



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – December 2004

Welcome to **Merge's Monthly Mega-Minute** - a bite-sized, yet substantial and practical, nugget of information that you can use immediately to enhance your professional and personal success.

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

When should you act on feedback?

The ability to accept feedback is an essential skill to your continued professional and personal success. Yet criticism is often difficult to take. If you've ever struggled with listening, evaluating and acting on some one else's observations and opinions, then try this approach. Ask yourself two questions – “Is the criticism valid?” and “Is the giver of the feedback important to my career or personal life, or is the feedback itself important to my ongoing success?” The answers to these two questions will help you determine what action to take next.

You can have four possible responses to the questions: valid and important; valid and not important; not valid and important; and not valid and not important. The only scenario you should act on is the first one; for the rest, offer a non-committal response and move on. Unless it's in the first category, don't agonize over it and carry it around for the rest of the day. Let it go!

Let's try some examples. If the cashier at the coffee shop points out that your shoes don't match your suit, the criticism (and the source) is clearly not important. And certainly, with your great sense of style, you know the feedback is not valid. If your boss tells you that your shoes don't match your suit, now the source becomes important, even though the criticism may still not be valid. A colleague points out that you mispronounced a word: while the feedback is valid, you know that it is not important to your ongoing success. In each of these three scenarios, offer a non-committal response such as “I can see why you might think that way”, or “Thanks for telling me”, or “I appreciate the feedback”. Then move on! If on the other hand, the boss notes an incorrect calculation in a report that you prepare for senior management, then the criticism is both valid and important. This is the only one you should act on!