

## *Our Approach to Increasing Productive Feedback....*

Feedback is vital to the survival and development of any individual or system. As individuals, as members of groups and organizations, we all need feedback in order to change and improve our skills. Yet, the amount of productive feedback we give and receive at work is often experienced as minimal.

Despite efforts to make feedback more available, through formal processes such as performance appraisals or 360 degree feedback instruments, the opportunity to give and receive feedback is often anticipated with more anxiety and dread than excitement.

The enhancement of feedback skills can have powerful benefits to individual and organizational performance. Our experience in working with organizations to increase feedback opportunities has led us to a deeper understanding of some of the beliefs and dilemmas we experience when trying to make feedback more available to people.

### *Some Beliefs and Dilemmas about Feedback*

The process of giving and receiving feedback can be thought of as dilemmas that we must resolve, both *within* the person giving or receiving the feedback, and *between* giver and receiver. The way we deal with these beliefs, and resolve the dilemmas has a profound impact on the feedback that is shared. Examples of some common dilemmas when giving feedback include:

*I really want to be honest, but....*

*...if I am, it could have a bad impact on me.*

*...how can I be sure they'll act on it, or do something with it?*

*...I don't want him/her/them to know that I said it.*

Similarly, there are a variety of beliefs and dilemmas that are experienced when *receiving* feedback. Some examples include:

*I really want to know how people (boss, customers, peers, subordinates) feel about me, but...*

*...they might tell me something I don't want to know.*

*...how valid is their perspective?*

*...they might dislike something about me or my performance that I like.*

Experiencing these kinds of dilemmas can be uncomfortable. In fact, performance review time is often a dreaded time of year...for managers as well as for their direct reports. The ability to resolve these dilemmas in productive ways is the focal point of our work in this area.

### *Some Goals:*

Our work in this area is geared to providing people with opportunities to strengthen their skills at dealing with these dilemmas. Our goal is to increase the opportunities for people to give and receive feedback to each other about important performance related matters.

### *Our Methods:*

It is our belief that we are all giving and receiving feedback all the time. Our methods center on creating a supportive climate within which people may more easily hear or share feedback that is important for their work performance.

Our methods are experiential. That is, rather than talking to people about how to give and get feedback, we engage people in a variety of activities designed to enable them to strengthen their skills at giving and receiving feedback. Moreover, we focus on providing people with the opportunity to develop their skills at effective feedback communication, and dealing with the inevitable conflicts that are generated from the feedback process. Through this work, the formal tools used to solicit and provide feedback become vehicles to a deeper conversation about performance, rather than substitutes for that important conversation.

Our programs and workshops are always customized to the specific needs of the participant group.

If you would like to discuss these issues or our work in this area further, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to engaging in dialogue about these matters. We can be reached at the address and phone on the cover, or through our email address: [info@marcusgroup.net](mailto:info@marcusgroup.net).