The Peer Feedback Model

We've been asked so many times, "What about giving feedback to peers? Or even to my boss?" It's a great question, because our feedback model, with that wonderfully necessary and challenging 4th step, just doesn't seem to translate. It takes nothing more than asking yourself how you'd feel about being on the receiving end from a peer to know that it won't have the same effect.

Why is that? We cover that, as well as what to do about it, in this cast on How To Give Feedback to Peers and Bosses. Yes, bosses are also covered by this method, because it's so non-confrontational, but we don't feel strongly about endorsing it as fully for bosses as we do for peers.

Listen in, and you'll learn why and how.

This has taken us longer than some folks would have wanted. Almost every time we talk about feedback someone asks for "the peer version." We didn't want to deliver it too early, because we feel that the real focus managers ought to have is on their teams, their directs.

Frankly, there are days when we're with clients where we're tired of hearing how much an organization is struggling, but it's never the manager whom we're talking to that's the problem, it's never their team. It's always a peer, or a boss, or someone else. It's always someone else. "Go fix THEM." "Let's give THEM feedback." "My team is fine." The fact is organizations don't change, individuals change. With enough such change, the organization ends up BEING changed. As managers we have a responsibility to worry about the I, me, my first. It's the old saying, "When something goes wrong in your organization, look for the cause of the problem in increasingly larger concentric circles around your own desk."

We're hoping that long time listeners will rededicate themselves to delivering feedback to their directs - using the original model - as they think about how to best use the peer model.

And now's a good time to point out that we ARE calling it the

PEER model, even though it's also intended for bosses. The reason we do that is that adjusting feedback for one's boss isn't easily done. Influencing up in an organization with adjusting feedback is not a trivial matter. Often, folks get a hold of the model and want to apply it to where their pain points are, and that means their boss... but that's not where we believe the best value lies.

Can you use this model for bosses? YES - we recommend it. SHOULD you use it as often as you want? NO. Discretion is the better part of valor.

We're going to flip this guidance around a little bit, since surely many thousands of our listeners are already quite familiar with the feedback model. Let's START with a stripped down How To, then discuss some important considerations, and finally give some examples.

1. **The Model How To**
2. **Some Considerations**
3. **Some Examples**

We'll end with a suggestion for how this model can help with the primary feedback model in a clever way.

1. The Model How To.

The two steps are:

a. **State the behavior.**

Just like the original model, we start by identifying the behavior we've noted. And whaddaya know, it sounds like,

"When you..."

b. **Describe the impact.**

And, just like the original model, you follow their behavior with a description of the results of their behavior. And it's simple, it sounds just like the original: "...here's what happens...." However, you needn't pile it on. 1 or 2 impacts are enough. They'll get the picture.

That's it - just those two steps. Basically, it's the core of the original model without asking first or asking for change afterwards.

If you've used the original model, you can apply this one right away, right now.

2. Some Considerations.

We think it will be helpful for us to share a couple of additional points here, including what to do about potential responses from a peer (or, yes, boss).

It's still about behavior. This is so important. Folks, if you lose the focus on behavior, don't come crying to us about how this peer model doesn't work. Remember: behavior is believable. But, so often with peers, we've seen it happen where we get relaxed a bit, we start talking not about behaviors but about characterizations. We don't talk about failure to return voicemails, we talk about showing disrespect. We don't talk about fast turnarounds, we talk about "service mentality." We don't talk about rearranging one's schedule and agreeing to a tough compromise, we talk about "collaborative spirit." You can't "DO" disrespect, or service mentality, or collaborative spirit. When we give feedback, we want to focus on what we want to start or stop... things the recipient can DO.

Remember positives. We have yet to have a single question from someone asking for how to give peer feedback for POSITIVE feedback. This is what scares us about this model. Remember that we ask everyone to start giving feedback with POSITIVES, or affirming feedback. That's a good rule here too. The fact is, you aren't as good as you think you are, and if you go around passing out negative feedback, you'll become even less than they think you are. LOOK for positives, and you'll see them everyday. And if you see them, share them.

We eliminated step one, asking if they're open to it. That's because we're not going to ask them to change it or continue it.

We eliminated step four, because we haven't the influence. Think of this shared insight, versus guidance.

If it's adjusting feedback, it would be great if they asked what they could do differently, wouldn't it? Yes it would, and your answer depends upon how they respond. If you perceive that their response is pretty neutral or certainly negative, simply say, "Just thought I'd share - your call." Or, "wouldn't presume to suggest - your call." If they seem genuinely interested in help, you can respond with, "your call. One thing that might help is..." Note that there is NO BUT there!!!!

3. Some Examples.

Hey, you know, when you come in late to our joint meetings, it kind of throws things off, and we get behind a bit.

Partner, when you pull an all-nighter and brief that well, it sure makes me glad we're working together. Thanks.

When you tell Ben that he "better watch out" it scares him, and he becomes ineffective, and I wish you'd have come to me.

When you tell me you'll have it to me, and then don't follow through, I end up with egg on my face to the boss.

And a final point: the tone of these - the relaxed, peer to peer voice, the lack of confrontation, the easiness, the casualness of it - that's the tone we recommended all along. The use of the peer model can make you even better delivering feedback to your team.

That's it. When you... here's what happens. Tread lightly with the boss, and deliver it with some ease.

Wrap Up

1. **The Model How To**

2. **Some Considerations**

3. **Some Examples**