

Don't Be Defensive

The one thing people expect when you're called in for criticism is that you'll look and feel guilty. Beware! That invites them to attack. Continue to explain what you did, why you did it, etc., factually, leaving **the** door open to admit mistakes or handle further discussion. But don't let the session deteriorate into a personal attack on you and who you are; just on what you did or didn't do.

Don't Counter-Punch

With your "dukes" either clenched or up in front of your face, don't respond by fighting back. Though you're tempted, do none of these:

"It's not a good system, anyway."

"Your objection isn't valid . . ."

"It's such a useless task . . ."

"What about when Jack did that?"

Stay with the listening. No comment, yet.

Get Specific

Take it in steps. First, be sure what the exact nature of the critique is:

"Could you please explain what you mean by 'unfinished'?"

"How, exactly, had you hoped it would look?"

This shows willingness to listen *and* gives you time to find out what the critique is about, *precisely*.

Ask for Suggestions

It's crucial that you impart that you want to *improve*, NOT only defending that you did nothing wrong. People often have very different views of "well done." Your boss's view must prevail. Ask:

"How would you handle it?"

"What format would be better?"

"Could you show me something that would demonstrate more of what you mean?"

Understand the Directions

Words like "maybe more of" or "not effective enough" or "too vague" don't help you do a better job next time. Find out exactly what is meant, with demonstration. Sometimes the boss is dissatisfied but