big think Edge

Building Relationships Through Likability: Present Feedback on a Silver Platter (A 4-Part Model) with Michelle Lederman, Connection Instigator and Author, *The 11 Laws of Likability*

If you're giving somebody feedback, some part of you obviously hopes they'll take it. Yet all too often the way we offer advice virtually ensures that it will be ignored. "Mood memory" plays a major role in how people process advice— denigrate them and (at best) they'll ignore you. Make them feel good about themselves, and you've got a foot in the door. Michelle Lederman's four-part model for offering feedback "on a silver platter" is designed to ensure that your valuable insight has its intended effect: to make something better. The four steps, *ask, elaborate, empower,* and *collaborate* are all about connecting with the recipient and helping her refine her own work. It turns the conversation from a lecture into an eager collaboration from which both parties can benefit.

1. Ask

- Start with an **open-ended question**. Don't ask: *Do you think that went well?* Ask: *How do you think it went? What do you think went well? What do you think could have gone better?* Get the other person talking to open the feedback conversation.
- **Listen** for the other person's unique:
  - understanding
  - concern
  - interpretation
- Check your assumptions at the door. Be open to other narratives around the situation.

2. Elaborate

- Add **information** that you might have collected from other sources. Don't say: *"I heard..."* Say: *"I received information from..."* Share your perspective.
- Aim to **elevate** the other person. Feedback isn't always negative. Feedback is simply information that you want somebody to put into action.

3. Empower

- Elicit ideas from the other person for **next steps**. Ask: *What would you do differently next time? How do you think we can move forward from here?*
- Remember that empowerment requires **flexing** to your employee. If the person prefers *direct feedback*, get to the point. If the person prefers *tact and diplomacy*, massage your messaging.
- When you delay feedback, you delay the value you're placing on it. Don't wait long to start the conversation.

4. Collaborate

- Employees receiving feedback may just defer to you. Build from their ideas. Say: "*I love that! In addition, maybe you could*..." Ask: "*What do you think?"* Don't dictate; **exchange**.
- Share a similar experience you went through to create a teachable moment and **build trust**. When you're vulnerable with your employees, you increase your *credibility*.
- Assure the person that everything is OK. We all make mistakes and still succeed.
- Focus on **mood memory**. People remember more how you made them *feel* than anything that you said.
- Ensure that you're being **action-oriented**. Feedback isn't about berating or punishing somebody.

Begin by *asking* open-ended questions. "How do you think that went?" not, "Do you think that was clear enough?" This triggers the person's genuine insights into her own performance—useful feedback that might otherwise have remained unconscious. Having asked, be sure to listen deeply to the answer. Really take in what the person is telling you. What can you add to it? Here you'll *elaborate*, based on your own opinions and outside information she might not have access to. The aim is to add value to the person's ideas, rather than contradicting them. Follow this up with the *empowering* act of soliciting her ideas about next steps. At this point, you'll *collaborate* by building on the solutions she offers. Suggest tweaks or extensions that clearly build upon her insights, giving them priority. Show vulnerability and build trust by sharing anecdotes of your own, similar experiences and how you handled them for better or worse. In the end, you're working toward a sense of partnership and mutual respect that results in real buy-in and meaningful change.

Prepare

Before you watch the video

Recall a time when someone gave you good advice that changed your life for the better. How did he/she present it? Why did you listen?

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Practice

After you watch the video

In your opinion, why does Michelle Lederman emphasize the importance of *timeliness* in giving feedback? Why is speed so essential?

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Why is it important to begin with open-ended questions?

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If someone used this four-step framework in giving you feedback, what would increase the likelihood of your trusting and working willingly with them?

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