



Four Steps for Handling Critical Feedback to Improve Your Career

Hearing constructive criticism doesn't have to be an uncomfortable or negative experience when you choose to take it as an opportunity to grow your skills. Here are four steps you should follow while getting critical feedback so you can grow your career and succeed!



1. Gut-Check Your First Reaction

When you first start to receive critical feedback, don't give in to your first knee-jerk reaction. It will be easy to automatically get defensive or shut down from the information you're hearing. It's vital to "gut-check" your first reaction as you receive constructive criticism. It's best to try not reacting at all! If you feel the need to immediately get defensive or take the feedback personally, you'll likely miss out on the opportunity to learn and grow from it. In fact, the experience, if you don't gut-check your first reaction, might even make you bitter towards your work or resentful towards your manager.

In almost every instance, critical feedback isn't given as an attack or even aimed at you personally. While it's easy to take it that way, doing a gut-check on your first reaction will help you separate the feedback from your emotions.

Taking a moment to pause your emotions and gut-check your first reaction will help you shift your mindset when receiving critical feedback. You'll be able to keep your emotions in check so you can absorb what you're being told without letting an emotional reaction get the best of you.





2. Listen to Understand

Much like “gut-checking” your first reaction, it’s important to listen with the intention of understanding rather than to respond. When you receive constructive criticism, it is almost always because your manager wants to help you improve - and improve the efforts you contribute to the organization.

If you only listen to the feedback to respond defensively, you’ll miss out on the opportunity to learn and grow. When you listen to understand, you’ll be able to have a productive conversation about the issue and how improvements can be made.

At this point in the conversation, you should avoid over-analyzing or questioning your manager’s critical feedback; instead, focus on understanding their comments and perspective. You should also consider giving the benefit of the doubt here—after all, it can sometimes be challenging to give tough feedback to another person. Be aware that whoever is giving you feedback might be nervous or may not be expressing their ideas as clearly as they’d like. When you take the time to truly listen to what the other person is telling you, you’ll both be able to have real dialogue about it moving forward.



3. Ask Questions for Clarity

After you’ve listened to understand, you can start asking questions for clarity on the areas for improvement. However, avoid turning this into a debate—when this happens, it’s too easy for emotional reactions to take over the situation, and it won’t be easy to make the experience a learning opportunity.

- Ask for specific examples to help you understand the issue.
- Acknowledge the facts that cannot be disputed. If you were given a concrete example of the issue, don’t try to debate it. Take responsibility for it and prepare to make the improvements.
- Ask if this is an isolated or ongoing issue. Is this a mistake you’ve only made once, or has this been happening for a while?
- Ask for concrete solutions and improvements in the feedback. This will help you and your manager make an action plan on resolving the issue.



4. Request Time to Follow-up

As the conversation comes to an end, you must articulate your plan for changes you plan to make moving forward and schedule a time to follow up on how those changes are going. This follow-up will allow you to continue the conversation, ask more questions, and plan next steps for how you can continue to improve.

Sometimes, hearing constructive feedback can make you aware of gaps or weaknesses you have without even knowing. However, becoming aware of these weak spots is a great way to start improving—ignorance isn't bliss when it comes to work success!

About EG Workforce Solutions

We've been in this business for decades and have developed a deep network of professional connections. Whether they're companies looking for talent, job seekers looking for work, or an up-and-coming store in need of some temporary help, we know the right people to bridge the gap between the hiring and the hired.

But what's more, we get to know people. From employers hiring to candidates looking, we take the time to listen and learn. We hear your likes, talents, and needs. We gain an understanding, and with it, we're able to facilitate lasting relationships between businesses and people.