

Presidents Message

Giving Constructive Feedback



One of my active projects is a 2 ½ year effort now in its final phase and very close to completion. With no possibility of a contract extension, I have put forth a lot of effort along with my entire team over the past 6 months, striving to meet all deliverables on time and utilizing the allocated funds. Last Friday, my boss sent me an email that took the wind out of my sails. It wasn't at all constructive, and unfortunately the conclusions regarding my performance as the project manager (in capital letters), were based upon inaccurate information. Does it happen? Yes. Will I address this with him and assure he's got the correct facts? Of course. That's the good news – he was very specific in his email, so I understand exactly what information I must clarify for him. But as is human nature receipt of this feedback, in the manner it was given, was pretty much on my mind throughout the weekend. It was upsetting and I was disappointed to receive an email like this. In my opinion, he handled the task of providing feedback poorly. A former colleague of mine used to refer to giving and receiving feedback as a gift. I chose to write about it this month because I believe this is probably one of our most important yet difficult management tasks: providing constructive and useful feedback to others.

There isn't anyone in the workforce that doesn't benefit from feedback. And it's a mandatory ingredient for building a productive, cohesive team. Giving feedback is a task that Project Managers must perform again and again as we give direction. It's critical to let people know how their performance is contributing or impacting the project, and what the next steps are in terms of expectations and goals. Especially in today's rapid-paced, changeable and demanding workplace, it's too easy to take a wrong turn and impact our project commitments. Providing feedback is an essential skill for indicating when things are going in the right direction or for redirecting performance. Positive or negative - the key is giving constructive feedback. To provide

guidance and information in a useful manner, whether reinforcing effective behavior or guiding someone back on track.

I recommend the following steps be considered to deliver helpful feedback. Most important is maintaining a straight forward and open line of communication. The goal is to provide direction that makes things better, and if feedback isn't constructive, it won't.

1. State the constructive purpose of your feedback.
Clarify your purpose right at the start of the discussion with one short sentence. "I want you to know how your Rev A has streamlined my operation...." Regarding corrective feedback - if my boss had just picked up the phone and said "I have a concern about..." or "I need to understand why....", we could have had a productive discussion, and his communication would have been far more effective. Angry or emotional feedback can be harmful to your team. I personally was not very open to the email I received and it certainly did not communicate to me that he was taking the initiative to make things better.
2. Be specific and focus on direct observations rather than on opinions or rumors.
When you describe a specific observation, the other person can understand exactly what you're talking about. There's nothing more motivating to a person or your entire team than getting clear and specific positive recognition. Also separate actual observations from your opinions or what you've heard from others. Rumors can simply be wrong and opinions make people defensive, especially if you are providing corrective feedback. Have a specific action or event in mind; and be able to say when/where, who was involved and what the results were. Starting with the facts provides a common ground on which to build – whether your feedback is positive or not.
3. Describe your reactions.
People often get submersed in their own thoughts and can really benefit from seeing themselves from another's perspective. When you describe your reactions or the consequences of the observed behavior, the other person can better appreciate the impact their actions are having on others or on the organization as a whole. Perception is performance – you can also give examples of how you and others are specifically affected.
4. Give the other person the opportunity to respond.
It's important to allow a person the chance to react to your feedback. Good or bad. It builds self-esteem and shows that you recognize the value of their ideas, suggestions, responses and reactions. Getting the other's point of view fosters open communication and also creates the opportunity to check for any misunderstandings or misinterpretations.
5. Offer suggestions.
Especially if your feedback is likely to be perceived as negative,

offering suggestions is one way to show that your intent is to make things better. Now past the evaluation, you've moved on toward supporting a change or improvement. Specific suggestions can encourage people to think constructively about a situation. And everyone benefits from ideas that help us perform better. We learn from suggestions provided by others, especially when they illustrate a new or different way of doing things.

6. Summarize and express your support.

It's always good to summarize – whether it's a review of actions items from a kick-off meeting, employee evaluation, a coaching opportunity, and when providing constructive feedback. Summarizing avoids any misunderstanding and assures the communication is clear. It's our opportunity to show support, and to conclude even a negative feedback situation on a positive note.

Using feedback constructively benefits everyone. As I write this article, I haven't yet had the opportunity to speak with my boss about the situation that sent me to this topic. I will, at his earliest convenience – and I am confident that our discussion will have a productive outcome.

Carmen Jones
PMI-NNV President

Monthly Dinner Meeting

Implementing Business Processes That Produce Better Projects

Most Project Managers are simply assigned a project to direct. The vision for the project is usually explained, along with many of the requirements, desired features or outcomes, so that the Project Manager learns enough to prepare a plan and organize the team. Few get an explanation of how the project fits into the business' strategic plan, goals, policies, finances, staffing, market development, or other needs that must be met to sustain the organization. As a consequence, they too often focus only on the needs of the project, and consider that the organization's procedures, forms, and reporting requirements only interfere with efforts to get the work done. The presentation scheduled for June 26 continues the theme from April: understanding the "big picture" context to produce a more successful project. In this presentation, Martin Gastanaga, Director of Operations for Noble



Studios, will use a project example where the deployment of SAS70 within a service-based business raised understanding of the importance of more complete project definition and Standard Operating Procedures.

Martin Gastanaga has been involved in Internet development and marketing for 17 years, starting his first company in 1994. He grew it as a boot strap startup to 20 employees, then merged with Twelve Horses. As the COO of Twelve Horses, he led their growth to over 60 employees with two offices in the United States and one in Ireland. In 2002, he sold Twelve Horses to One to One Interactive, where he became the Senior Vice President of Client Engagement.



After taking some time off, he took a position with Noble Studios and is now their Director of Operations. The company specializes in Web and mobile application design and development, social online strategy and marketing, and brand development. Martin takes an active, hands-on role, leading improvement of internal processes and team productivity, providing direction and removing obstacles for the staff. He especially enjoys motivating technical developers, account service representatives, and creative teams to produce great results. He does this by mentoring, guiding and educating staff on how their project, personal and team goals align with overall company strategies. This helps employees simultaneously complete their projects successfully and achieve the long-term vision of the organization.

Meeting Time and Location

The presentation is scheduled for the June 26 meeting of the Project Management Institute's Northern Nevada Chapter. It will be held at Firkin & Wolf restaurant (13971 S. Virginia St in the Sierra Summit Mall, Reno). Networking begins at 5:30pm, dinner and announcements begin at 6:15pm, and the presentation begins at 7:00pm. The charge for dinner and presentation is \$25 (\$20 members); \$10 (\$5 members) for the presentation only. Register on-line at <http://www.pmi-nnv.org/>. One PDU can be earned for attending. Additional information can be obtained from Wynnlee Crisp, NNV PMI Program Director, (425) 681-7887.

**For those of you that will be joining us for dinner, the dinner options for this month are as follows:

- Grilled Chicken Cobb Salad
- Chicken Marsala
- BLT with Avocado
- Roast Beef Dip

Monthly Lunch Meetings

In addition to the PMI-NNV monthly evening meetings, we will continue having two lunch time meetings so that you may attend the location most convenient for you. The format will be the same for all lunch meetings: relaxed with lots of discussion about real-life experiences in project management.

June - Data Gathering Techniques

June 12th

Our monthly Carson City lunch forum will be held every 2nd Tuesday of every month at High Sierra Brewing Company at 11:30 to 1:00pm.

June 19th

Our monthly Reno lunch forum will be held every 3rd Tuesday of every month at Firkin & Wolf at 11:30 to 1:00.

Check-Out the Great Initiatives by PMI's Global Chapters

All around the world, PMI members and communities are using their project management skills to benefit society.

Volunteers are giving back, whether it is helping manage the aftermath of a natural disaster, working with not-for-profit organizations or mentoring disadvantaged youth.

[Find out more information](#) about what some of the PMI chapters around the world have been doing.

International Project Management Day

State of Nevada Recognizes 1Nov12 as

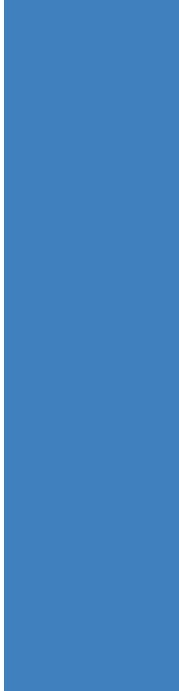
International Project Management Day

PMI-NNV has been working with our counterparts in Southern Nevada, PMI-SNC, and the international project management day (IPMD) organization to have the State of Nevada recognize November 1, 2012 as our first official project management day for the State of Nevada. We are pleased to announce we have received a signed proclamation on the 30th of May from Governor Sandoval and our Secretary of State, Ross Miller, recognizing November 1, 2012 as our first IPM Day for the State of Nevada.

The international project management day (IPM day) is intended to encourage project based organizations worldwide or organizations who utilize project management methodologies to schedule some type of recognition event within their organizations or coordinated locally with others to truly demonstrate appreciation for the achievements of project managers and their teams.

Julia Childs, VP of Marketing for PMI-NNV, will be working with our chapter members to update our chapter portfolio with contact information for managers responsible for project managers in Northern Nevada companies. With this information we are going to launch an outreach program encouraging these managers to recognize November 1, 2012 as IPM day with their staff, and provide ideas for them to raise awareness of their project managers - e.g. tell you what a great job you are doing, send an eCard recognizing the day, take you to lunch, or even hold a company or staff meeting recognizing the achievements of their project managers. IPM day is always the first Thursday in November. For more information on IPM Day, you can visit their website:

<http://internationalpmday.org/>



More news to come!



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