



The Critic's Corner Shouldn't be Lonely

by Patti Hathaway, CSP

In a survey, 48% of the 7,800 people who responded said they suffer from a lack of feedback on their performance and 69% who felt they weren't receiving feedback are thinking of looking for another job.

Many managers do not feel comfortable giving criticism to their people and as a result do so infrequently. Research on motivation concludes that feedback is one of the biggest motivators for change. Most people are starving for feedback -- both positive and negative.

There are some common attitudes towards criticizing others that may get in the manager's way of providing feedback to his/her employees. One of the most common attitudes is "If I wait long enough, the situation will probably resolve itself so I won't have to get involved." Avoiding situations may be appropriate when the issue is trivial or when a problem is symptomatic of more pressing problems. However, ignoring situations is inappropriate most of the time, because most problems do not go away on their own.

A second common problem is the manager's need to be liked, some people avoid criticizing others for fear they will not be liked. They tend to avoid conflict at all costs. They may also genuinely believe that they are not sufficiently competent to criticize others, because they are not above criticism themselves. But none of us is -- so that excuse is a poor one.

Try this 3-step approach to giving effective criticism: (1) Set realistic goals and expectations. The first and most basic step we must take before we can give criticism is to let the other person know our expectations of him or her. If we have never shared our expectations, we have no basis on which to base our evaluation or criticism. Think through how you set up expectations for your seasonal help - is it thorough? clear? well-explained? If not, you are to be blamed for poor work habits and unmet expectations. No one can read your mind. You need to be specific and detailed if you want results.

The second step (2) is to be immediate. Give the feedback as close to the actual event as possible. Be short and specific. Select a good time, but don't save up your comments until you have a 15 minute speech to discharge. When giving criticism, you should not ask for a complete character change. It is far more effective to address one trait or issue at a time. Giving criticism requires compassion, insight and tact. The last step (3) is be specific.

Perhaps if managers would take the time to plan well-thought-out praises and criticisms, we would have a less disgruntled and unmotivated workforce today. Samuel Butler summed it up well when he said "If people would dare to speak to one another unreservedly, there would be a good deal less sorrow in the world a hundred years hence."

These ideas are excerpted from Patti Hathaway's book, Feedback Skills for Leaders which has sold over 100,000 copies and been translated into 5 languages. Patti Hathaway, CSP, The CHANGE AGENT, is one of fewer than 7% women worldwide to have earned the Certified Speaking Professional designation from the National Speakers Association for her proven presentation skills. She is a Business Advisor and the author of 6 books. She solves your people challenges by providing highly customized solutions to meet your needs. Contact Patti at 1-800-339-0973 or at her web site: www.thechangeagent.com for information on her speaking and consulting services or to receive her free e-mail newsletter/blog.