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## COLUMNIST

### Feedback Hijack: A More Effective Response to Reviews

The number one predictor of perceived effectiveness is your commitments to your own self-improvement.



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Have you gotten feedback lately? How did you respond? If you're like most people, you may have been thrown into a state of self-protective reaction - the feedback hijack. People fall into a number of pitfalls when it comes to feedback: They take it too personally. They get too defensive. They rationalize it and reject it.

None of this is helpful, to you or your career.

Your willingness to listen, learn, and improve will do more for your perception as a committed leader than anything else. A few simple steps on your part will help you get out of the emotional swirl of feedback and into a productive response.

**Come into feedback with an open mind.** A common response to feedback is defensiveness. When we do surveys at the Leadership Research Institute, we often ask participants providing feedback to rate the recipient on their willingness to receive the feedback and make a change. This kind of awareness can help a leader remember that improvement following feedback is an expectation--and you cannot meet that expectation if you dismiss everything you hear. The worst case scenario occurs when feedback shuts you down. When you shut down, you don't take in the feedback at all. Now you are not only ignoring what you might need to change or improve but you are also closing off all possibilities of getting the insights you need to learn to do things differently. Before you discount any kind of feedback, at least make the effort to understand it and either validate or invalidate it.

**Treat feedback as feedback.** It's just information; it is not the gospel truth. Feedback is someone opinion of you, wrapped in their personal experiences, bias, and observations. Some of it will be valuable and some will not. You have a choice on how you want to approach feedback--you can ignore it, or you can accept it. If you accept it, don't grumble about it. And, if you do not accept it, simply let it go. If you let it go and it comes back again later, at that point you'd better get serious about making changes.

**Follow through.** It is not just receiving the feedback that is important. Once you have the feedback, you have to actually do something with it - including reflecting on the results, creating a plan of actions based on the information, and following through with the people who gave you the feedback. When asking for feedback, try the following suggestions to make sure you have a positive experience: thanking your participants, sharing what you have learned, describing what you will do now, asking for further suggestions, and following up periodically.

Taking these steps will communicate to everyone around you that you are a person who listens and who wants to be your best. The number one predictor of perceived effectiveness is your commitments to your own self-improvement. It is only part of the process to be committed. You need to show you are committed. Otherwise, no one will know. If they don't know you have received the feedback, what would make them think it was worth giving in the first place?

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