

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM: CREATING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AT WORK PLACES

CRÍTICA CONSTRUTIVA: CRIANDO COMPORTAMENTO POSITIVO NOS LOCAIS DE TRABALHO

CRÍTICA CONSTRUCTIVA: CREANDO COMPORTAMIENTO POSITIVO EN LOS LUGARES DE TRABAJO

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ABSTRACT

The world around is entirely and universally reliant on the reviews and opinions of others. These opinions are a result of either judgement or biasness. The opinions when given may or may not be accepted as one of the many innate qualities of human beings is that they dislike when they are told they are wrong. Feedback or criticism as a form of communication is present in every context and in every practice. At work places too, feedback plays a pivotal role that determines organisational behaviour. The manner criticism is given or received impacts in great measure the communication pattern that is the lifeblood of an organisation. This paper studies the pattern of sending and receiving constructive criticism and primarily emphasizes on the ability to accept criticism as one of the important soft skills criteria that serves a purpose to bring better results mainly at workplaces to boost personal growth and professional development.

Key Words: Criticism, Feedback, Acceptance, Emotional-wellbeing, Personal-growth, Business organisation.

RESUMO

O mundo ao redor depende total e universalmente das análises e opiniões de outras pessoas. Essas opiniões são resultado de julgamento ou parcialidade. As opiniões, quando dadas, podem ou não ser aceitas como uma das muitas qualidades inatas dos seres humanos é que eles não gostam quando lhes dizem que estão errados. Feedback ou crítica como forma de comunicação está presente em todos os contextos e em todas as práticas. Também nos locais de trabalho, o feedback desempenha um papel fundamental que determina o comportamento organizacional. A forma como as críticas são feitas ou recebidas impacta em grande medida o padrão de comunicação que é a força vital de uma organização. Este artigo estuda o padrão de envio e recebimento de críticas construtivas e enfatiza principalmente a capacidade de aceitar críticas como um dos importantes critérios de soft skills que servem ao propósito de trazer melhores resultados principalmente nos locais de trabalho para impulsionar o crescimento pessoal e o desenvolvimento profissional.

Palavras-chave: Crítica, Feedback, Aceitação, Bem-estar emocional, Crescimento pessoal, Organização empresarial.

RESUMEN

El mundo que nos rodea depende total y universalmente de las reseñas y opiniones de los demás. Estas opiniones son el resultado de juicios o prejuicios. Las opiniones cuando se dan pueden ser aceptadas o no como una de las muchas cualidades innatas de los seres humanos y es que les disgusta cuando se les dice que están equivocados. La retroalimentación o la crítica como forma de comunicación están presentes en todos los contextos y en todas las prácticas. También en los lugares de trabajo, la retroalimentación juega un papel fundamental que determina el comportamiento organizacional. La forma en que se dan o reciben las críticas impacta en gran medida el patrón de comunicación que es el alma de una organización. Este artículo estudia el patrón de envío y recepción de críticas constructivas y enfatiza principalmente en la capacidad de aceptar la crítica como uno de los criterios importantes de habilidades blandas que tiene el propósito de brindar mejores resultados principalmente en los lugares de trabajo para impulsar el crecimiento personal y el desarrollo profesional.

Palabras clave: Crítica, Feedback, Aceptación, Bienestar emocional, Crecimiento personal, Organización empresarial

1. INTRODUCTION

“The term feedback was coined in the 1860s during the Industrial Revolution to describe the way that outputs of energy, momentum, or signals are returned to their point of origin in a mechanical system” (Stone and Heen, 2014: 5). Since, then the term has been used in various contexts and in various directions from loops of an electronic circuit to performance management in industrial relations, from “online customer surveys or as workplace jargon for criticism” (Carroll, 2014: 3). Feedback thus has been used differently and interestingly the usage and need of feedback today at workplaces has been more crucial than ever.

One of the basic realities at work places today is everything is subjected to change; like changes in technology, changes in market demands, changes in competition, changes in staffing and resources and so on. Due to this unpredictability, every day the global leaders in business organisations experience a newness in their products, customers, information, employees, clients, services, rules and every tiny aspects concerned with their growth and development. It thus becomes significantly important to understand how the changes and the newness reflect in the quality of the work so that quality improvement can be made based on the requirements. Arguing on the same, one might debate on the ones responsible for the quality management or improvement. One might easily answer it's the people who work; even technologies are run by people. Hence, the people should be taken care of first. Murch visualises “if we don't invest in our people and give them the feedback they need, we can't expect to have a high- performing business. People won't know what they need to replicate and what they need to improve” (Murch, 2016: 4).

The words feedback and criticism are concomitant and used as a fundamental concept to guide the progress of a future action. For example, at work places mainly, feedback is imperative to help employees, managers to achieve their desired goals. In fact, feedback provides a pathway to develop performances, talent and morale and so does criticism as Bright elucidates “criticism has the power to become one of the most consequential tools in

our arsenal for creating motivation, trust and respect with all the people we deal with” (Bright, 2014: 8). However, it is also imperative to understand the nature of both feedback and criticism is equal if it is intended or directed to growth and development as opposed to feedback and criticism meant to be hurtful. This paper uses the terms ‘feedback’ and ‘criticism’ interchangeably.

The word criticism is derived from the Greek word *‘krikitos’* meaning ‘judgement’; and hence criticism is the exercise of judgement” (Kharbe, 2009: 159). The word criticism is often understood as negative and hostile or as a practise of finding the foibles or faults of some work, an object or a person and conveying the same to the originator. However, “in its more formal use it can suggest neutral analysis or even approving evaluation. Judgement is not always unfavourable” (Adair, 2010: 10). The problem is that most of the people around us have used the word criticism wrongly as they do not know to use it effectively or in positive sense. Although in many cases people are genuinely interested in helping others by letting them know about their shortcomings, yet they do it in an impolite manner and thus be hurtful. Knowing the right way to criticise or provide feedback can ultimately change the base of judgement which thus cannot always be unfavourable. Hence, criticism has one of the most distinguishing and salient feature that is to judge and that judgement cannot always be adverse.

However, even if criticism is understood as negative, the consequences may not be sufficient to make it negative unless based on clear evaluation. An argument on this concept may follow that criticism means providing a judgement. But giving a judgement without evaluation is an incomplete criticism. It is more than simply providing a judgement. “Criticism comprises many activities, including: the description, classification, contextualization, elucidation, interpretation and analysis of the art” (Carroll, 2009: 3). Hence, criticism is more of an assessment or an evaluation expressed upon the basis of a series of activities otherwise criticism is not valued.

Feedback or criticism is a form of communication. It is a response to an action or communication. It suggests that the critic is interested in giving feedback and moving further with communication. However, communication is not a one way process. Much of the communication process moves ahead if the receiver wants to take it further. The emotional state, perception of the receiver and the texture of the message are few key elements that

matter during a communication chiefly when the sender chooses to make a judgement on the faults of the receiver. These elements assist in either developing or deteriorating the communication process with the critic. When the emotional state of the receiver is open and broad and the perception is free from barriers the receiver takes criticism in a constructive way. Likewise, if the message conveyed in the communication is based on personal biases and aimed to create a negative, threatening and adverse effect on the receiver, the receiver may not reciprocate positively. In fact, the nature of criticism is strongly receiver- dependent and the ability to accept it matters a lot chiefly at workplaces.

Let's understand this point with an example. A manager talks about the performance of one of his employees. He says "I am happy to see your performance and the feedback we are receiving from the other organisations. I appreciate your work. However, this week your performance is not upto mark and barely meets the requirements of the project. You better take your work seriously or get ready to get replaced". Anyone can understand this communication to be negative and threatening. The praises are turned a deaf ear to and the criticism is approved. However, if the words are ignored and the intention is deeply contemplated, it would be clear that the criticism of the manager has a hidden agenda to boost the working spirit of the employee so that the employee gives his best in this week's performance too. Casmir writes "listening while suspending judgement, encouraging input by knowledgeable critics, and the ability to separate the wheat from the chaff are crucial to the construction of theory" (Casmir, 2013: 53). On paying attention to the intention and not on the content of the message during a communication can help learn and improve. If the negative aspects of the message are focused, surely the receiver misses out the positive aspects.

The above example falls under constructive criticism that is based on constructive feedback. "Constructive feedback alerts an individual to an area in which his or her performance could improve. Its main purpose is to help people understand where they stand in relation to the expected job behaviour" (Krizan et al., 2008: 376). This suggests constructive feedback is a result of detailed observations and thorough evaluation, only then the individual's potentialities is judged. Here in the above example, the same process has been followed about the employee's performance where the weak spots are acknowledged and the employee is provided with an opportunity to improve. At the same time positive points of the

employee's performance is also offered that boost his strengths and thus encourage him. A more detailed study on constructive feedback is studied in the later section of this paper.

Constructive feedback that forms an essential component in business however, must follow certain guidelines. Although this happens spontaneously and there is no particular guidelines mentioned as to when and where to give the feedback, however, every employee chiefly, the members of higher level or executive bodies must realise and understand the fact that providing constructive feedback the right way and in the right time may hinder demotivation among the employees. Constructive feedback must be presented in an appropriate pattern of communication keeping in mind certain points. "Unfortunately, what happens in many workplaces is that a mass of negative feedback is saved up for the annual appraisal. Then, when it is given, it suffers from the dual sins of being too much and too late" (Bee and Bee, 2011: 4). In this competitive world when globalization has increased growth and rapidness in technology, business dealings, organisational structure, the magnitude, the flow, and the dimension of communication among people associated has also met drastic changes. In such cases, the receiver of the criticism feels burdened under criticisms. Accepting criticism thus becomes a difficult task for them which at times can be difficult to bear or deal with. Hence, if the critics opt to criticise they must provide the feedback in a proper way and in suitable time so as to suffer late influences.

2. CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

As already understood constructive criticism is an essence of workplace communication. It enhances self awareness among the employees regarding their strengths and weaknesses and it also make them realize how they utilize or need to utilize their strengths in what they are doing. Constructive criticism also makes the employees be conscious about the opportunities they find around them and how well they can develop their opportunities along with the changes they might bring into their work to make their performance better.

However constructive criticism depends on the sender or the one responsible to offer judgement that comes with great accountability. In fact, constructive criticism is not everyone's cup of tea. It is an art only practiced by the senders who are sincere and who genuinely want to see their employees or co-workers improving without any doubt. This

fosters a two way learning process. The members at the workplace also learn to provide better results in their work. Hence, constructive criticism is a necessity at workplace. On this VanDuinkerken and Kaspar also view that “people can only learn from their mistakes if they did wrong and are able to take responsibility. Thus they can learn from their mistakes and correct them” (VanDuinkerken and Arant Kaspar, 2015: 124).

Many times for the critics it becomes difficult to provide the right feedback at the right time so much so that they feel the need to struggle doing the same. Even though they feel they are correct they are unable to provide the feedback as the sense of fear clouds their sense of positive communication. The sense of fear may sprout up of the feeling regarding the reactions of others. Reina and Reina understand that this sense of fear is the result of distrust that the sender may have within self that restricts them “to frame comments without getting emotional, judgemental, or pulling unresolved issues into the conversation” (Reina and Reina, 2015: 101).

Human brain is a very fascinating organ and it functions in yet many fascinating ways. It needs to be programmed appropriately for best results. The sender thus needs to simply do the same by gradually giving negative criticism and positive simultaneously so that although it may hurt the sentiments of the receiver it does not cause much damage because the receiver is also motivated to learn. This process simply programs the brain that if there is a negative judgement, there also is a positive one and based on this positivity the employee strengthens his learning ability. This structure is based on Pedleton’s rule of feedback that “is based on an understanding that a very negative account leaves the learner feeling very downhearted; they may lose so much confidence that it is difficult for them to have the motivation to continue. Emphasizing some positives gives the learner a foundation to build on”(Northrop, Crow, and Kraszewski, 2015: 302). Let us understand the concept with an example:

Example 1- Andy has just wrapped up a meeting on the monthly budget. Due to some unavoidable circumstances Andy could not find time to circulate the agendas to the members who were sitting in the meeting. After the meeting, Hazel her boss asks him to meet in her cabin. Here is how Hazel implemented the ice cream sandwich method:

Positive feedback: Andy the meeting was really productive. I am sure the impact will be large and lasting among the members. Each one seemed enthusiastic for the budget plans. Thank you for your contribution. You did a commendable job.

Criticism: But don't you think that because this meeting was important as this organisation's success is entirely dependent on how we carry forward the resolutions, the agendas or the goals of the meetings had to be communicated prior to the commencement of the meeting. Was it only me or did you as well notice that most of the participants had that blank expression on their faces. It seemed that they were not prepared. I saw many of them had to get back to their desks to find out if they had missed any information. Some of them checked their mobiles for mails and dates they might have marked for today's event. Apparently a lot of time was spent on gathering the background of today's meeting. What are your views on this?

Positive feedback: You are already giving your best in the rest of the activities. I am glad that your diligence in the last project has added up to other responsibilities and that has chaired you another promotion

Criticism: But today's negligence may not be overlooked or further entertained.

Example 2- Willey is a new employee in the marketing department of an organisation. This organisation conducts an employee development program every six months. Willey has been able to place himself in good books of many co-workers and his superiors through his hard work. However, because he is confident that he won't be asked for a show cause of not attending the program, he decides to skip it and continues his work at the cabin. In the program, many important discussions were made regarding self presentation, marketing ethics, connections and prospective between products and services, and demonstration. Willey has just missed them all. A little later his boss Christopher calls him to his cabin and the following ice cream sandwich method was applied.

Positive feedback: Willey you have an outstanding merit record since the time you have joined us. Everyone is pleased to work with you.

Criticism: But don't you think you need to work hard on it to improve yourself. Being confident is good but being over confident is not. I could not find you in the EDP today. I was told you seemed less interested for the program.

Positive feedback: Last few months the marketing department has witnessed a rise in the product sales and I give this credit entirely to you and your team.

Criticism: However, today I am much displeased with your activity. Your absence without any valid reason only shows disrespect towards the organisations' programs. And I feel sorry for that.

Understanding the examples through the concept of ice cream sandwich method, let us de-structure it part by part. At first the employees are provided with a positive feedback that is genuine and deserving. Then next a constructive criticism is provided which turns the receiver's mind to be receptive and that he obviously would accept because he has already accepted the positive part of the feedback. Next the employee identifies that part of the criticism which the sender wants him to identify and develop, and is then offered the next positive points. The next part instils the employees to remain open to the constructive criticism and finally the employee is left with more positivity, self esteem and confidence. Thus, the employees understand where they are wrong and in which way they can improve upon their mistakes. Lipkin and Perrymore understand it as the ice-cream sandwich method as they elucidate "ice cream sandwiches can be compared to communicating unpleasant feedback because the guilt of eating an ice cream sandwich can be outweighed by its fabulous taste and communicating necessary criticism can be outweighed by the comfort of real, positive feedback" (Lipkin and Perrymore, 2009: 32).

Constructive criticism is in fact a part and parcel in every day workplace communication for bringing the best in employees' strengths, morale and professionalism to improve the quality of work and performance. Rather constructive criticism must be encouraged for anyone whether peers or managers to co-workers or subordinates respectively. Studies reveal that while destructive criticism is easy to be delivered constructive criticism is not so simple process. It requires a lot of thoughtfulness before providing constructive criticism. Here are some of the important points senders need to understand before providing constructive criticism.

Thoughtfulness Before Speech

Anyone who is eager to provide constructive criticism must understand that outlining an entire conversation in mind before finally delivering it to the receiver would help one achieve what they want. Carefully choosing the right words and delivering at the right context assist in a positive reciprocation. Werre believes to "express yourself with thoughtfulness,

accuracy, decisiveness, and clarity. And whenever you want to give your opinion, speak calmly. Do not reveal anger, frustration, resentment, or annoyance” (Werre, 2004: 64). It all depends on the way one communicates and despite the consequences how hard one may try to avoid harshness towards others, others may easily find it and make the best of it to use against you. Hence, it is always suggested to think a hundred times the ways the words and the pattern of delivery before the receiver primarily when one is likely to offer any feedback.

Importance to Face to Face Communication

Most of the communication at workplaces takes place through written communication i.e. through emails, memos, reports. Feedback as an essential component of a successful communication is also provided via written communication. However, for constructive communication choosing a proper channel and pattern is of utmost important because it is crucial to deliver the right message to the right person at the right time and space. Hence, based on the complexity of the matter constructive criticism may be chosen to be provided through face to face communication. In face to face communication, constructive criticism is better understood and accepted as the receiver is offered an opportunity to clarify suggestions and ask for explanations. Also, face to face communication is accompanied with body language that assists with the appropriate delivery of message intended. On this Lehman and Dufrene write “face-to-face delivery provides the benefit of nonverbal communication and immediate feedback, which minimizes the misinterpretation of these highly sensitive messages” (Lehman and Dufrene, 2012: 109). Non verbal communication which includes body language, eye contact, facial expressions, and intonation reveals a lot about the intention of a message that is delivered. Hence, constructive criticism exactly defines the purpose and the intent of the feedback provided that suggests whether it was for improvement or humiliation.

However, it is also important to understand that not every constructive criticism is supposed to be delivered face to face. As mentioned above, the delivery of constructive criticism is dependent on the complexity of the matter. Guffey and Loewy affirm that “complex situations may require a different strategy” (Guffey and Loewy, 2013: 338) like written communication through emails and memorandums which requires a thorough detailing about thoughts and opinions and calm bent of mind. Written communications are recorded documents hence, ought to be properly organised.

Emphasis on Learning and Improvement

The main purpose of constructive criticism is to provide a space and opportunity for the listeners to improve their performance. However, most of the people at work places use languages and choose words which do not focus on improvement of the work rather on the person. For example using words like “your performance today during presentation was dreadful” or “your handling questions after the presentation was terrible, seems you were not prepared” does not in any way focuses on helping the listener to improve rather it lowers the confidence and self esteem within the listener. However incorporating sentences like “if you had used more audience-centric words and maintained a good eye contact during the presentation, it would have had more impact on them” or “if you had avoided self engrossed experiences to justify your points and instead provided points that take a general view, the question handling session would have been more productive” in communication the feedback becomes more accepted and welcome. On this Mac Rae elucidates “constructive criticism identifies problems and proposes solutions rather than blindly judging, blaming, or condemning” (MacRae, 2016: 57). In the later sentences the speaker categorizes the areas that require improvement and thereby recommends the employee with solutions for a better performance next time. These sentences do not make the listener feel low or doubtful rather they promise a change in attitude for good in further performances.

Use of Right Tone

A right tone is significant while delivering anything constructive. A lot of misinterpretation arises if the tone chosen doesn't match with the words chosen. Communicating emotions at work is a big and necessary challenge. Communication of negative emotions like anger, disappointment, frustration, sarcasm and annoyance chiefly during constructive criticism is downright a tough task to handle. Hence, developing empathy or being able to understand what one feels can solve a number of job, performance and management relevant, issues. Empathy however requires innovativeness in thinking, carefully observing and then managing as Singh rights “to be empathetic you would need to be innovative. How innovative can you be? Do you realise the impact you have on others? Can you reduce or eliminate the negativities in your dealings with people? Are you willing to search and analyse so as to uncover positive contributions? Can you identify the strengths of

all of your employees? Do you have something positive to say to everyone at the end of the task?” (Singh, 2006: 78-79). Once these questions are answered the phenomena of empathy starts growing and once empathy is practiced, constructive criticism finds the appropriate direction and the tone involuntarily falls to place with the right approach.

3. DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Destructive criticism is one of the worst ways to motivate someone negatively. In general contexts and often at workplaces destructive criticism are articulated more as “personal attacks rather than complaints that can be acted upon” (Goleman, 2009: 151). Destructive criticism constitutes derision, repulsion, disdain that leaves the listener feeling miserable, disappointed and angry. Thus destructive criticism is used intentionally with a purpose to suppress others. Landy and Conte cite Baron’s definition of destructive criticism as they assert it “as negative feedback that is cruel, sarcastic, and offensive. It is usually general rather than specific and often directed toward personal characteristics of the employee rather than job-relevant behaviours”(Landy and Conte, 2016: 2014-2015). And when the feedback is given towards personal characteristics rather than job related issues, it neither adds values to the receiver’s growth and development nor enhances the learning capability. Rather it lowers down self- effectiveness and impedes further task performance. On this Clarke rightly remarked “when people receive negative feedback about their performance, this can impair their sense of competence, which in turn decreases intrinsic motivation” (Clarke, 2016: 241).

However, it is important to note that although the effects of the feedback may or may not have detrimental effect, its acceptance is crucial at workplaces. The flow of reactions and communication that follow after acceptance and non acceptance is all reliant entirely as a responsibility on the receiver and his willingness. It is also important to understand that much of the professionalism of an employee is dependent on the gracious manner of response to criticism an employee offers at workplace. The following section discusses about the ability to accept criticism by the receiver and how a receiver must respond to workplace criticism.

4. ABILITY TO ACCEPT CRITICISM

Workplace is a fascinating field where vex of views are overtly expressed and if expressed covertly can easily be interpreted. In fact the covert views are expressed in a

manner that can be easily accessed. While an employee feels easy and relaxed giving a criticism, accepting criticism becomes a big deal. Rules say when one offers criticism one must also have the ability to accept. Hence, although it is difficult to stop or restrict someone from giving their point of views to others, it is however required that the receiver chooses an appropriate way to accept criticism for personal excellence, mental satisfaction and professional growth.

Many authors attempt to elucidate why it is at times difficult to accept criticism at workplaces. Reina and Reina understand one reason can be self doubt as they believe that the criticism listeners receive is never for their benefit but for their detriment as they write “additionally you may not trust what you hear because you have reason to believe the criticism is not intended for your benefit but is rather meant to hurt or harm you. Or you may hear echoes of prior painful mistakes that cloud your perspectives. And sometimes it’s just plain hard to look at yourself or asks others to do so. It may feel easier to avoid conflict, shortcomings, and mistakes than be proactive in addressing them”(Reina and Reina, 2006: 101). In self-doubt the victim simply can’t believe his/ her strengths and this arises due to the lack of self-assessment. Also intensely believing the fact that confidence comes naturally to people is another reason where self-doubt generates. Thoughts like “I cannot be like him/her”, “his presentations are better than mine”, “she is a better team leader than me” are few among the many self-doubts that permits to find everything good in others and simultaneously not realising the strengths and positivity that one has within and that one can improve taking the suggestions. The section below studies how to accept criticism though response and not through reaction.

Today, ability to accept criticism at workplaces is considered one among the top soft skills requirements. Although a challenging task considering the fact that emotions are involved that can lead to sudden outburst leading to awkward moments, however, it is one of the credibility that most employers demand at workplaces. Alex claims accepting and learning from criticism “is one of the most challenging soft skills, which is why it’s typically one of the most impressive to employers. Your ability to handle criticism says a lot about your willingness to improve” (Alex, 2009: 10). Self awareness is one among the many approaches that dictates the changes or modifications one is able to bring in one’s personality through continuous self assessment. Willingness to improve is the result of how willingly one is

committed to self awareness, learning and self assessment. Only self awareness would enable an individual to encourage or discourage reactions both positive and negative while reflecting back to criticisms. As discussed earlier in the earlier section it is the receiver who has the complete control over handling criticism and how he/she accepts or reacts to criticism. Developing certain skills through self-awareness and continuous learning, employees can learn the ability to accept criticism. Following are some of the many soft skills to develop the ability to accept criticism at workplaces for personal and professional development.

Developing Listening Skills

It is always good to listen to what others have to say regarding one's performance. Listening is just a physical ability but a skill set that allows an individual to pay attention to what others are saying. Only when one listens to the criticisms attentively, can one find proper answer befitting to respond to various criticisms. Poor listening skills would never make a receiver a skilful learner of faults or the requirements to rectify the faults. One may argue that listening to criticism is as equal as accepting criticism even if one is right. However Griffin views "listening to criticism is not the same as agreeing with the criticism" (Griffin, 2011: 69).

Keeping Mind Open

Griffin views "criticism as a perception" (Griffin, 2011:70). And perceptions vary from minds to minds so also criticism. Although it is unimportant to follow and agree everyone's perception because that would generate low confidence in self, however "it's important to remember that their perceptions matter; they impact how they bring themselves your shared work" (Reina and Reina, 2006). It is therefore essential to keep minds open so that one learns what one is made of and how one might change accordingly. Keeping mind open enables us to view things and generate prospective that in other ways may not have been available and open to you. In other words it let us explore our inner potentialities and our 'can do's and can't dos'. Taking criticism as criticism and not as points to work upon can make learning process restricted. On this Zainuddin views "criticism may appear negative, but through criticism you can learn and improve from the suggestions given"(Zainuddin, 2015: 36). Hence keeping mind open can in fact elevate responsiveness and understanding regarding self and

how to change weaknesses into strengths thereby bringing a positive attitude to offer the best in performance and in career as a whole.

Ignoring the Tone and Focusing on the Criticism

One of the most difficult tasks during criticism is to ignore the tone and stay focused on the criticism. It is an obvious fact that the tone is the first thing that draws attention of the listener during the criticism. However the listener may opt to disregard the tone factor and may focus on the content and the intention of the criticism if he/she really wants to proceed further with a positive attitude. The chief aim of the receiver is to collect views from the criticism so that the weaknesses can be worked upon, however if the tone drags the attention of the listener, the chief aim gets distracted with anger, frustration and disappointment leaving the aim incomplete.

Understanding the Value of Criticism

Employees need to understand that criticisms are a part and parcel of everyday life and that cannot be avoided or altered. The need and value of criticism is essential at workplaces today as criticisms provide important and worthy opportunities more for personal growth than for professional growth. How an employee utilizes the aspects of personal growth into the development of the professional growth depends entirely on the employees' views and learning factors. Employees must understand that criticism is a valuable and effective tool that provides a concerted atmosphere at workplaces and that expands the scope of opportunities through self exploration and haunting to still explore more of our strengths. In fact constructive criticism is also known to boost employees' morale at workplace. Employees' morale is one of the most essential ethics required and that can be defined as "the psychological state of a person as expressed in self-confidence, enthusiasm, and loyalty to a cause or organisation" (Adams, 2014: 131). An employee's morale is introspective in their actions that they put forth on the need and cause of the job and responsibilities they offer to the organisation that may lead them to be compensated or acknowledged by others. Criticism just aids in reflecting the employees morale their commitment, their enthusiasm and their eagerness to do their respective works.

Responding and not Reacting

One of the first thing generally individuals do as soon as they receive any criticism is react; react with anger, react with answer and react as an antagonist without much thought. However, while reacting is downright ugly and does not provide the right solution to a typical awkward moment like criticism, it is very much commonly understood as an interchangeable word with respond. Although both react and respond are answers to a stimulus Sharir elucidates “reaction is an automatic answer to a stimulus or situation. There is no contemplation or consideration, just a knee-jerk reaction that often leads to remorse and regret. When you respond on the other hand, you offer a considered answer to the stimulus or situation and then behave accordingly” (Sharir, 2010: 71). When one chooses to respond one in fact tends to create enough time to think about what the most favourable response that should be. In this way one can develop the ability to accept criticism positively.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper studied in details the essence of feedback and criticism and the structure of constructive criticism. This paper also studied in details the appropriate way to send and receive constructive criticism. Both sending and receiving criticism is an art, a skill and a subtle one which requires thorough thoughtfulness and a productive response with a purpose to handle special problems at workplaces. Constructive criticism if given or taken candidly can provide leverage and guidance to improve both personally and professionally. Learning to give feedback and learning from feedback are essential constituents at workplace communication. Employees must understand that the most valuable aspect of constructive criticism is the power that it provides to acknowledge any gaps that lag between their goals and aspirations. Hence, learning to give and take it in the right way can transform workplace communication into a way positive atmosphere to work for.

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