

Skills 360 – Giving and Receiving Feedback (Part 2)

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of feedback do you find useful in your work?
2. Do you have a preferred way of receiving feedback on your work?
3. When you receive feedback that isn't useful, how do you deal with it?

Vocabulary

Mind starts racing: if your "mind starts racing," you think quickly about something because you are excited, worried, or scared; "My mind sure started racing when my doctor left a message on my answering machine."

Common reaction to: a normal or usual way that people respond to something; "Denial and disbelief are common reactions to very bad news."

Constructively: in a positive, helpful, or useful way; "It is important to approach problem-solving constructively, rather than just moaning and complaining."

To take something personally: if you "take things personally," you interpret a statement as critical of you; "When someone critiques your designs, don't take it personally."

To hinder: to stop something from happening or to slow its progress; "Todd's illness has really hindered our work on this big software development project."

Tone: the way someone says something or the sound in their voice that shows feeling; "Fiona's tone sure was happy when she announced her resignation. I wonder what her plans are."

The urge to: a feeling of wanting or having to do something; "I have the urge to take the rest of the afternoon off but I know it's not a good idea."

Defensive: if you act "defensive," you are protecting yourself from what you see as criticism; "When an employee becomes very defensive about his performance, it is a sign that he's not working as hard as he should."

Clarification: making an idea easier to understand or making someone understand correctly; "Yes, I'm just calling to get some clarification about the warranty policy on a laptop I bought recently."

To be upfront: to be honest and direct; "The salesman was not completely upfront with me about some of the used car's problems."

Actionable: if advice, criticism, goals, or feedback are "actionable," they are specific enough to have clear actions or activities that follow; "A good manager provides actionable advice to his employees and gives them the tools they need to do the job."

To recognize: to see or notice what something or who someone is; "Few economists recognized the signs of the coming recession."

To apply: to use something in a situation, such as knowledge, skills, or methods; "Coop education programs give students the chance to apply what they're learning in job situations."

Open-minded: accepting of new ideas or beliefs; "An open-minded manager is willing to listen to what his employees have to say, even when it is critical of the company."

Lines of communication: the ways of communicating between groups or people, often described as "open" or "closed;" "I really feel that we need to make the lines of communication between different offices much more open."

Transcript

Welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host Tim Simmons, and today I want to help you *receive* feedback with a positive attitude.

Before we jump into the lesson, let me tell you about a really awesome promo we're running for our 7th anniversary. This year we're going all out and giving away not one, but two iPad Minis – one to a new premium member and the second to an existing member who renews. Head over to BusinessEnglishPod.com to get started.

Okay now, on with the lesson. How do you feel when you hear something like this from your manager: "Listen, I really need to talk to you about the work you've been doing on that big project..." If you're like most people, your heart starts beating a little faster and your **mind starts racing**. In fact, this is a **common reaction** to the idea that we're about to receive feedback. We naturally don't like it. But it's *important*, so we need to learn how to receive feedback **constructively**.

Receiving feedback properly begins with thinking about feedback positively. First of all, if someone is giving you direct and immediate feedback, it's a sign of good communication and a healthy work environment. The alternative is *not* getting feedback, or getting feedback too late to use it constructively. That's not a good situation. How would you feel if, six months after finishing a project, a colleague told you that your boss wasn't really happy with your work?

Next, when you get feedback, understand that it's not *personal*, but about producing better results. Humans have a **natural tendency to take** feedback **personally**, but that will only **hinder** your performance. Focus on the ideas in the feedback, rather than the way the feedback is given or your relationship with the person giving it. Don't think "why is he really telling me this?" or "why does he have to say it with that **tone**?" Instead, think "what exactly is he saying and how can I use that to improve my work." Not taking things personally also means resisting the **urge** to become **defensive**. Just listen carefully and ask for **clarification** if you don't understand. Try not to start every response with "but..." That's a sign of defensiveness.

Now, sometimes it's true that feedback is not delivered effectively. If this happens, **be upfront** about it. If a manager is constantly criticizing what you, tell him that you need the feedback differently. Good feedback is specific, so ask for specifics if you don't get any. Good feedback is also **actionable**, so if it's not obvious how you can *use* the feedback, then ask how. So if someone says "That report really needs some work," you can say something like "is there any specific section that you think could be improved?"

Now, we've been focusing on negative feedback, or feedback about what you need to do better or differently. And people naturally focus on this kind of feedback. But you shouldn't forget to **recognize** *positive* feedback when you get it. Let the praise inspire and motivate you. Build on that positive feedback and learn to **apply** your strengths in different areas. And if you really feel you don't receive much positive feedback, then ask for it, like this: "Could you tell me what you thought worked really well in the report?"

So, stay positive and **open-minded** when you receive feedback, keep **lines of communication** clear, and you'll be able to use the feedback constructively. And finally, pay attention to how people are giving you feedback. Whether you think they're doing it well or not, you can learn how to provide better feedback to others.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the **myBEOonline.com** website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

Review

1. Why does Tim talk about your heart beating faster and your mind racing?
 - A To explain the common response to feedback
 - B To emphasize the importance of organized feedback
 - C To show what happens when we don't have enough feedback
 - D To describe the feeling of someone who has to give feedback

2. According to Tim, receiving feedback properly starts with thinking about feedback _____.
 - A Personally
 - B Critically
 - C Positively
 - D Specifically

3. What does Tim say is the purpose of feedback?
 - A To motivate
 - B To produce better results
 - C To maintain open lines of communication
 - D To instill a sense of discipline

4. Tim advises against starting every response to feedback with the word "but". Why?
 - A It creates a negative mood.
 - B It is a sign of defensiveness.
 - C It is grammatically incorrect.
 - D It hinders progress.

5. Which of the following does Tim say that you can or should ask for when receiving feedback? [Select all that apply.]
 - A How you can use feedback
 - B How often you will receive feedback
 - C Positive feedback
 - D The chance to present your opinion
 - E Why the person is using a certain tone of voice
 - F Specifics
 - G Clarification

6. What does Tim imply about positive feedback?
 - A It is less motivating than negative feedback.
 - B Many people don't recognize it.
 - C It is only necessary for people who lack confidence.
 - D It can help identify your weaknesses.

Review Answers

1. Why does Tim talk about your heart beating faster and your mind racing?

A To explain the common response to feedback

2. According to Tim, receiving feedback properly starts with thinking about feedback _____.

C Positively

3. What does Tim say is the purpose of feedback?

B To produce better results

4. Tim advises against starting every response to feedback with the word "but". Why?

B It is a sign of defensiveness.

5. Which of the following does Tim say that you can or should ask for when receiving feedback? [CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY]

A How you can use feedback

C Positive feedback

F Specifics

G Clarification

6. What does Tim imply about positive feedback?

B Many people don't recognize it.

Online Practice

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice:**

