EA Insights

EXECUTIVE ADVANTAGE LLC

Quick Links

EA Home Page

About Us

Solutions for Businesses

Solutions for Professionals

News

Contact Us

Join our Mailing List

"Quotes"

"Too often we're happy to receive thanks..., accepting gratitude instead of feedback or performance measurements."
~Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen

"Feedback is the breakfast of champions."
~Ken Blanchard

"I don't read reviews, but I do get feedback from my peers and people I know, like other actors and directors and producers."
~Chadwick Boseman

"I usually tell people upfront what to expect, and that I really want their feedback and their ideas, and if they think I've got a hair out of place or food stuck in my teeth, gosh, I want to know that."
~Greg Brenneman

"No matter how good you think you are as a leader, my goodness, the people around you will have all kinds of ideas for how you can get better. So for me, the most fundamental thing about leadership is to have the humility to continue to get feedback and to try to get better - because your job is to try to help everybody else get better."
~Jim Yong Kim

"Critics only make you stronger. You have to look at what they are saying as feedback. Sometimes the feedback helps, and other times, it's just noise that can be a distraction."
~Robert Kiyosaki

"One of my passions is ... helping women to get ahead in business. For women, that feedback loop can be broken. Women won't get as much feedback from male bosses as men will get. Therefore, they have to make an extra effort, whether

Report Cards

Do you remember Report Card Day?

In some schools, once a quarter, near the end of the day, you could hear a pin drop as the teacher handed out that unmistakable folder. For others, the letter carrier delivered the envelope directly to your home. Or, as technology developed, the new came via email or at a designated login time on the school portal. Whatever the means, the end result is the same: Grades were distributed. (*You decide whether that warrants a "Yay" or an "Ugh".*)

At the core of what we all experienced was the anticipation of receiving feedback on our efforts. We, and our parents, awaited the official word about how we were doing with respect to our studies.

The butterflies we felt as children likely have not subsided much since we've become adults. While we may not get report cards, we still get feedback. The mark ups of our reports, the evaluation results after a formal presentation, the emailed comments about a deliverable, or the annual performance review all are current-day feedback forms. And, many of us do the adult equivalent of trying to beat the mail home or becoming overnight calligraphers, desperately trying to turn a "D" into a "B" in order to block the true message.

As I told a client in a recent executive coaching session, though, feedback actually can be a gift. Even when it hurts, as was the case with my client who was losing a valued customer, the offer of insight presents an opportunity to look within and to make some decisions about what to do next.

Well, that is our topic for this month's *EA Insights*. We're completing our series on feedback by examining how one might receive feedback in a useful manner.

Keep reading. It's my hope that, the next time you're on the feedback-receiving end, you'll be less likely to dodge the report card. Instead, see how you can use the comments to continue growing!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
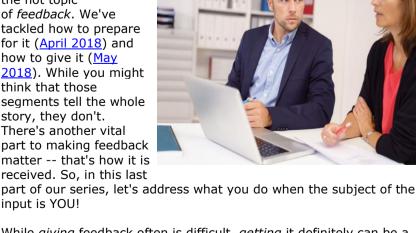Executive Advantage, LLC

Receiving Feedback: 6 Steps to Better Outcomes

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

For the last two months, we've been examining the hot topic of *feedback*. We've tackled how to prepare for it (April 2018) and how to give it (May 2018). While you might think that those segments tell the whole story, they don't. There's another vital part to making feedback matter -- that's how it is received. So, in this last part of our series, let's address what you do when the subject of the input is YOU!

While *giving* feedback often is difficult, *getting* it definitely can be a touchy proposition. No matter how experienced or confident or adept a person may appear on the outside, chances are high that the prospect of getting comments about that last assignment or performance exposes the vulnerability we all try to keep deeply hidden on the inside. Can't you just feel the nerves of the gymnast with eyes fixed on the scoreboard after a routine or the actor pacing the floor on the morning after opening night awaiting the reviews? Although on a different scale, at some point in time we all share their angst. *"Was I good?" "Did I do enough?"*

It's tough, I know. But, feedback actually can be a gift. It is possible to benefit from what's shared. Certainly, the feedback giver bears some responsibility for the usefulness of the message, but you, as receiver, play a critical part too. So, here are six steps for better outcomes as you receive feedback.

1. Invite feedback.

There's an obvious and a not-so-obvious part to this step. We begin with what you'd expect: It's important to let people know that you're open to receiving feedback. If your underlying intent is continual growth, you position yourself to do just that by being open to getting input from people who offer a different perspective on what you do and how you do it. Don't assume that people will instinctively know that you're willing to accept their insights. Very clearly give them permission to communicate with you about what they see you doing well and where you could stand to improve.

On the not-so-obvious side, note that what's coming from your mouth must match your responses when the feedback is offered. There's nothing worse than hearing someone say that she welcomes feedback and then blow a gasket or react coldly when comments actually are made. (*Did you want the input, or didn't you?*) I know that, in theory, it's easy to believe that feedback is a good thing. Well, if that's the message that's publicized, it also has to be the message that's lived out. The invitation has to be more than lip-service; it has to become practice...both when the observations present praise and when they present challenge.

2. Make it a dialogue.

Here, *dialogue* doesn't mean that the person talks, then you talk, and you walk away internalizing little. Instead, an effective feedback conversation is an exchange in which active listening occurs.

Listen to understand. Hear the words and their tone. Try to grasp the intent of the comments. Ask questions, not from a defensive posture in order to debunk anything you don't like, but to clarify what's being said so that you can transition from just hearing to achieving fuller understanding. Do your best to make the conversation worthwhile; seek to gain that person's perspective about what the issue is, what his or her evaluation is, how your performance offered a positive or negative impact, and what you can take from this experience into the future.

3. Be honest with yourself.

When folks are heaping on the praise, it's nothing for us to sit back and rehash it again and again and again. On the other hand, when a comment centers on a suggestion for improvement, we're prone to file it away quickly and disregard the input as "just one person's opinion".

To derive meaning from feedback, though, it's important to be honest with yourself. Whether you do it on the spot with a commenter who's engendered trust, or in private later as you have a man-in-the-mirror moment, engaging in self-evaluation is critical. Look truthfully at the observation, whether glowing or challenging, and assess where you stand...no, where you really stand. Dismiss what has limited value, but be discerning. Again, if your goal is ongoing development, then you should devote some time to determining, in as unbiased a manner as possible, where growth may be warranted, where work may be necessary, where perceptions may need correcting, or where you're strong and can to shine further.

4. Develop a strategy.

I'm sure this is not you, but you probably know someone who receives input well, and then...does nothing. Note that self-assessment is not the end of the process. You've also got to figure out what you're going to do with what you've learned. Create a strategy. What are the one, or two, or three key points that are to be taken from that feedback conversation and that should be acted upon? What's the specific outcome you want to see in each area? What's the best way to get you to that desired end? What steps do you need to undertake, and who else should you involve, in order to reach that goal? Unless a bona fide strategy is developed, although the feedback may be spot-on, it's useless because no significant thought is given to how to use what was shared.

5. Do something.

Strategy without action is like a computer with no power source. It's a bust.

Think about the feedback cycle at a high level. You do a piece of work, someone observes and gives you input about what you did, then you take that insight and use it to continue what you're doing well or to adjust where needed, and the cycle begins again. Essential in that process is the post-feedback action -- the doing. If you receive feedback, but then do nothing with it, the initial communication was a waste of time. The giver expressed an opinion, which may have been accepted on its face; however, the lack of movement in response to it actually showed that you discounted whatever was shared.

So, to make the most of feedback, after developing strategies for those critical lessons learned, do something. Carry out the plan that you've set so that you are able to make progress in the targeted areas.

6. Follow up on your progress.

Lastly, don't hesitate to check in on your progress periodically. Of course, you can use self-assessment to look back at the original insight and gauge how far you've come. Circling back with the feedback giver or others whom you trust also is a good way to measure progress; it also reinforces to those around you that you're serious about getting and strategically incorporating people's insights into your personal development plan.

Receiving feedback well is as much of an art as giving it well can be. However, both are essential to the growth of individuals and the effectiveness of teams. If feedback is an issue for you, isn't it time you sought some help? Let *Executive Advantage* partner with you. Contact us today.

---

that is unfortunate, good, bad, indifferent."
~Sallie Krawcheck

"Millennials tend to appreciate regular feedback because they want to feel that their work matters and that they are making a difference in the workplace. As the youngest generation at most organizations, they also tend to be hungry for growth and development opportunities."
~Kathryn Minshew

"I think of feedback as constructive, not positive or negative. You choose to do what you want with it."
~Denise Morrison

"If you get honest feedback and do nothing about it, then the feedback will stop."
~Alan Mulally

"I think it's very important to have a feedback loop, where you're constantly thinking about what you've done and how you could be doing it better."
~Elon Musk

"One of the things I've learned is to be receptive of feedback."
~Ben Silbermann

"I think by paying attention to the feedback that you get on Yelp, you can very quickly integrate it into your business... The really savvy folks out there, they don't necessarily take anything negative personally, but use it as constructive feedback and adjust their business."
~Jeremy Stoppelman

"There has to be a willingness to constantly accept critical feedback and rapidly iterate to make things better."
~Sam Yagan

About Executive Advantage

At *Executive Advantage*, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about *Executive Advantage*, contact us **online** or at **(301) 280-5950**.

View our profile on Linked in