



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – September 2006

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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

Giving feedback is like eating spinach

You've probably heard that spinach is an excellent source of dietary iron. What you might not have known is that there are two kinds of iron – heme and non-heme, and spinach contains the latter. The significance: non-heme iron is more difficult for the body to absorb, unless it is accompanied by an enhancer, such as the vitamin C in citrus fruits. In other words, if you were to drink a glass of orange juice while eating your spinach, your body would absorb and accept the iron much more effectively and quickly.

As a leader, you are charged with offering open, honest and constructive feedback to the people you lead. But, just like spinach, if you give it to them "straight up", natural human defensiveness might cause them not to absorb and accept the feedback the way you'd like. Fortunately, just like with spinach, you can use enhancers, ways to help your employees recognize and take in the feedback more effectively and quickly. Here are two possibilities: in your discussions, focus on the performance rather than the person, and on the future rather than the past. So, instead of "You've been coming in late every morning for the past two weeks," try "When you come in late to work, it affects our customer service levels. How can we prevent this from happening from now on?" Here's a third idea: separate fact from opinion by describing observable behaviour. For example, "You are so disorganized," may not get the positive change you'd like. But, you may get a better response by describing the specific behaviour that makes you think the employee is disorganized: "When I ask you for patient files, I find that you are unable to locate them."

Who would have thought that giving good feedback to employees is a lot like eating spinach!