



TriOpus Group

Shaping your company's talent

This month:
GIVING FEEDBACK



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For the past 31 years, Lake Superior State University has released its annual *List of Words and Phrases Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-Use, Over-Use and General Uselessness*. Over the years, some of the offenders have been: hunker down, person of interest, 'we' are pregnant, metrosexual, truthiness, junk science and awesome. Since communication and language are such important tools in leadership, we thought this month we would focus our Newsletter upon trying to use the most appropriate language when coaching and leading. Giving effective feedback is a skill to be developed like any other. The words you choose to use when giving feedback should be truly reflective of the behavior and/or outcome you're focusing on. If your leaders are looking to develop their feedback skills, TriOpus Group can help! Give us a call at **1-800-864-2721**.

"THE GREAT ENEMY OF CLEAR LANGUAGE IS INSINCERITY"
~GEORGE ORWELL

just what are you trying to say?



"If you have nothing to say, say nothing."
-Mark Twain



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The late Comedian Rodney Dangerfield never got any respect. I think I know how he felt.

Recently, speaking at a conference, I walked off the stage feeling pretty proud of myself. Afterwards, I met with someone who was in the audience whose opinion I value. 'How was it?' I asked. 'It was good' she said. 'Good? Good? Is that it?' I asked. I was deflated. It was as if she had told me that it was about the worst speech she had ever heard and that she hoped to never have to listen to me again.

So how was it that I had translated the word 'good' into such a negative review of that speech? How could this happen? Then I started thinking about all the words that we hear everyday and that we use to tell people how we feel about something they have done. Then it all started to make some sense.

It would seem that over the years we have watered our wine. When I was much younger, seeing the word 'good' on one of my school assignments – a rare occurrence I might add – gave me a warm feeling. Not so today. The word 'good' is now trumped by 'great', then 'fantastic' and the ever-present 'awesome'. And if you think it ends there, there is 'really awesome' and 'really really awesome'. Is it any wonder the word 'good' gets so little respect? Is it possible that the word 'fantastic' means about the same as 'good' used to in years past?

As leaders or peers, in business we have a responsibility to let people know how they are doing, to provide meaningful feedback so to speak. But overusing words such as awesome every time someone does what is expected of them creates a challenge for us. How do we distinguish between 'mediocre awesome' and 'outstanding awesome', if you get my meaning? I would argue that most things that are described as awesome do not, in fact, fill us with awe. They are important but ordinary. They are (how should I say it?) 'good'. But since these superlatives are in our lexicon, are being used over and over, and are not likely to disappear, how can we improve the situation? Here are a couple of tips to help you.

When providing feedback to someone you lead or work with, regardless of which adjectives you use:

- ☆ Make sure the feedback is relevant – it must pertain to what they are doing.
- ☆ Make sure it is specific – if someone took work home to get things done, thank them for it.
- ☆ Tell them about the impact of what they've done – if taking work home meant the proposal went out on time, let them know.
- ☆ Make sure it is current and timely – if it happened this week, tell them this week.

Everyone I've ever met likes and probably needs to be told they are doing a good job. After all, it is a confirmation that what they are doing is on track and making a difference in the organization. That's not a 'nice to have', that's essential for your business, your department, or your team.

Because it is so important, I'd like to ask each of you to use those steps I mentioned above when providing feedback. Can you do that for me?

That would be incredibly awesome. It would be good too.