

Episode #21: Is It Difficult for You to Give and Receive Feedback Remotely?

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. Now that so many teams are working at home due to COVID-19, in today's episode you will hear ten tips on how to give and receive feedback, especially during this pandemic. I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last two episodes you heard six suggestions on how to get started improving your virtual team's effectiveness. The three covered in the last episode were:

1. **Leverage free content that's available online to build vulnerability-based trust among your team members.** To accomplish this, I suggested leveraging "The Ideal Team Player" model and resources available on YouTube to run a simple but powerful exercise that builds vulnerability-based trust within a remote team.
2. **The next one was to mine for conflict and test for clarity and buy-in during virtual meetings.** In discussions when there is little debate among team members, "mine" for conflict by asking questions that trigger opposing points of view relevant to the topic at hand. Ensure that every participant has their video on. And after mining for conflict, leverage the whiteboard and screen-sharing features of your virtual meeting platform to write down the specific agreement that has been reached, who is responsible for carrying it out, and the corresponding deadline.
3. **The last one was to align behind a common short-term objective during the pandemic.** Has your team been operating under a unified objective during the last six months? Or has remote work fostered isolation of the different functions and resulted in a silo approach to everyone's jobs? If the common objective is not crystal clear, or if it requires adjustments, I recommend that you don't wait any longer to sort it all out.

Today I want to share a list of ten tips on how to give and receive constructive feedback within the remote conditions most of you and your employees are experiencing. I have built this list over the years, initially from what I did right and wrong, while I was inside the corporate world. Over the last decade I have expanded this list with what I have learned from available literature and what has and has not worked with my clients.

1. **The first tip is not to throw in the towel in these difficult times.** Let's acknowledge that giving and receiving feedback is not easy to begin with. And providing feedback through a video-conferencing platform makes an already challenging conversation even more problematic. In my close to four decades working within and with corporations, I have seen very few managers excel at giving feedback. On one end, there are those leaders who do not want to jeopardize their relationship with the employee and choose to play it safe with vague and generic comments. On the other end, I have seen managers who are direct and almost harsh

with their comments, usually eliciting a push back from the employee. Fortunately, giving constructive feedback is a learnable skill, so keep listening...

2. **The second tip is to make a choice:** When you give and receive feedback, you have an opportunity to grow. Do you want to benefit from that? If so, please continue listening to this episode. However, if your answer is no, the rest of these tips are probably not for you at this time in your life.
3. **The third tip is to restrict the conversation to one piece of feedback at a time.** As with any good communication strategy, the simplicity of a single message increases the odds of it being adequately understood. This is one of those practices where I see tremendous upside potential. If we were to run a poll today on what the current feedback practice in your company is, I would anticipate the majority of you would answer that it centers around the yearly performance review cycle. In these annual meetings, managers typically focus on the performance objectives employees missed and what they need to do to turn them around. They become more of a catch-all “correction of business errors” discussion, rather than receiving feedback on a specific behavior that needs to be improved.
4. **Related to the previous tip, the next one comes from a seminar I attended in my early years as a manager: Pinpoint.** Make your feedback as specific as possible. Provide examples, such as “When you anticipate missing a deadline with me, let me know as soon as possible. Last week you were four days late publishing your research report, and I only became aware of the delay when my boss inquired me about it.” Stay away from generic comments, such as “try harder,” “be more assertive,” etc.
5. **Next tip is to set ground rules, such as being 100 percent constructive and providing both positive and negative feedback.** As the feedback giver, say and show an intention to help the other person grow. When you are on the receiving end, ask questions only to clarify a point vs. to challenge a statement. One more ground rule: As indicated in previous episodes, always hold these sessions with the video camera on.
6. **The sixth tip is to, as the manager, volunteer to receive the feedback first.** This will show humility and maturity from you and will make the other person more open to receiving your feedback.
7. **The seventh tip is to listen with your ears and your heart.** Beyond the words being stated, watch for nonverbal signs, such as body language, sighs, and any other means used, consciously or subconsciously, by the other person. Likewise, beware of your own communication signs and ensure they are consistent with the message you want to share. Remember: video camera on is a must for both of you!
8. **Next tip is to practice, practice, practice.** You can set up a feedback session with a colleague with whom you hold a high level of trust. Go first and stick to positive feedback if you want to initially play it safe. Make it a learning experience for both of you.

9. **The ninth tip is to recognize that no two persons address and react to feedback the same way.** Remember “The Platinum Rule” from previous podcasts? “Treat others the way THEY, not YOU, want to be treated.” As much as you can, customize your delivery style to what you think will work best for your employee. Some may wish to receive a direct message, whereas others may prefer to spend the first few minutes “warming up” to the conversation.

10. **Last but not least, exercise the option to pause and assess the process midway, if needed.** Has it ever happened to you that a feedback session, or any other type of one-to-one conversation, went in the wrong direction? Be ready to call a time-out if the conversation is not flowing positively. Reschedule it to a later time and try to avoid repeating what went wrong in the first talk.

I hope these ten tips help you increase the quality and frequency of your feedback sessions, whether it is with colleagues, people within your team, your boss, or even your spouse. Remember that, for the last six months, your employees have been challenged by understaffing, isolation, and unclear separation between work and personal spaces. This raises the importance of paying close attention to the human component in all your communication. Be kind and tactful, and at the same time be clear and pinpoint your feedback.

I hope you enjoyed today’s episode. In the next one, I will provide tips to help you improve the engagement level of your employees during this pandemic.

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This is coach Percy Cannon, working to help you *make the rest of your life...the best of your life*®.

Percy's BIO

Percy provides corporate managers and leadership teams with customized coaching programs that help them develop the skills and capabilities needed to significantly increase their business results through others and accelerate their career growth.

Percy is an "alumnus" from three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, with whom he spent close to three decades.

Since 2011 he has been helping corporate executives, managers and employees ***make the rest of their life...the best of their life®***.

Percy has worked in the United States and across several countries in Latin America as an Executive Coach, Leadership Team Consultant and Keynote Speaker, serving companies such as Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Citibank, Tiffany & Avianca.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC" and certified as a "Go-Giver" speaker & coach.

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (*The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life*) and in Spanish (*El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida*).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

He can be reached at percy@cannon.consulting.