

## Turn Correction Into Compliments

### It's Like Dancing

Sometimes, the actual work of good management and leadership is like the footwork of a dance. In the beginning, we have to “mimic” the steps of an expert, and think carefully about the details of our steps and movement. Yes, it feels awkward at first, and more contrived than spontaneous. But that changes with time, as we practice the steps and become more comfortable with new movement and behavior.

With that in mind, think of this material as dance instruction. The forms will give you a simple structure to guide your thinking and your preparation for sessions of correction with your team members. At first, they may feel a bit contrived and formal. Hopefully, they will become much more spontaneous and “natural” over time, as you put the steps into practice and become more familiar with their use.

We've supplied forms that have already been filled out. They are intended to be examples of real situations and how those could be addressed using the steps outlined. The blank forms can be duplicated (yes, you have permission to do so, for your own use—feel free to hand them out at your next staff meeting.) Use the form as long as you need to, until you become comfortable with the practices they define.

### Before You Make an Assignment

Mistakes are a lot easier to correct when there is a known standard to measure results. Be sure to create that standard when you first give an assignment—then you can refer back to it when correction is needed. Always connect the standard with the *values* behind it! This will help team members internalize the values that define your corporate culture.

Here are some illustrations that match the examples we've used in the completed forms...

The **Report** –

*Quality and excellence are big around here, so it needs to be accurate AND look professional. Get a rough copy done, and we'll go over it together.*

The **Presentation** –

*We're all about teamwork here, so it needs to represent the rest of us well. Have you seen Karen present? She does a great job and might have some time to help you. Get your slides together and I'll be the audience for your rehearsal on Friday.*

The **Project** –

*Profitability is king in our company, so you need to manage cost and deadlines well. Have you thought about recruiting a “wing man” for this? Someone like David could be a good sounding board for your planning and execution schedule. Let's touch base after the first two weeks, to see how things are going.*

**The Personal Trainer** is a resource for growing leaders produced by Dr. Jim Dyke, the Founder and Director of **Corporate Leadership Initiatives, Inc.**—an organization dedicated to equipping men and women with skills and principles pertinent to the role and life of a transformational leader of the 21st century. This is a specially-designed tool for personal reflection and discussion that will help you and your team apply the ideas and principles presented in issue number six of the newsletter **Leadership Tracks**. Log on to **www.CLInet.com** to discover more ways **Corporate Leadership Initiatives, Inc.** can bring its resources and expertise to your organization and help your people become better leaders and better followers. Copyright 2019 James R. Dyke — all rights reserved.

## Before You Correct a Person

*Some simple reminders are in order...*

**Be private.** Never correct in public. You wouldn't like it. Neither would they.

**Be timely.** The closer to the infraction, the better.

**Be calm.** Never correct someone when you're angry. You may say something you'll regret.

**Be specific.** Don't generalize. Focus on behavior that can be easily identified... and changed.

**Be open.** Allow for their perspective; opinion; reaction; thinking.

**Be constructive.** Correction is about making things better, not punishing mistakes.

**Be positive.** Surround correction with praise (we'll show you how).

**Be inviting.** Whenever possible, use suggestions worded as questions instead of demands or directives.

Here are some suggestions, based on the examples we used in the forms provided...

The **Report** – *Do you think Marty might consider helping you with formatting and proofing?*

The **Presentation** – *Do you think it might be easier to absorb if you added a few more slides, but put less information on each slide?*

The **Project** – *Have you figured out where and why you are getting too close to your budget limits?*

## Close the G.A.P.

Consultant and author W. Steven Brown suggests using the GAP approach when correcting a team member.<sup>1</sup>

**G—Get Their Opinion.** Get the person's feedback. Make sure they understand the situation.

**A—Agree On What Will Be Done.** Define the desired behavior or outcome. Be specific!

**P—Positively Reinforce the Desired Behavior.** Recognize improvement—with public praise whenever possible and appropriate.

NOTE: On our forms, "P" is used for "Concluding PRAISE" as part of the "Sandwich" approach.

## Use the S.B.I.

Remember the formula taught by *The Center for Creative Leadership*.

**S—Situation.**

Describe the situation or setting *where* and *when* the offending behavior took place.

**B—Behavior.**

Describe the behavior that needs correcting. Be as specific and descriptive as possible.

**I—Impact.**

Describe the impact that the person's behavior had on *you*. Don't generalize to everyone—just keep it personal, and let your reaction stand as a potential example of other's.

## Putting It All Together

Use the forms provided, to help you put all of these suggestions into practice. Notice that there are two forms provided—one that focuses on correcting performance related to an assigned *task*; and one that focuses on correcting *behavior*. We've provided three examples of each, so you will have lots of illustrations for applying the principles we've presented.

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1. *13 Fatal Errors Managers Make*, Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1985.

# Task Correction

## Who...needs correcting

Pat

## Praise—Introduction

*I love your energy to get assignments done quickly and on time— AND I want to add strong effectiveness to that wonderful "do it now" efficiency of yours. . .*

## What...needs correcting

*I'm thinking that the format could use a little tweaking, to have the right professional look it needs in order to really shine. Right now, it's just the basic WORD template— no logo or anything— kind of plain.*

## Impact...of the error

*As a team, we've talked about our values of excellence and professional image in our work. I want to make sure this report measures up and sends the right message higher up to our division V.P.*

## G—Get Their Opinion

*Can you see what I'm talking about?*

## A—Agree on correction

*Marty has done a lot of this kind of thing in the past— maybe he could give you some ideas and some help. What do you think? Take a shot at some formatting revisions, and let's look at it again on Monday.*

## P—Praise—Conclusion

*Thanks for doing such great job compiling the data— your content is top-notch, and that's the biggest part of the work.*

# Task Correction

## Who...needs correcting

Greg

## Praise—Introduction

Thank you for stepping into this assignment and tackling it on short notice— you did a good job of assembling the technical information AND I want to make sure that your hard work really gets the credit it deserves.

## What...needs correcting

It seemed like you were a little uncomfortable presenting this morning.

## Impact...of the error

You didn't come across with the kind of enthusiasm and self-confidence that your data deserved. And I want to help you gain the respect that I think you ought to have as a member of this team.

## G—Get Their Opinion

How did you feel about your presentation?

Did you sense what I was sensing from the others in the room?

## A—Agree on correction

Would you be open to having Karen and Pete help you take your presentation up a notch? I'm thinking that maybe a couple of veterans like them could really give you some good advice and coaching. What do you think?

## P—Praise—Conclusion

Thanks for working with this— you have a very positive and enthusiastic attitude about accepting new challenges, and I think that is one of your most valuable traits. I really appreciate that about you!

# Task Correction

## Who...needs correcting

Mike

## Praise—Introduction

*I am really thankful for your ability to roll up your sleeves and get things moving when we need something done around here, AND I want to be sure that your strong action-orientation is matched with good overall project management skills.*

## What...needs correcting

*It looks like you're a little ahead of where you should be with your expenses on this project.*

## Impact...of the error

*The division V.P. is counting on us to get this thing done without blowing out his budget. And I'm committed to helping you maintain our team's great reputation and sterling track record.*

## G—Get Their Opinion

*Do you see the trend that I'm seeing? Have you had a chance to evaluate your cash flow and get a sense of what's happening?*

## A—Agree on correction

*Do you have time to meet with Chris this week and compare your projected expenses with your actual? I would like to see what that looks like after you and Chris do an analysis.*

## P—Praise—Conclusion

*You've got a strong start, Mike, and the project is moving—and that counts for a lot around here!*

# Task Correction

**Who...needs correcting**

**Praise—Introduction**

**What...needs correcting**

**Impact...of the error**

**G—Get Their Opinion**

**A—Agree on correction**

**P—Praise—Conclusion**

# Behavior Correction

## Who...needs correcting

Steve

## Praise—Introduction

*One of the things I have always appreciated about you is your candor, AND I want to be sure that this quality of yours is valued by others the way I value it.*

## Situation—Where and When

*In the meeting this morning, Jennifer made a suggestion about the new project, and you offered a very energetic response. Do you remember?*

## Behavior—What needs correcting

*You raised your voice and pointed your finger at her and accused her of trying to use the project as a way of expanding her departmental staff and budget.*

## Impact—How it affected me

*I felt like jumping to her defense. That came across to me as a personal attack—on her character and her motives. I think that kind of thing threatens the trust levels on the team and hinders our ability to work together.*

## G—Get Their Opinion

*Were you aware that you were giving the impression of a personal attack?*

## A—Agree on correction

*It might be good for you to talk to Jennifer and apologize, and consider restating that apology at our next team meeting, so the other members can hear it as well. And in the future, maybe you should express concerns like that to me privately, so we can talk about it.*

## P—Praise—Conclusion

*Thanks for listening, Steve— I appreciate your willingness to adapt to a new team dynamic, and learn some new ways to relate to me and the other team members. Your positive attitude about facing change and new challenges is something I really value.*

# Behavior Correction

## Who...needs correcting

Donna

## Praise—Introduction

I want you to know how much I value your contributions to our department. You are unusually thorough in all of your assignments. I appreciate your dedication and diligence AND I want to be sure you have the support that you need to succeed.

## Situation—Where and When

The thing is, I was expecting a rough draft of your report yesterday.

## Behavior—What needs correcting

When you missed that deadline, I was a bit concerned.

## Impact—How it affected me

I need to present the information in that report at our division meeting this Friday. It represents our whole team, and so we need time to go over the content and format to make sure it's up to snuff and meets the standard of excellence we've set for ourselves.

## G—Get Their Opinion

Do you understand my concern about this? Was that deadline on your calendar, or did I make a wrong assumption? Did you have what you needed to complete the report? Help me understand what happened.

## A—Agree on correction

It would be great to be able to go over that report with you some time tomorrow morning. Is that possible? Can we agree on 10 in your office?

## P—Praise—Conclusion

Donna - thank you for working with me on this. I have come to really value your diligence and attention to detail. I am confident that the report will reflect your thoroughness and precision!



# Behavior Correction

## Who...needs correcting

Karen

## Praise—Introduction

I want you to know how much I appreciate your commitment, as my assistant, to "protect" me from nuisance phone calls. You've done a great job reassigning calls that really needed to be handled by others. You have saved me countless hours, AND I want to make sure that your reputation for being a strong protector is matched with the positive image of a "people person."

## Situation—Where and When

Just before lunch, I heard you handle a phone call from one of our dealers.

## Behavior—What needs correcting

Your words were definitely professional, but when you said, "He doesn't have time to deal with those details" I wondered how the dealer was feeling about that response.

## Impact—How it affected me

I felt that you came across a bit abrupt and bureaucratic, rather than warm and helpful. I'm concerned that we help our dealers feel welcomed when they call, and that we generate a sense of enthusiastic hospitality—that our dealers never feel that they have intruded on us or our schedule. After all, they are the reason we all have jobs around here!

## G—Get Their Opinion

Does this all make sense to you? Were you aware of how you might have been received over the phone?

## A—Agree on correction

Let's agree to "err" on the side of allowing me to interact with dealers. When you're in a similar situation in the future, maybe it would be better to say, "I'm not sure he's the best person to help you with this, but I know he would want to make sure that this is handled well for you. Can I transfer you to the shipping department, or do you want to talk to him first about this?"

## P—Praise—Conclusion

Karen, I want to emphasize how much I depend on you, and what a great job I think you are doing. I've had my share of assistants, and none have handled the challenges you have with such grace and style. Thanks for representing me so well!

# Behavior Correction

**Who...needs correcting**

**Praise—Introduction**

**Situation—Where and When**

**Behavior—What needs correcting**

**Impact—How it affected me**

**G—Get Their Opinion**

**A—Agree on correction**

**P—Praise—Conclusion**