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Take Criticism. . .To The Next Level

a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

The Manager's Coach

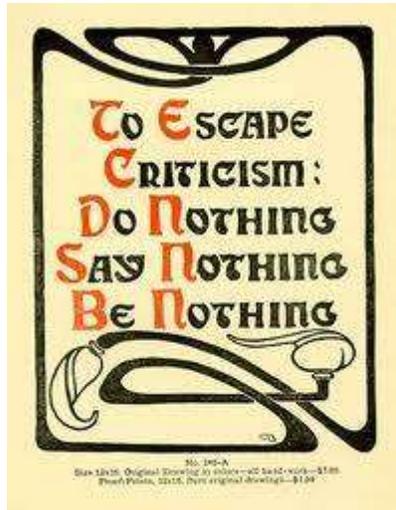
Why Criticism Cuts

I honestly don't know anyone who likes criticism. In fact, I have found over the years that most of us actually fear it. Do YOU? Why is that? Why do we tense up, swallow hard, and even feel sick to the stomach when somebody criticizes our behaviors, decisions, actions, products, or ideas? Well, after thoughtful reflection, I think there are two main reasons.

First, we associate criticism with personal attack. When the boss tells us he isn't pleased with a project outcome, emotionally we translate that statement into "you aren't smart enough, educated enough, skilled enough, or creative enough to produce something of real value". Though sad, it's often what we do, isn't it? We allow his assessment of our work to poke holes in our general feelings of self worth.



Secondly, many or most of us grew up in families who had no idea how to model effective, constructive delivery of criticism. It's just the way it was. But now we have to reframe those mental tapes, and it's difficult to do. Over and over we relive the anxiety we experienced when Mom called us lazy for not cleaning our bedroom, careless for spilling our milk, and stupid for not acing a test. Many years later we continue to label ourselves lazy, careless, stupid, and lots of other derogatory words.



Think this isn't a big deal? It's huge! I want you to know that NOW is the perfect time to start separating people's criticisms of your work from your intrinsic value as a human being. You can be a good, decent, capable, motivated, energetic employee who occasionally disappoints your boss. Failing to meet or exceed a sales quota doesn't mean you are worthless.

Sylvia

FEATURE ARTICLE

Criticism at Work: Responses That Preserve and Grow Your Career

There is an art to receiving criticism. Don't assume you automatically know how to do it. Most people are rather clueless. You've got to think it through, plan a strategy, and practice. The following guidance can help you to actually improve relationships, save your reputation, and move projects forward in a highly productive manner.

Assume the other person has your best interests at heart.

- Unless you know otherwise, this is a great place to start when criticism comes your way. Resist the temptation of believing the other person delights in chopping you down. Try on the attitude that maybe this person really wants to see you succeed long term.

Control your emotions.

- Stay calm and appear stable. Avoid angry outbursts, obnoxious dismissal, and tears. You don't have to like what you hear—or agree with it—but you do need

to remain professional if you value your job. Demonstrations of lack of control can kill your career.

Look for the truth within the message.

- While you may seethe upon hearing ninety percent of the feedback, focus on the one kernel of truth that's usually there. What is the golden nugget—the single piece—you can take with you long after this conversation concludes? What change can you make? What action can you take? Even the worst criticism imaginable contains a bit of truth that can serve you well.

Ask for clarification.

- If you are not hearing specifics during a critical conversation, ask the person to tell you precisely how he thinks you could have managed the project differently. You don't have to accept vague generalities that give you nothing of value. Using a reasonable tone of voice, request the clarity you need to avoid these mistakes in the future.

Elevate the other person.

- This is especially useful with persons who have some authority over you. Acknowledge and respect the individual's position throughout the conversation. Say something like: "I take your comments very seriously because you've managed this company for twenty years and certainly understand the business."

Determine the action you need to take.

- After considering all of the critical content, you need to decide how you can use this information to everyone's advantage. What has to happen next? Propose a solution before the conversation ends. See if what you are thinking sounds reasonable to the other person. This can be the creative, positive part of an otherwise challenging, difficult encounter.

RESOURCES

Self Assess Your Ability to Cope With Criticism

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Read each statement and rate your skill associated with it. Use a scale of one to ten, with ten representing the highest possible rating and one representing the lowest. Then review your scores and check out your results at the bottom of the assessment.

_____ I approach criticism with the attitude that it is an opportunity to learn.

_____ I understand intellectually and emotionally that criticism is part of life.

_____ I do not fear criticism.

_____ I have a strong sense about why I feel about criticism the way I do.

_____ I am able to control my emotions during conversations that criticize the quality and quantity of my work.

_____ I am able to control my emotions during conversations that criticize my behavior.

_____ I am able to control my emotions during conversations that criticize my creativity and ideas.

_____ I am able to control my emotions during conversations that criticize my judgment and decision making ability.

_____ I look for the kernel of truth in critical conversations.

_____ I am able to thank the person for sharing his/her feedback with me.

_____ I can move beyond the criticism rather easily instead of allowing it to destroy me or drag me down.

_____ I can take positive steps to incorporate the truth within the criticism into my work, behavior, actions, decisions, and ideas.

YOUR RESULTS:

If you rated yourself an 8 or above in any one of the statements, know that you are dealing with criticism rather effectively or very effectively. A score below an 8 indicates that this is an area that requires your attention in order to grow. If you scored a 6, ask yourself what it would take for you to move into a 7 or an 8, for example. © 2011 Sylvia D. Hepler, Launching Lives, LLC. All rights reserved.

TIP

Consider the Consequences

Set aside time this week to think about the consequences of “blowing” conversations during which you are criticized for your work, behavior, decisions, actions, and/or ideas. What do you forfeit, sabotage, or ruin if you erupt like a volcano, avoid reality, dismiss elements of truth, resist recommendations, and turn confrontational conversations into fights? Get clear now about how you will react, participate, and respond positively to these kinds of interactions. Don’t delay. You never know when your boss, colleague, or employee may ask to see you in her office or corner you at the water cooler. The best way to deal with criticism is to be ready for it.

Where in the World is SYLVIA?

On August 25, 2011 Sylvia partners with Donald Shores of Rising SalesU to present a morning long workshop that will focus on helping business owners to re-energize themselves and jump-start their mindset, approach, and business goals. Sponsored and organized by the Harrisburg Regional Chamber of Commerce as part of their “Make It Happen” series, this learning opportunity offers participants a chance to get away from the office and focus on growing their businesses with fresh eyes.



Sylvia makes some time to enjoy what is left of the summer! Here she is lunching *al fresco* at Trevi 5 in Hershey with her niece Abby who is about to start grad school.

About This Ezine

This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

Back issues are [available here](#). Send email by [clicking here](#) to manage your free subscription. Sharing content with attribution is encouraged

Launching Lives Ezine is dedicated, above all, to “building people...building businesses.” ©2010, 2011

About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on ezinearticles.com. She has produced an audio CD entitled, “Making Change”, [two special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an e-book entitled, No Surprises: A Business Guide for Starting Your Coaching Practice.

More information is available at her [Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives is an executive coaching company located in South Central PA. Its mission is to support managers and executives to solve their most

pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives focuses on BUILDING PEOPLE through individual, private coaching, group coaching, specialized products, speeches, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching is the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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