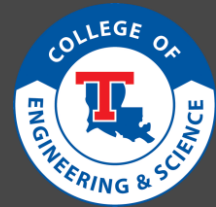


# Learn to Take Constructive Criticism in Stride...



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# The problem...

- While constructive criticism is valuable (a rare gift, actually), it can be challenging not to react defensively when someone delivers it...
- ...as women, it can be even more challenging to receive constructive criticism at work, because we tend to be very hard on ourselves and averse to “putting ourselves out there” if we aren’t pretty close to 100% sure that we will be successful...
- ...yet identifying areas of improvement are critical for enhancing your skills, productivity and relationships.

# The Game Plan...

- The next time you receive constructive criticism from a student, colleague, staff person, or administrator, use this 6-step process to handle the encounter with tact and grace and pave your way from constructive criticism to professional success!

# 1. Stop Your First Reaction...

- At the first sign of constructive criticism, STOP and try not to react *at all...*
- You have 1 second to stop your reaction, which is ample time for your brain to process the situation.
- Halt dismissive facial expressions (like eye-rolling), reactive quips, sighs - remind yourself to stay *calm*.
- Curtail reactions to the person delivering the feedback, even if you don't respect them or they are junior to you (like a student) - accurate and constructive feedback can come from flawed sources.

## 2. Remember the Benefit of Getting Feedback...

- You have a few seconds to quickly remind yourself of the benefits of receiving constructive criticism:
  - To improve your skills
  - To enhance your work product
  - To strengthen relationships
  - To help you meet expectations that other have of you
- Now that your brain is working, you are ready to engage in productive dialogue as your competent, thoughtful self (instead of your combative, *Mean Girls* self)...

# 3. Listen for Understanding...

- Listen closely and allow them to share their thoughts completely without interruption
- When they are done, repeat back what you heard
- Avoid analyzing/questioning their assessment - focus on *understanding* their comments and perspective
- Remember that perception is reality
- Acknowledge that they may be nervous or not express their ideas perfectly – criticism is hard to deliver

## 4. Say Thank You...

- Look the person in the eyes and thank them for sharing feedback with you (THIS WILL BE HARD!)
- Don't gloss over this – be deliberate and say “I really appreciate your taking the time to talk to me about this.”
- Saying thanks doesn't mean that you *agree* with their assessment, but it does *acknowledge the effort* to which they went to evaluate you and share their thoughts

# 5. Ask Questions to Deconstruct the Feedback...

- Ask questions to get to the root of the actual issues being raised and possible solutions for addressing them
- Avoid engaging in a debate
- Seek specific examples to help you understand the issue
- Acknowledge any feedback that is not in dispute
- Try to understand whether this was an isolated issue
- Seek specific solutions to address the feedback



## 6. Request Time to Follow Up...

- Try to agree on the issues being raised
- Articulate what you will do moving forward
- Thank the person again for the feedback
- Move on!
- If it is a larger issue or was raised by your administrator, ask for a follow-up meeting to ask more questions, get agreement on next steps – take some time to process the feedback, seek advice from others, think about solutions

# Remember...

- Constructive criticism is a gift
- It helps us see ourselves through others eyes, learn about ourselves and our weaknesses
- It helps us improve
- If we are defensive instead of gracious and accepting, we will miss out on some important insight!
- Feedback isn't easy to receive, but it also isn't easy to give (which is why it is a real gift if you get it!)

# Questions??



Check out the ADVANCEIng Faculty Website for a copy of this presentation!

# References

- Lindsay, N., “Taking Constructive Criticism Like a Champ,” FORBESWOMAN, November 7, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/dailymuse/2012/11/07/taking-constructive-criticism-like-a-champ/>
- Mott, M., “Careers: 6 Steps to Championing Constructive Criticism,” AWIS Washington Wire, November 2012 Issue 1.