

## Why is it Hard to Accept Feedback on a Business Pitch?

(Updated: June 16, 2017)

It takes courage to stand up in front of others and make a presentation. It takes even more courage to make a presentation that intends to persuade others.

**But it takes the most courage to make a presentation . . . receive critical feedback on your effort . . . and then respond positively to negative feedback.**

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Friedrich Nietzsche, historic philosopher, and  
Kelly Clarkson, American Idol

Nothing prepares you for negative feedback. It hurts! You've tried your best, and here is someone criticizing you.

But if you take a moment to reflect . . . you have to admit that *everyone* improves when they're given feedback. The best feedback is called "coaching," which means the person providing the feedback is working hard to help you improve your performance.

But even harsh, negative feedback delivered in a painful way can still include valuable nuggets of information that will help you improve your performance.

Or, as author Dick Grote wrote in the *Harvard Business Review*: "Even though negative feedback may be badly delivered, it may be accurate."

We've learned that entrepreneurs and small business leaders are tenacious people. Tenacity comes in many forms . . . and one form is the ability to withstand criticism, find the value in what you're hearing, and come back stronger.

Maybe the best rule for accepting feedback suggested by Dick Grote is: "Listen to negative feedback without planning your response." What he means is: take the time to really *listen* . . . and maybe you'll find that even the most difficult feedback to accept contains important insights on how you can become a more effective communicator.

We're going to ask your classmates, your teacher and maybe an business mentor to video your practice business pitch *and then give you feedback*. While you listen to that feedback, follow these three rules:

- 1) **Listen and List** - while you're receiving feedback, take notes on the key points of feedback you're receiving.
- 2) **Repeat and Confirm** - once the feedback is complete, repeat what you've heard. Confirm with your critics that what you "heard" accurately reflects the feedback they were trying to give.
- 3) **Adjust and Improve** - once you've confirmed the feedback you've received, make it a point of honor to find ways that you can adjust and improve your presentation style.

**Harvard Business Review Rules for Accepting Feedback**

- 1) **Listen Carefully** - even though negative feedback may be badly delivered, it may be accurate.
- 2) **Don't Get Defensive** - try to prove someone wrong and we become argumentative . . . close-minded to the useful information that may be hidden in the poorly presented feedback.
- 3) **Ask for Time** - it's good to ask for time to consider what your informant has told you. Saying something like, "I appreciate your feedback. I'd like give what you've said some real thought . . ." will demonstrate that you take what you've been told seriously."

*How to Handle Negative Feedback, Dick Grote*

**If you're as courageous and tenacious as an effective entrepreneur / small business leader, maybe you (and your classmates) can all post the opportunities for improvement you've heard, so you can learn from others as well.**  
**All for one, and one for all! Good luck.**