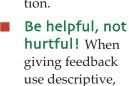# Giving and Receiving Feedback

Feedback—it goes both ways – to give it you have to be willing to receive it! Feedback is a beneficial, and necessary, tool for leadership development. If you want to grow as a leader you need to learn how to give and receive compliments and criticism. What better time to practice than with a group of peer leaders that you trust, and can learn a lot from? You will be a better leader for it!

To help you best realize your potential as a feedback giver and seeker, consider the following points:

■ **You aren't perfect—let's just get that out there!** It is tough to hear, but you are in good company, as no one is perfect. That said, it should make receiving suggestions for improvement a little easier and even rewarding as your ultimate goal is improvement, not perfection.

■ **Be helpful, not hurtful!** When giving feedback use descriptive, constructive and helpful language. Ways to best do this include using "I" statements, speaking in specifics rather than generalities, focusing on things that can be changed, and avoiding giving suggestions when you are angry or frustrated.

■ **Find a balance!** Feedback includes compliments as well as criticism. Go out of your way to let people know when they have done a good job! This is

…consider how you like to be thanked for a job well done. What kinds of "thank yous" mean the most? Now consider some simple ways you can thank and recognize those you work with.

Starters

Sometimes starting the feedback process is the hardest part when giving a compliment or criticism. Consider these "starters" when sharing feedback with others.

Compliment for going the extra mile – "Sarah, I noticed today that you went out of your way to…"

Criticism of not pulling their weight – "Marcus, you are a valued member of this team and I benefit from your skills and talents when you are engaged in our team effort…"

Compliment for developing as a leader - "John, I remember when we first started on the executive board and I have enjoyed watching you grow as a leader who…"

Criticism of causing disruptions – "Ella, I have enjoyed having you as a part of our small group and I feel when you give your full attention to…."

especially true if they have improved in an area that you had earlier given feedback on – let them know that you noticed and it is valued.

■ **Public versus private!** Consider your surroundings before you give someone feedback. No one likes to be in the limelight when a shortcoming is being addressed. Find time in a private, less visible location, to provide a suggestion or tip for improvement. Alternatively, some people are motivated by public acknowledgement. In a team meeting recognize the good work of a fellow member!

■ **Kill 'em with kindness!** Sometimes you just can't make someone happy. They will always be the first to tell you what is wrong and last to tell you what went right. In these situations, you may have to swallow your pride – and your frustration —and thank them for the feedback and let it go! If you have done all you can to address their concerns, then you have done your best.