



The Heebie Geebies

My husband showed me a video recently. It was a 2-year-old who, in her daycare class, got a visit from the Easter Bunny.

Picture it. This tiny tot is minding her own business, happily being 2, until all of a sudden her world is rudely rocked by a huge creature with long ears and creepy smile.

The reaction...absolute terror! Oh, my goodness, the mom in me just wanted to scoop her up and assure her that she was safe.

Now, we're not 2, and the Easter Bunny hasn't come a-callin'. Believe it or not, though, there's something that elicits a near-similar response in many adults. Okay, maybe we don't scream and scurry, as the little one did in the video, but the visceral reaction can be no less strong.

What's the masked offender for us? *Feedback!* (Seriously, did you just shudder?)

Whether you're on the giving or the getting end of it, the prospect of feedback really can give many of us the heebie geebies.

So, join me for a three-part **EA Insights** exploration of the topic. This month, let's lay the groundwork. Next month, let's outline some steps that can make feedback giving more productive. Finally, we'll consider how to receive input well.

And, I promise, I'll try not to be too scary!

All the best,

June

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Feedback: Laying the Groundwork

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Whether we're on the giving or the getting end of feedback, just the thought of it can cause even the bravest among us to get a quick case of the heebie geebies. (I bet your mind's eye immediately pictured a less-than-pleasant feedback experience you've had. I know mine did!)



Feedback conversations should happen naturally and routinely in the workplace -- between supervisors and staff members, between peers, between the team and its clients. Similarly, feedback conversations should take place in our personal lives in a range of contexts as well. Unfortunately, though, these exchanges either don't happen or don't go off well when they do.

So, in Part 1 of this three-part series on feedback, let's lay the groundwork.

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"Quotes"

"Critique, feedback, reaction to one's work or the way they have presented it, regardless of intention, is a gift."
~Mark Brand

"Your spouse, a sibling, a friend need to read your drafts. They have to be people unafraid to tell you what sucks."
~Douglas Brunt

"Leaders cannot work in a vacuum. They may take on larger, seemingly more important roles in an organization, but this does not exclude them from asking for and using feedback. In fact, a leader arguably needs feedback more so than anyone else. It's what helps a leader respond appropriately to events in pursuit of successful outcomes."
~Jack Canfield

"Regular feedback is one of the hardest things to drive through an organization."
~Kenneth Chenault

"A great manager is someone who says, 'You come to work with me, and I'll help you be as successful as possible; I'll help you grow. I'll help

First, what is *feedback*?

Basically, *feedback* is communication about how we're doing in our efforts to reach a certain goal. Information is delivered to encourage us to continue the task in the current manner because we're doing well, OR it offers insight into how we can modify the approach in order to improve outcomes.

When viewed in this way, feedback should be a natural and comfortable occurrence, not a terror-causing event.

Second, what preliminaries set the stage for an effective feedback conversation?

For me, two R's come to mind.

Go back to the descriptors I used above for the optimal feedback setting. The goal is for the interaction to occur in a natural and comfortable environment. You can't have either of those without the first R, which is *relationship*.

Feedback without relationship usually is doomed from the start.

"Who ARE you?"

"How can you comment on my performance (or my conduct) without context and history?"

"You have ignored me for the past 6 months, why are you talking to me now?"

Input, even if the points are valid, very well may lose its meaning in the absence of relationship -- an interpersonal connection between actor and feedback provider. Think about it. You tend to be more willing to take instruction to heart when it comes from someone who's engaged with you, walked with you, and shared with you, than you are to hear what comes from a stranger or from someone who's not taken advantage of available opportunities to develop a rapport with you. Relationship moves a person from an outer circle to an inner circle of association, and in so doing it adds weight to the words of affirmation or correction regarding the task that's being tackled or the conduct exhibited.

So, feedback is most effective when delivered by people with whom we've developed a relationship.

That leads to the second R -- *respect*.

Have you ever gotten input from someone whose own behavior or performance patterns may not have lived up to the standard to which the person was attempting to hold you? In other words, you were getting feedback from someone who didn't typically practice what he or she happened to be preaching at the moment...and you knew it? Honestly, how effective was that opinion? Did the praise or the prodding make a dent? Probably not.

People value feedback from a person whom they respect. We gain respect through what we've accomplished, by how we perform, by how we conduct ourselves. Our actions, over time, show that we're credible. You see, functioning in "Do as I say do, not as I do" mode diminishes standing. People wonder why they should listen, when we don't seem follow the very guidance we're offering.

Without respect, feedback may be tolerated because of the giver's position or power, but it's likely to fall on deaf ears. The delivered impressions are not likely to be received in a way that will have a meaningful impact on the person and on his or her efforts either to continue performing well or to correct the approach and yield better results.

So, feedback is most effective when delivered by people who engender respect.

That gets us started on the journey to more fruitful feedback conversations. In Part 2, we'll address giving effective feedback. Until then, if delivering or receiving feedback productively presents a challenge for you, don't go it alone. Reach out to us at [Executive Advantage](#) for help in becoming better prepared for your feedback exchanges. [Contact us today](#). We're here to partner with you!



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you make sure you're in the right role; I'll provide the relationship for you to understand and know yourself. And I want you to be more successful than me."

~Curt Coffman

"Listen to clients, employees, and peers and stay open to their ideas, feedback, and answers. Doing so is vital to the success of any leader."

~Adena Friedman

"We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve."

~Bill Gates

"Find someone within the company who is on another team but is at a similar level or role as you to be a friend, a sounding board, and a place to go for candid feedback. Find a mentor within the company who resembles the leader you'd like to grow to be."

~Katrina Lake

"One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say."

~Bryant H. McGill

It's a challenge to grow professionally and move up the corporate ladder when you're not receiving feedback on your performance.

~John Rampton

"Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you."

~William Arthur Ward

About Executive Advantage

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