

COOPERATIVE RESOLUTION PROGRAM

HANDLING FEEDBACK WITH GRACE AND DIGNITY

Receiving job performance feedback is never easy; unless you know how. Feedback can only be as effective as the person on the receiving end wants to make it. In the best-run companies, customer complaints are considered a “gift” because they point out areas where a process can be improved; which then enables the company to better meet its performance goals. The same is true for individuals on the receiving end of “constructive feedback”. Constructively feedback can help you better meet your individual performance goals and increase your value as an employee. Here are a few guidelines that may help:

- ✚ **Listen.** Concentrate on what is being said. Practice effective listening skills (e.g., positive body language, facial expressions, gestures, etc.)
- ✚ **Try to suspend judgment.** Constructive feedback often triggers an emotional response and defensiveness. Keep your emotions under control. Do not get mad. Rather, keep your cool so you can understand the feedback and figure out what to do differently in the future.
- ✚ **Take time before responding.** You are getting your supervisor’s perspective; which may be different than yours. Even if you disagree, this is what they think. Take a step back and ask yourself: what have you done to contribute to this impression? Is this an accurate reflection of what you are trying to accomplish? If not, what might you change?
- ✚ **Do not justify.** Do not try to explain the reason behind the behavior or performance in question. Your task in receiving the feedback is to understand the impact of the behavior or performance from your supervisor’s perspective.
- ✚ **Ask for examples that illustrate the feedback.** Ask your supervisor to provide you with examples of the behavior or performance that created the need for the constructive feedback. Ask him/her what they might want differently?
 - For example, if there is a communication problem, how would he/she like to communicate better – in-person vs. email, regularly vs. at project bench-marks?
 - If there are goals that have not been achieved, confirm what goals aren’t being met and ask specifically what your supervisor’s expectations are for you to meet those goals.
- ✚ **Explore alternatives.** Suggest what you might have done differently that would have been more effective. Ask your supervisor for suggestions.
- ✚ **Define a concrete action plan.** Schedule a meeting with your supervisor after the feedback session to decide on a plan going forward. Feedback is only useful if it’s used. How do you want the next six months to differ from the last six? What one goal would add the most value now and take priority in the short term? What can you do to ensure the next review is a positive one?