

Feedback: Not an easy sword to swallow

by Bob Rodgers

Julius Caesar said, "It is easier to find men who will volunteer to die, than those who are willing to endure pain with patience."

Certainly, one of the most painful aspects of self-improvement in the workplace is receiving feedback. Listening to



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feedback can hurt, and it most certainly requires a great deal of patience.

Feedback is the information that allows you to monitor progress in your day-to-day tasks. Feedback lets you know how you measure up. Are you on task? Attaining your goals? Learning new skills? Feedback can boost self-confidence and keep you motivated to continue to strive to bring your best self forward, in work and overflowing into life.

There are three major components to making feedback work for you: Who to ask, what to ask and how to ask for it.

The person you ask to provide you with

feedback should be someone you respect, someone with integrity, someone who will encourage you to do your best. While this person may be a colleague at work, also consider looking to friends and family. Your spouse or even your children might qualify for the job. People with whom you serve in a volunteer community capacity may be another source to consider.

This person should have a different "style" than your own; he or she should be someone who works or conducts tasks in a manner different from yours, so his or her points of view will be from an angle you may not have considered.

Perhaps you and this person have suffered disagreements in the past or had opinions that clashed at a board or even neighborhood watch meetings. This could be the person who offers you the enlightenment that you are seeking.

This person should be someone whose success is intertwined with yours, and again, not limited to a work situation. Perhaps you run the annual PTA gift wrap sale as co-chairs together. You both need to

have a vested interest in each making the other work effectively, and the relationship should be at a level where he or she has seen you in action in a number of situations, over a period of several months or more.

Now that you have thought of the person whom you'd like to have deliver your feedback, decide on what it is you hope to learn from this exercise – your development goals. You may have more than one goal in mind; perhaps you'd like to be a more effective public speaker or you'd like to be more receptive to suggestions from other team members, but you need to first select one goal and tackle it before moving on to your next challenge. Remember, changing an ingrained behavior is not easy; it requires dedication and motivation.

The most difficult part of receiving feedback comes in asking for it. The quality and quantity of the information you receive is dependent upon how you get it.

The "SBI" model is a practical and objective delivery system, in which the per-

son offering feedback presents to you the situation in which the behavior occurred, the behavior that was witnessed, and the impact or consequences it had on the people who were present.

This formula allows for an objective reporting of how you're progressing with your goal behavior in a non-judgmental manner.

The feedback you receive should be candid, truthful, detailed and devoid of judgment from the other party.

In the end, it's your choice whether you change your behavior, but always graciously thank the party who also stepped out of his or her comfort zone to offer the gift of feedback. **GBJ**

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