



CONSTRUCTUS INTERNATIONAL

Developing a Philosophy for Criticism

STATEMENT: I coached basketball for 44 years – 10 at the high school and 34 at the intercollegiate levels. I also served as the Athletic Director, Athletic Chair and Assistant to the President at the collegiate level. I have never owned a business, but when I have spoken to executives at IBM, Sun Microsystems and various other businesses, I have found that there is a strong correlation between business leaders and coaches. I do hope my experiences from the world of coaching will give you insights into your leadership.

PROBLEM: Leaders must critique those who report to them, yet very few leaders consciously think about developing a Philosophy of Criticism. How do coaches critique their players while not hurting their confidence and how do business leaders critique their employees yet still have them come to work with a positive attitude?

AFFECT: A leader's criticism can destroy morale on a team or in a business, and poor morale can result in losses of games or profits. In the extreme, it can literally close a business.

LEADERSHIP FACTOR: As leaders of "teams" or companies, we many times do not develop a definitive structure or system of criticism. We rely on past experiences of how were dealt with as a youth or as an employee in other organizations, with no regard to a structured philosophy or thought process of how we offer criticism. As a result of not thinking through ways to criticize actions within a company, we sometimes select methods that are automatic to our reaction to a situation, hence the result does not produce positive reactions with company employees or the company morale.

SOLUTIONS: Let me give you some thoughts and some examples of how to develop a philosophy of criticism. After you read this, it is our hope that you settle in on a way to criticize actions within your company, in a manner that will help produce great employee relations as well as very productive workers as well.

Questions to ask ourselves:

1. When do we criticize?

We came to the conclusion that two things were not acceptable on our teams and must be reprimanded – physical laziness and mental laziness. Both are not fair to teammates. If someone in the business is constantly late for work or meetings or continues to make errors after we know they have learned the skill, then they are not fair to their team. Physical and mental laziness must be addressed in any successful organization.





2. What do we criticize?

In the outstanding book, The One Minute Manager, the emphasis is that we criticize the action, not the person. Some coaches do not believe this. They believe that you rip both the action and the person. I played for one coach who believed this and to survive in the program you had to tune him out when he criticized your personhood or he would destroy your confidence. The real problem came when the tuning out became so prevalent my teammates and I continued to tune him out when he was teaching. So, critiquing the action, not the person, was something I carried into my coaching.

3. How do we criticize?

In the book about Coach Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers, Instant Replay, author and Green Bay player Jerry Kramer states that when Coach Lombardi criticized you in practice, you sure knew it! But he said when the practice was over, Lombardi would find some good aspect of your play and praise you. Morgan Wooten, the great DeMatha High School coach, speaks to the "Sandwich Theory" – Praise, Critique, Praise. You literally sandwich the criticism with praise.

IMPLEMENTATION: As a leader of a team or company, we must cultivate a plan of how we will implement our newly developed philosophy. In a company setting this may mean writing up the philosophy in a company manual for all to see. It may mean meeting with managers and other people in management positions who direct others to set a plan to implement the new changes. No matter what a plan with action must take place.

DELEGATE: As discussed above, delegate someone or select a team of people to consciously implement the new philosophy. Make sure the team agrees and has the same views, as they will be "selling" this to other managers whom will implement the idea.

FOLLOW-UP AND REPORT: As leaders we want to know if what we developed is working and is producing good results. If not, we need to change the way it works or modify it a bit. Have the people whom you delegated to implement the system follow-up and report to inform you of how the new philosophy is working.

EVALUATE: Over extended periods of time we will see either a big change or no change at all. At major company management meeting, this would be a time to evaluate the philosophy and how it has been implemented and if it had a chance to work as it was intended.





Philosophy of Criticisms Worksheet

Problem:

1. Do I have a philosophy of Criticism? _____
2. If so, what is it and is it effective?

Affect:

1. How does my current philosophy affect actions within my company?

Leadership:

2. As a leader of my company, how am I demonstrating this philosophy?

Solutions:

1. When do we criticize?

2. What do we criticize?

3. How do we criticize?

Implementation:

1. How will we implement the new idea?





2. What is the time frame in which we will implement the changes?

Delegation:

1. Who will I delegate to help implement the new idea?

Report / Follow-up:

1. How will those in charge follow-up?

2. How often will we follow-up?

Evaluation:

1. When will we evaluate and assess whether or not the new idea is working?

2. How will we know if the new idea is working?

