



Dear Friend,

You Need to Talk

Have you ever said something so frequently that it becomes second-nature?

Ask any **Executive Advantage** client, and I am sure the person quickly would be able to rattle off a favorite "June-ism" or two.

For me, though, a constant in my coaching has become a request, an encouragement, and sometimes an admonition for the person with whom I'm speaking to engage in a necessary conversation. Talk with that colleague with whom you're having a personality clash. Talk with that supervisor whose assignment is unclear. Talk with that staff member whose hiring last week you're beginning to rethink.

However, of these and other critical workplace conversations, I find none to be more needed than the giving of effective feedback regarding job performance or conduct. Unfortunately, of the many supervisor or manager responsibilities required on a daily basis, giving meaningful feedback perhaps is the stickiest of them all. Oh my goodness, if I did nothing else, helping people to give (and to learn how to receive) feedback constructively would keep us in business til the cows come home! The very thought of venturing into this area, at times, produces a case of the heebie-jeebies in even the bravest soul. Yet, the need for feedback doesn't go away simply because your abdominal roller coaster takes off.

So, let's explore effective feedback together. In this month's edition of **EA Insights** we'll cover Part I -- the basics related to the what, when, and why of feedback. Then, come back next month, as we look at how to offer feedback effectively and what you do thereafter.

Let us help you get ready because...you need to talk!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Overcoming the Feedback Angst (Part I: Understanding Feedback)

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

*Blistering emails
Silence
Generalities
Comments on an annual performance review...and nothing in between*

For far too many folks, this is the extent of the job-related feedback they receive. They have no clue from day-to-day how they're doing or what will make them better.

In working with **Executive Advantage** clients, it's become clear that the generally poor state of feedback in the workplace isn't largely tied to supervisors and managers who don't care. They do care. But, for many, overcoming the angst associated with providing feedback... feedback that matters...is difficult to say the least.

So, let's begin a look at feedback that, I hope, will help make this an easier proposition for you.

The **WHAT**

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"Quotes"

"There are no failures only feedback."
~Richard Bandler

"We want feedback from all those who are closely involved in every aspect of the process[.]"
~Lisa Bridges

"It's important as we bring this system forward that we make sure supervisors are properly educated and trained in what it means to evaluate performance[.] We have to assure people that we're going to have adequate feedback[.]"
~Michael Chertoff

"The main thing is that you have [someone] that believes in you and who will give you the feedback that you need to produce a good [product]."
~Christopher Darden

"[W]e continuously look...for feedback on our strategic development initiatives. The end result is a product suite that evolves with our clients' businesses."
~Tom Gavin

"I can go to him and talk to him about anything... and I know he'll give me honest feedback and help me move down the right path."
~Taurean Green

"[It] is intended to give informal feedback and not be



Feedback is information. It's not just any information, though. *Feedback* is insight into how a person is doing in his efforts to reach a certain goal. It's information that's relayed for a purpose -- to be used either to support a continuation of what is being done well or to encourage a modification of a person's approach so that future results can be better.

With that said, feedback, by its very nature, requires the giver to GIVE something of value to the recipient. Grunts...off-handed comments such as, "Don't worry about it. I'll tell you when you're messing up."...or even a "Good job!" without elaboration, just don't cut it. Why? This isn't true feedback. None of these examples really provides the person on the other end with any meaningful inkling into why the work is being carried out well or where adjustments would assist with improving the outcomes. The bottom line is that, for a communication to qualify as *feedback*, it must involve the sharing of worthwhile information about the nature of the person's efforts.

The *WHEN*

Sometimes people struggle with when to offer feedback to a member of the team.

However, effective supervisors give feedback when they...
See great work.

Recognize that someone's struggling.
Arrive at milestones for an assignment or project.
Uncover problems or notice repeated errors.
Are asked by a staff member.
Have someone working in a new role.
Observe a staff member in action.
Meet with a team member.

In other words, I believe that the answer to the *WHEN* question is that feedback should be a constant part of the supervisory function. Workplace feedback shouldn't be so infrequent as to cause a staff member to faint at its receipt. Nor should workplace feedback be offered only at formal review times, leaving the person in the dark for the other 3, 6, or 12 months of the year. Feedback should be ongoing.

Don't misunderstand, though. A call for continual feedback doesn't mean that a supervisor stands over someone's shoulder nit-picking every step. Rather, the recommendation of ongoing feedback implies that it should become a natural part of the supervisor-staff member relationship. As you see something, say something...and that *something* is input into the excellent, the good, the potential challenge, and the poor.

The *WHY*

From the *WHAT* and *WHEN* discussions, I hope you're beginning to see the *WHY*.

We give feedback so that people know where they stand at any given point in time. We give feedback in order not to let good work go unnoticed. Offering feedback helps people know what they're doing well -- in terms of job-related performance or conduct -- so that they can continue or build upon those efforts. We also give people feedback in order not to let a struggle extend beyond its useful term or to allow poor work to go unnoticed. Instead, at those times, we offer insight about actual or possible problems so that they don't become the norm and so that people know where change is warranted in order to prevent their (and perhaps your) effort to achieve the desired outcome from being derailed.

In the long run, the provision of feedback in the regular course of business helps the organization to meet more of its goals because it helps people stay or get on track; they know where they're going, how they're doing, and what to tighten up. And, offering meaningful feedback also contributes to a healthy work environment because people are informed about strengths and challenges and, as a result, are encouraged and empowered to grow.

How do you measure up when it comes to giving meaningful feedback? Are you seeing workplace goals being met, and are you contributing to the continual development of your staff? If you could benefit from some personal feedback, I invite you to call on **Executive Advantage**. Let us help you overcome your feedback angst! **Contact us today**.



And, don't forget to join us next month for Part II of *Overcoming the Feedback Angst* as we cover the *HOW* of feedback.

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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.

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heavy-handed. It is to recognize efforts already in place through positive reinforcement."
~Greg Knudsen

"Right now I know I have a lot of things to work on, ...and it was nice to get feedback on all of them[.] Thinking gold is good. I'm staying positive and feeling good[.]"
~Michelle Kwan

"We constantly listen to feedback from our users with the goal of providing the best...experience available[.]"
~Karen Mahon

*"I think we got some good experience and learned some valuable lessons[. *** We] got some great feedback on where we are at the moment."*
~Rich Manning

"It's exciting[.] To have them see it and hear their feedback, that's worth its weight in gold."
~Glen Murray

"It was a great way to examine what I do and to receive appropriate feedback in order to become an even better and more complete educator."
~Sharyn Stein

"What is the shortest word in the English language that contains the letters abcdef? Answer: Feedback. Don't forget that feedback is one of the essential elements of good communication."
~Unknown