



How to Give and Receive Constructive Criticism

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Give your team the tools to feel comfortable giving and receiving constructive criticism and feedback from their co-workers. This lesson could also be used as an introductory training resource for new supervisors or managers.

HOW TO USE: These exercises are best if you have about 1 hour to spend on the exercise and the discussion. You can complete each exercise separately if you don't have time to complete both. This lesson also is most effective with team members who are familiar with each other's performance in the store. To get started, ask your associates to team up in pairs or groups of three. As you are working through these exercises, if you find employees who need to improve their retail skills, have them work through NHPA's Basic Training Course in Selling Skills to help them deliver better customer service.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introductory Remarks: During these exercises, you'll learn how to communicate constructive criticism to your co-workers, and you'll have the opportunity to reflect on your own work performance. The goal of this exercise is to improve how we communicate with each other, improve our ability to think critically about our performance and continually find ways we can improve workplace culture and the customer experience.

Exercise 1

In pairs, small groups or in the large group, ask each person to share one way they contribute to the company and one way they can improve.

Recommendation: Supervisors who are participating in the exercise with their direct reports should take notes during this exercise to follow up during regular evaluations.

Exercise 2

Ask each pair or group to trade off constructive criticism about the other person's performance using "the sandwich method." The sandwich method is a technique that layers constructive criticism between two compliments about a person's performance.

Example: Anna is great at greeting customers right when they walk in the door. She needs to improve her sense of urgency when there are many customers in line, but her positive attitude during busy moments keeps customers happy.

The goal of this exercise is for you to practice delivering an improvement opportunity in a constructive and positive way. It's also an opportunity for you to praise your fellow team members and to learn something about yourself that you may be able to improve.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When and where should you correct a co-worker's improper conduct?
While some behavior should be corrected as soon as possible, it's crucial that customers and other staff never see or hear corrective actions. If conduct needs to be corrected immediately, ask the associate to accompany you to a place in the store where other people can't overhear the conversation.
- How should you respond if you disagree with your supervisor's feedback?
It's important for you and your supervisor to have an open, honest dialogue about your performance. If you disagree with their assessment, say so, and offer examples that show otherwise without being argumentative. If necessary, take some time to reflect on their feedback before following up.
- What's the benefit of receiving constructive criticism?
To grow in the business, it's important to have concrete examples of how we can improve our performance. It's also important to understand the value of receiving feedback from people who may have more experience than we do.

FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING

To improve your employees' customer service, have them take the Basic Training Course in Selling Skills, where they will learn about making a good first impression, dealing with customer complaints, overcoming objections, closing the sale and much more. The course is available to NHPA Training Members. Learn how to become an NHPA Training Member at yournhpa.org/training or call 800-772-4424.