



I was venting to my colleague one day about our supervisor and how I was just so frustrated because they weren't giving me what I needed to do my job effectively.

No matter how many times I asked and pled and tried to persuade, it wasn't working.

My coworker, very compassionate and wise said, 'well if it's not working, why do you keep doing it?;

Wise, right? But at the moment, I wasn't ready to hear it.

I was frustrated.

I wanted to blame my supervisor.

I wasn't trying to be constructive.

I wanted some sympathy that everything I did was right and everything they did was wrong.

But of course that wasn't benefiting anybody.

So when I was able to step back from that moment and really appreciate those words of wisdom, it changed not just my experience with that supervisor at that job, it was a turning point in my career.

That's the power of critical feedback.

Unfortunately a lot of leaders shy away from it because critical feedback can be hard and people might react a certain way to it.

The easy way out is just to avoid it all together.

But I'm not interested in the easy way out and neither are you. You're here because you want to learn how to address these difficult conversations to get to a good outcome.

That's what we're going to do today.

I do want to clarify by critical feedback, I mean critical both in terms of importance but also critical in the sense that you are working with someone on something that they need to improve.

Sometimes people refer to this as bad feedback and I challenge them on that because to me bad feedback is feedback that's not effective, and good feedback is feedback that's effective whether somebody's praising you or helping you work through something.

It matters because in learning how to do this, you're going to be able to help people grow and reach outcomes.



We'll focus a lot in this session on you being the supervisor and giving critical feedback to your staff, but there are lots of opportunities for critical feedback outside of that relationship. From you to a colleague, even from you to your own supervisor.

We'll talk just a bit about that nuance.

Most of what we talk about is really going to be relevant no matter who you're giving this critical feedback to. By having these conversations- and I'm going to keep using that word conversation because that's what critical feedback should be. It should be a conversation. It's not a reprimand or a talking to. It's a conversation between professionals. You're showing them with your words and your actions that honesty and accountability and transparency are values and that they matter. Finally when people know where they stand and they have the opportunity to grow and somebody who is invested in helping them grow, it increases engagement and it helps with staff retention.

In this Gallup survey almost everybody said they appreciate the value in critical feedback, but so few of them are getting the amount of feedback and the quality of feedback that they're looking for.

Even though people might be defensive and they might act a certain way deep down what they're telling us is they want this feedback.

It's challenging for most people but let's not worry about most people. Let's worry about you. I want you to think about what is challenging about this for you and in your mindset what might you shift to start to make this easier for you?

There are a lot of things to consider. You might want to pause this slide and just take a look through and maybe screenshot it because ultimately like any conversation, there's a lot that goes into how that conversation is framed.

We want to start with the end in mind. The end, the ultimate goal of feedback is growth. You're trying to get to a certain goal or a certain type of growth.

You need to remember that most people aren't used to getting good quality critical feedback. They might not embrace it and they might not love it and they might not be grateful for it in the moment or ever.

That's their choice.

They don't have to be grateful for it.

That's not on you. Your role is to provide it and if they choose to accept it and they choose to use the wisdom and the care that you are putting in to help them grow, then that will benefit them.

If they choose not to then that is their choice. If it bottles down to a performance issue,



then that becomes another conversation about how to proceed.

You have to keep in mind that you're not always right, whatever that means, right?

It's not about being right, but you might be giving someone feedback that's really not accurate or it's really not that helpful.

You're not infallible.

Even with your best intentions, it's okay for them to reject the feedback because it's perfectly fine for people to disagree on the best way forward.

Your modeling is going to be essential both in how you're giving it and how you're receiving it.

If you're trying to create this feedback culture on your team, but as soon as one of your staff gives you feedback you react in a certain way, it's really going to undermine what you're trying to do.

Make sure you're modeling when you give as well as receive what this process is like.

Other things to consider is what is this relationship?

If it's staff to supervisor or supervisor to staff there's a certain way to go about it.

It might be getting into performance issues and you might have to have HR involved at some point.

That's a whole level of consideration that's not going to be present. For example, if you're having this conversation with a colleague or even your boss.

Is it solicited or unsolicited?

Are you just offering to your boss something that you don't like and you want them to change or are they asking you and how is your response different in that way?

Will they be open to it?

You shouldn't assume but if you have a history and pattern with this person, then you might have a sense of how open they have been to receiving feedback. When it comes to a colleague or a boss, you might make a decision at some point to say, 'this conversation isn't really going to do any good. In fact, it's only going to cause further harm.'

I hope that's not the case, but unfortunately it often is.

If you're a supervisor having these conversations with your staff, they don't get much choice, because it is your job to give them this critical feedback. If they're not open to it,



then that becomes a conversation as well.

Is it your opinion or is it fact?

A big challenge with critical feedback is we often present it as fact, and that's where a lot of the defensiveness comes. When we say something like, 'your writing wasn't very good quality' or 'the presentation wasn't very engaging'. That's really subjective.

You want to try to frame your feedback in what you're noticing and what the impact of that is.

Instead of saying, you know, 'your presentation wasn't very engaging' which is so personal, you can say something like, 'when I looked at the clients, three of them were on their phones and one of them was half asleep and they didn't ask any questions. I was concerned about their engagement. What did you experience?'

Or 'after the presentation, nobody bought our product. What happened there?'

Try to stick to some facts and not just give what you think is a fact but is actually an opinion.

A designation I want to make here is that feedback is different than just enforcing a policy. A lot of times we equate that with feedback. When you have to talk to someone because they're late all the time or they never get the reports in on time, that's not really feedback. You're just reminding them of a policy they're not following.

That's really not what critical feedback is. Critical feedback is really digging into something to get to the bottom of it and help that person grow.

We're going to talk about what's really important later on when we get to performance issues of determining if it's an issue of effort or ability or attitude, we'll get to that later.

But like any conversation, think about what the other person needs. Cater your conversation to their style. Be clear about the why, what the purpose of this conversation is and why it is it.

You're really trying to involve them in this conversation.

There's a lot of coaching that goes into effective critical feedback.

Not just, 'you're doing this bad thing and I'm going to tell you how to do this good thing' because you're not always going to be around to help them throughout these moments.

You want them to learn to grow and support themselves, too.

Having these conversations where you ask,



*What do you think went well?*

*What do you think didn't go so well?*

*Here's what I experienced. What did you experience?*

It's important to determine if this is a pattern or if it's an anomaly. If this is somebody who does something so exceptionally well all the time and one time they don't is it something worth bringing up?

These are the calls you have to make. It's not always clear. You do want to address things quickly, but sometimes it's better not to address them.

If you have the sense and a lot of times, it's just a sense, you won't know for sure that this was a one-off and they're going to go back to their regular wonderful performance and it's going to do more harm than good to hone in on this one instance.

Always focus on going forward.

What did they learn from it? What might they do differently going forward? What kind of support do they need to do it differently going forward?

For a lot of people they're already feeling it if they messed up, if they made a mistake, if the thing they were working on didn't go well, and in a lot of cases they're already feeling it. You don't want to add to that. You want to give them an opportunity to share that.

*How are you feeling about how it went?*

If they say, 'I'm the worst! It was terrible', you want to help them work through it and then talk about what went wrong and how to do it better.

People love to say feedback isn't personal but it is. It is your own interpretation of what is going on based on what you're looking for, what your values are, the lens that you see the world in- all of that stuff is so relative.

So make it personal.

*Here's what I saw. What did you see?*

*Here's what I experienced. What did you experience?*

There's a lot that goes into this and we're going to talk more about this throughout the rest of the lessons.

Look back into your own personal examples of some past critical feedback you've given and received and some future critical feedback that you've been maybe sitting on that it's time for you to give and you might need some support around that.



So the most important question for you is, how do you plan to increase the quality and the quantity of the critical feedback you give?