



Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.

CFO Plus, LLC

**Ted Hofmann - Principal/Senior Consultant**

**John Morre - Principal/Senior Consultant**

**Linda Panichelli - Principal/Senior Tax Consultant**

**Jim Chamberlain - Senior Consultant**

**1450 Grant Avenue, Suite 102**

**Novato, CA 94945-3142**

**Home Office: 415-898-7879**

**Toll Free 866-CFO-PLUS or 866-236-7587**

**Email: [thofmann@cfoplus.net](mailto:thofmann@cfoplus.net)**

**[jmorre@cfoplus.net](mailto:jmorre@cfoplus.net)**

**[lpanichelli@cfoplus.net](mailto:lpanichelli@cfoplus.net)**

**[jchamberlain@cfoplus.net](mailto:jchamberlain@cfoplus.net)**

**Web: [www.cfoplus.net](http://www.cfoplus.net)**

## The Art of Constructive Criticism

Every day, millions of employees in today's business marketplace go home frustrated because "the boss" has seemingly called them on the carpet for something they either didn't do, or in many cases, didn't do very well. Not everyone's perfect, but the way the boss, a co-worker, team member or anyone else delivered the criticism can make or break morale.

Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Would you want to be demeaned for underperforming? Most supervisors or managers don't intend to deliver a harsh dose of negative feedback. More often, than not, they simply never learned the art of constructive criticism.

Can behavior be changed? Absolutely. With work and the understanding that when constructive criticism is applied – and applied with a purpose – supervisors can get exactly what they want while giving the employee exactly what they need to improve.

If you're providing constructive criticism, try these tactics.

- Respect the person's integrity by reacting to behavior or performance in private.
- Provide feedback that is specific and behavioral, rather than general and judgmental. Focus on the work, not the person. Point out the two missed deadlines, not the fact that you believe the person lacks commitment to the organization.
- Remain calm, and ensure you are in control before you deliver criticism. Any feedback that is perceived as "angry" won't do any good when the person you're criticizing hears your emotion – not your intended message.
- Limit feedback. Don't point out too many issues all at the same time. Focus on relevant, important observations that will make the most impact in the shortest amount of time. Deal with details later.
- Identify the positive outcome of the desired behavior. Stressing the positives will go a long way to motivating an employee to change.
- Provide the right balance of the positive and negative. Use common sense to make sure you get your point across while aptly getting the end result you want.

We all have a boss. Even the company president answers to clients or a board of directors. Knowing how to receive criticism graciously is an art form in itself. If you're on the receiving end of the criticism, follow these tips.

- If you want to be perceived as professional, separate emotions from the situation. Consider your body language. Are you tense? Are you wearing the weight of the message on your face? Remaining calm and steady is key to the situation, even if the person is unjustified in making the criticism or the criticism isn't delivered appropriately.
- Don't interrupt and don't provide excuses. This is a red flag to the other person that you're nervous and defensive. Let the person finish before responding. You may even respond by taking a break and processing your responses. If the critic is rational, s(he) will understand your need to take time to think.
- Use the criticism to your advantage. For example, it would be more beneficial for you to thank the person, accept the criticism and turn the situation around.
- Don't take criticism if it's unfair. If the person is unjustified in criticizing you, let the person finish speaking, then approach the feedback with what you think happened without tattling on the other person or pointing the finger.

The bottom line is respect. Can you provide constructive criticism and let the recipient know s(he) is still a respected member of the team or organization? If so, you've done your job well. If not, it's time for a refresher course on human behavior. Your willingness to provide constructive criticism – and accept feedback from others – is paramount to long-term survival in the marketplace.