


# Communicating Criticism Effectively

August 26, 2004



**Communicating Criticism Effectively**

Charlene Traynor  
of Traveling Coaches, Inc.  
August 26, 2004 at 2:00 pm  
Grand Canyon 3, 4 (COMM7)



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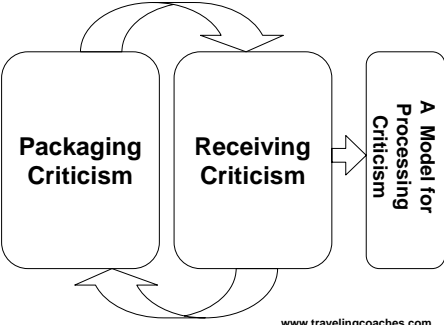
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**Session Overview**



**Packaging Criticism**      **Receiving Criticism**      **A Model for Processing Criticism**

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**Session Overview**



**Packaging Criticism**      **Receiving Criticism**      **A Model for Processing Criticism**

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# Communicating Criticism Effectively

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## Assume

- They don't want to hear it.
- They won't like what you have to say.
- They will defend their position.
- They will challenge you.
- They will not agree with you.



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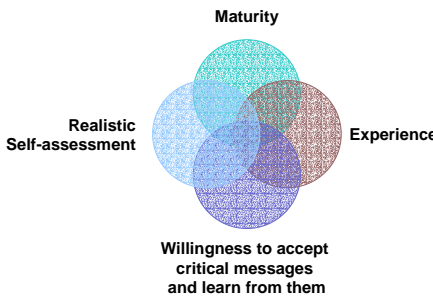
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## Factors




Maturity

Realistic Self-assessment

Experience

Willingness to accept critical messages and learn from them



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## Be Tactful

- Keep in mind the emotional impact the message will have on the receiver.
- Be respectful.
- Keep their dignity intact.
- Be careful of being "honest, straightforward – telling it like it is."
- Be wary of "I'm going to tell you this for your own good."
  - Using these types of disclaimers is self serving. It can also be mean-spirited and hurtful.
- Plan the location of where you will deliver the message.
  - Critical comments should be delivered in a private, non-threatening, neutral location. Never subject people to public embarrassment by confronting them in the presence of others.



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# Communicating Criticism Effectively

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## Be Assertive, not Aggressive

- Avoid *YOU* statements.
- Use I and We messages.

**You are wrong.**

**VS.**

**I don't agree.**

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## Be Assertive, not Aggressive

- Avoid *YOU* statements.
- Use I and We messages.

**You violated our policy.**

**VS.**

**Tell me what it means when our policies are violated.**

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## Be Assertive, not Aggressive


- Avoid *YOU* statements.
- Use I and We messages.

**Why did you do this? It is not what I asked for.**

**VS.**

**Help me understand what happened / why it was done this way.**

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# Communicating Criticism Effectively

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 **Identify the Positive**

- Blend critical comments with very clear positive statements.
- Avoid the word “but” between statements.
- Use the person’s name.
- Negative statements should never stand alone. Positive statements can and should.
  - Don’t communicate with your teams only when something is wrong. Increase these types of talks.



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 **Depersonalize the Message**

- Assess your own emotional state. If angry, it may be better to postpone the session.
- Examine the true intent of your message.
  - Is it emotionally influenced? (intended to punish, threaten, intimidate, show how smart you are and how stupid the other person is)
- Avoid comments that may be personal.
- Be in solution mode – don’t blame.
- Focus on what happened – not on who did it.
- Focus on what you want them to do differently.
- Describe behavior, events, standards, procedures, expectations and advantages.



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 **Provide Suggestions for Corrective Action**

- It’s not enough to just tell someone what they did wrong. This is shallow and incomplete.
- Making recommendations or corrective options contributes to creating a positive outcome.



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**Don't Dwell on the Past**

- Never bring up previous criticisms.
- Do not harbor grudges.



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**Session Overview**



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**Seek Honest Feedback**

- Most valuable information you can receive
  - Has positive impact on performance
  - Important for career growth
  - Helps us see how we are perceived by others

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# Communicating Criticism Effectively

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 **Seven areas in which to seek evaluation and critical comments:**

1. Quality of your work
2. Ability to control costs and address budget concerns
3. Ability to meet deadlines
4. Overall skills in critical thinking and problem solving
5. Quality of your decision making
6. The depth of your creativity
7. Skill levels in personal organization (conflict resolution, customer service, working collaboratively and communication)



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 **Separate your *work* from your *self*:**

- Give others permission to disagree with you.
- Don't shoot the messenger.
- Just because they have critical comments doesn't mean they reject everything that you do.



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 **Accept critical comments with a commitment to learn**

- It can help you...
  - ...better understand what others think
  - ...consider alternatives
  - ...get a better view of the big picture
  - ...see how others' priorities differ from your own



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 **Lower the Stakes**

- Every discussion is not a battle that must be won.
- There is no need to quit, take yourself off the project or refuse to support someone else's efforts just because things don't go your way.



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 **Depersonalize the Issue**

- Take the **who** out of it and focus on the **what**.
- It's not about **me**....it's about the **work**.



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 **Seek Solutions**

- "Help me understand how I could have done this differently"
- "What are some options for correcting or handling this type of situation?"
- "May I hear your thoughts or ideas on a better way of dealing with this situation?"



**Look at your critics as allies, not adversaries.**

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# Communicating Criticism Effectively

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**Listen for Accuracy, not Emotion**

- People often listen from a position of preconceived perceptions.
- Many determine ahead of time what they are going to hear.
- They use selective listening.

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**An Effective Model for Processing Critical Comments**

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# Communicating Criticism Effectively

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**Step 1: Clarify**

- Ask for specific examples of the performance or behaviors that are being criticized.



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**Step 2: Acknowledge.**

This can defuse the situation.

- "I have always found your input to be very insightful and I take your comments very seriously."
- "Your opinions are important to me and I appreciate your efforts in helping me improve."
- "Obviously you have put a lot of thought into this and I appreciate your insight."



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**Step 3: Identify.**

Identify the steps that must be taken to remedy the situation and correct mistakes.

- "Help me understand exactly what it is that I can do differently."
- "What is the single most important thing I can do to correct this?"
- "What is the most effective, specific action I can take?"



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**Step 4: Establish criteria**

To measure the effectiveness of your action as a result of the criticism.

- “How will we know that this has been successfully dealt with?”
- It is not enough for you to now that you have taken corrective action, others must also be aware of your response.



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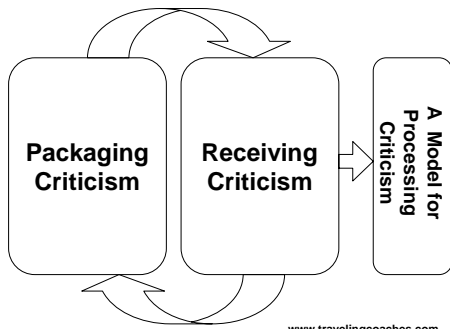
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**Sources**

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[www.briefings.com](http://www.briefings.com)

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