

Stay with the Facts, Not the Person

"Look, this job wasn't done correctly and only a very sloppy person who doesn't pay attention would have let that go through!"

It's often a temptation to pull in the whole kitchen sink when all you need to criticize is the faucet. We sometimes get carried away and attack the *person*—their ability, intentions, smarts, etc.—when all that needs to be discussed is what *thing* or *process* went wrong.

"Well, this job went wrong. Somehow it was allowed to go through. It would help to figure out why so we can fix it."

Getting at the Truth

Behavior is predictable, given certain kinds of circumstances. What do you think people normally do when they're accused of something, criticized, or asked to discuss something incriminating? Wouldn't they naturally be self-protective and careful of what they'd say? Wouldn't *you*?

In one-on-one encounters where the subject is incriminating—like finding out why or how someone goofed or uncovering a weak link in the system—you as truth seeker need to counter the usual self-protective responses with some strategic moves to get to what you want.

Describe the Expected Response

Before you start, clear the air and surprise him/her.

"I was thinking before you came in about how / would feel if someone asked *me* to talk about. . . and asked me about X and Y. I guess I'd be pretty careful with my answers. Is that how you feel?"

This opens the conversation on a healthier note of allowing for people's natural tendencies. It sounds understanding. It helps the other person feel safer and encourages them to tell you how they feel before you go for the hard information. Then you can deal with fears, anxiety, reluctance to "tattle," and so on.

Tell What You Want to Know and Why

Your intention has very much to do with *how*, and *if*, someone will answer you openly. If the reason sounds useful and valuable to the ongoing good of the business or the group, you have begun to provide motivation. The other person can then select from what you want to know about and feel in some control at the same time that they answer you.