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How To Get What You Want...From The People You Want It From

By Kathy Gates

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Successful feedback is usually associated with improving employee productivity, but feedback is not just for supervisor-employee relationships. Being able to deliver honest, constructive feedback is also vital to healthy relationships at home.

You give feedback to your children, spouse, friends, doctor, and even your hair stylist.

If you run a home based business, you also need to be able to give effective messages to suppliers, customers, marketers, and web-site designers, just to name a few.

Being unable to give feedback successfully could set you up for feeling taken advantage of, frustrated, under-appreciated, and overwhelmed.

Putting these methods into practice will help you provide honest communication that will protect your time and needs, yet even improve your relationships.

1. Successful communication requires that you get the other person's full attention. Plan your discussion at a time when both parties can focus on the situation. Asking your teenager to rethink the way she's spending her money while she's got a rented movie and friends in the other room is guaranteed to be ignored. Telling an employee to redo a report as you rush out to a meeting is almost always going to generate hurt feelings. Choose a

quiet time, and schedule enough time so that you don't feel obliged to rush through the conversation.

2. Successful communication is on-going, not an out of left-field ambush. When someone does something great, don't assume they know how you feel. Tell them! The same is true for when you need to correct a behavior. "May I make a suggestion" are very valuable words for an on-going dialogue of behavior.

3. Successful communication focuses on behavior, not personalities. People will always respond more readily to

facts than fault-finding. Don't make it personal. Always avoid sarcasm or insults. Whether it's negative or positive feedback, connect it to specific examples, which will help take the focus off the individual and highlight the behavior instead. Tell him exactly what he did that was not acceptable, or in the reverse help him to continue appropriate behavior by praising his accomplishments.

4. Successful communication will motivate, not discourage individuals. We all feel the need to hear from others how we are doing. It's a basis for communication and trust. A discussion resulting in an exchange of ideas and information is always a powerful motivator. Knowing what actions you want, what your goals are, and having a method to give them to you will motivate people to please you. Motivated people have specific goals and look for ways to achieve them, and efficiency is a natural result of that.

5. Successful communication focuses on one thing at a time. Be specific. If you are giving negative feedback, be direct about what the problem is, stick to the topic, and avoid dragging in other problems. Instead of telling your teenager that you've been proud of her attitude lately, compliment an exact time she was willing to do something without a fuss. Instead of saying "Hey Chuck, nice work on that project", try "Hey Chuck, I really appreciate you working so closely with XYZ Vendor to get that equipment delivered on time".

6. Successful feedback focuses on things the individual can do something about. Feedback concerning matters

that are out of the individual's control is not useful. It only increases a person's frustration to be criticized for something they can't do anything about. Reprimanding your teenager for spending too much time on an assignment is unfair since she can't control her teachers' requests. Expecting your associate to write a business letter the same way you would is impossible since he can't read your mind.

7. Successful communication offers solutions. When you must give negative feedback to someone, always focus on what corrective action they can take. Be willing to give them the support and tools needed to correct the situation. Discuss the options, or explain the rules and clearly define the consequences. The objective of successful communication is to help the person view the information as an opportunity to learn, instead of a threat.

By offering specific examples, you will be able to relate how changing his behavior will help him achieve his goal.

8. Try using the "feedback sandwich". A feedback sandwich is a language tool that assists you in giving clear and specific messages in an acceptable way. Begin with a specific praise, then your constructive advice using the tools above, then additional praise. It's very important that your acknowledgments be true about the individual, not just general positive statements.

Kathy Gates, Professional Life Coach, believes there is a more advanced form of motivation beyond the "gottas", "shoulds", and "havetos". Visit www.reallifecoach.com, email kathy@reallifecoach.com, or call 480.998.5843 for a FREE consultation

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