

## Turn Corrections Into Compliments

### Dr. Jim Dyke

Mike Vance is a creative thinker and author who writes about his long association with Walt Disney. Vance has a non-negotiable rule for any leader who wants to have a creative and effective organization: *Never sanction incompetence.* This is the tough but important job of a leader: to step in with a correcting influence when people miss the mark in their assignment or their behavior.

So... How do you do that difficult job without damaging the person or the positive team spirit you work so hard to create?

### Respect = Truth + Love

Start by embracing the right "people" value for your team. It's R-E-S-P-E-C-T and you get it when you combine difficult truth with genuine concern for your people. It takes truth AND love together, to provide healthy and affirming correction. Say what needs to be said. *But say it with kindness.* And don't forget: one of the best indicators of respect is keeping the process of criticism private – *never correct a person in public.*

### Tasks Need the Right Foundation

There are three basic things that might need correction: attendance, behaviors, and tasks. Let's start with the easy one. Mistakes in assigned tasks are easier to correct later if you lay the right foundation in the very beginning.

### Begin With The End

*When you give an assignment in the first place...* (1) Start with the most important part: Be sure to define the outcome you want, and the values that will shape the effort. (2) Give clear instructions, and take time to get immediate feedback on those instructions. And (3) Establish the expectation of future feedback as the norm (*"get back to me with a rough copy so we can make any needed adjustments"*) IF IT'S NEEDED.

### Behaviors Need the Right Focus

Correcting bad behavior is a little trickier. Use the Situation / Behavior / Impact approach that *The Center for Creative Leadership* teaches executives: (1) First describe the situation in which your team member behaved inadequately; (2) Then describe the behavior itself; (3) Finally, describe how that behavior impacted *you, others, or the organization itself.* By linking their behavior with its wider effect you are helping them gain the big picture of work and relationships. The Point: Their behavior is important, *because it affects the people around them.*

### Make a Sandwich

Cosmetics mogul Mary Kay Ash always encouraged her leaders to "sandwich every bit of criticism between two heavy layers of praise." So... make every correction a three-layer process. (1) Express genuine appreciation for their effort so far and for their behavioral strength. (2) Be specific about what needs to be corrected, and why. (3) Close with another expression of appreciation and affirmation.

### Don't Try This On Your Own

Putting these principles into practice takes a little more detail than what we've supplied in this brief newsletter. Don't try these ideas without the help and direction that you will find in the matching issue of *The Personal Trainer.* Use the instructions and forms provided in the companion issue to help you turn *corrections* into *compliments*, and make a tough job an opportunity for affirmation and praise.



**Leadership Tracks** is a resource for growing leaders edited 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.

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