior which the receiver can do something about. Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded on some shortcoming over which he or she has no control.
- **requested** - it is solicited, rather than imposed. Formal feedback is most acceptable when the receiver has formulated the question which those observing them can answer.
- **timely** - it is well-timed. In general, feedback is most useful when offered at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, support available from others, etc.)
- **clear** - it is checked to insure clear communication. One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the received feedback to see if it corresponds to what the sender had in mind.
- **accurate** - when feedback is given, both giver and receiver have the opportunity to check the accuracy of the message and feedback. This back and forth process can happen repeatedly until a full understanding is reached.
- **trusted** - a trusted non-threatening source helps to make feedback more palatable ("Daddy, you're getting too fat!" from a 3 year old is more acceptable than from your boss)

Standards

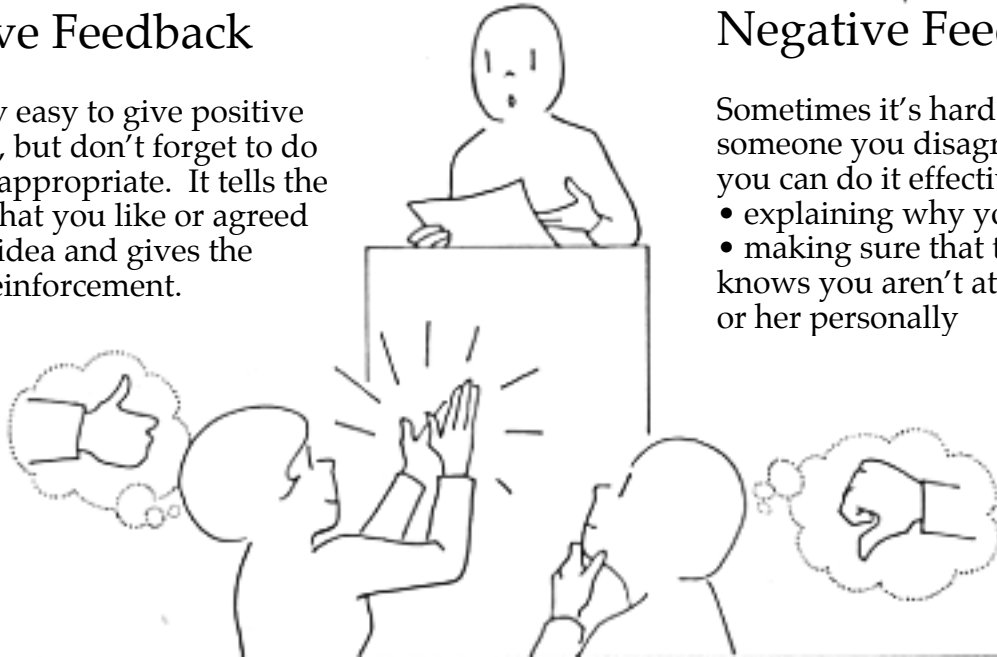
Some appropriate standard for giving feedback are:

- refer to specific behavioral data
- speak to one specific item at a time
- give feedback at a useful level
- give feedback as soon after the action as possible
- offer rather than impose feedback
- be aware of your non-verbal feedback

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Positive Feedback

It's pretty easy to give positive reactions, but don't forget to do so when appropriate. It tells the speaker that you like or agreed with the idea and gives the person reinforcement.



Negative Feedback

Sometimes it's hard to tell someone you disagree. But, you can do it effectively by:

- explaining why you disagree
- making sure that the speaker knows you aren't attacking him or her personally

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By “padding” your comments with positive reinforcement of the good aspects of a project, speech, etc., you let the receiver know that there were good aspects of their message--making the constructive criticism easier to digest!



Receiving Feedback

It is often easier to give feedback than to receive. It is extremely important that, when receiving feedback, one should remember:

- do not get defensive
- expect honesty
- they are trying to help - accept feedback as constructive
- feedback is not always accurate, you can disregard it