

IS IT REALLY BETTER TO GIVE THAN RECEIVE?

By Marilyn Thiet

There are so many areas in which I would agree with the saying it is better to give than receive. Certainly this holds true in the areas of giving of your time, talents, and gifts. But what about giving feedback? Do you seek and receive feedback as much as you give it? As leaders it is our job to give feedback to those we lead. Providing positive, constructive, direct, timely, consistent feedback is an elemental expectation of every manager and leader. For many of us that is easier said than done. Providing appropriate and useful feedback takes thought and time. It is a skill that many of us have to continue to practice, develop and grow over our entire career. If as a leader you are not deliberately practicing this skill you probably should be.

As difficult as providing good feedback may be, seeking feedback, regardless of your level within an organization proves much harder for most people. “How can I do better? What am I doing that I don’t know? What am I not doing that I don’t see?” are questions that Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, author of the wildly popular book “Lean In”, says can lead to multiple benefits. According to Sandberg, as difficult as it may be to hear the truth, the upside of painful knowledge is so much greater than the downside of blissful ignorance. Blissful ignorance, a state of mind that is so easy to achieve and maintain. If I don’t look in the mirror, I don’t have to see the real me, warts and all. But as a leader, blissful ignorance is not a choice, not if you desire to be a great leader. According to the latest research by Zenger Folkman, leaders who seek feedback are better liked and more effective leaders than those who do not seek feedback. In an earlier blog I talked about the importance of finding a person that you can trust to hold the mirror for you. Once you find that person, it is up to you to look in the mirror, accept what you see, and make changes in the areas that are not working for you or your team.

Take time this week to be mindful of the role feedback plays in your communications. On a daily basis are you seeking feedback as much as you are giving it (assuming you are giving it often!). Are you listening to the feedback you are given and making an effort to use it in a constructive way? And are you acknowledging and thanking the people who are providing the feedback to you? Having someone tell you that you are doing a great job will make you feel good for about 30 seconds. Having someone give you honest, direct, and constructive feedback may change and impact you for a lifetime.