

LEEdership LEGACY SERIES™

7 TIPS FOR A "BALANCED" EVALUATION

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ABOUT THE 7 TIPS FOR A "BALANCED" EVALUATION

"Catch people doing something right."

Has anyone ever said that to you before?

Those were words of wisdom given to me by my professional speaking mentor Sporty King. He observed how my evaluation skills needed improvement. I was good at highlighting what a speaker or leader could do better for the next time. Unfortunately, I was not consistent in sharing what a speaker or leader did well – unless something truly resonated with me. Sporty reminded me that we will all have areas in which we must improve. He shared the best way to motivate a speaker or leader to improve is to share what they are already doing right. He encouraged me not to leave those details out of my evaluation.

How about you?

Do you include "the good" in your evaluation?

Or, do you leave it out – like I did?

In the Toastmasters International resource manual entitled, "Effective Evaluation" (www.toastmasters.org/202), it says, *"In Toastmasters, feedback is called evaluation, and it is the heart of the Toastmasters educational program...Your purpose as an Evaluator is to provide honest reaction in a constructive manner to the person's efforts, using the evaluation guides provided. You are not a judge or an authority on speaking or leadership. When you evaluate, you are simply giving your own reaction to the person's speaking or leadership efforts."*

This statement was an "ah-ha moment" for me because it reflected a quote which has influenced the way I live my life. The quote is:

"The challenge is to be a light, not a judge; to be a model, not a critic."

The final 1-2 punch for me which changed how I deliver evaluations came from the "Effective Evaluation" guide. It let me know, *"An evaluation is an opinion, nothing more. This opinion should mention the effect on you, what the speaker or leader did well, areas where the speaker or leader could improve, and specific recommendations for improvement. Keep in mind that you cannot change the person's behavior or force the person to accept your ideas and suggested improvements...But through your evaluation you can provide information that the speaker or leader may consider for future projects. The decision to accept your suggestions is the speaker or leader's alone."*

This information was the turning point in how I now deliver evaluations to speakers and leaders. I've learned a few tricks to help me provide a **"balanced" evaluation**. If you're looking for a way to deliver a **"balanced" evaluation**, meaning, not too harsh or overly kind; one that's helpful and encouraging, I recommend you test out these seven (7) tips:

TIP #1: Read the evaluation guide for the speech/leadership project: the evaluation guide will review the objectives of the project; list questions for you to answer about the project; and give you talking points to use during your 2-3-minute verbal evaluation for the project.

TIP #2: Focus on listening: distractions can easily catch your attention and block your ability to provide a "balanced" evaluation. Give your speaker/leader the attention necessary to listen with your ears and watch with your eyes. Share your opinion of what they did well, along with what you suggest can be done differently for the next time.

TIP #3: Use the "Sandwich Method" for your verbal evaluation: this method allows you to cover the "positives – corrective – positives" of the project. It's a good method to use for your 2-3-minute verbal evaluation because you can cover 1-2 good points first; state an area for improvement next; then close by reiterating the 1-2 good points again.

TIP#4: Use the "LB/NT Method" for your verbal evaluation: this method is an alternative to the "Sandwich Method." It gives you a chance to focus on what you "liked best (LB), as well as, what you recommend the speaker/leader can do differently the "next time" (NT). You can use the evaluation guide to focus on the questions you answered regarding positive aspects of the project; in addition to the questions which allowed you to share recommendations for improvement.

TIP #5: Use "starter phrases" to construct your evaluation: it is essential to say the right thing in your 2-3-minute verbal evaluation. To make sure you provide your opinion in a helpful, encouraging way, proceed your answers in the written evaluation with "starter phrases" such as:

"What I liked most about the speech was [highlight answers to questions that allowed you to focus on the positive]."

"One area where I think you could have shown a little more [highlight the goal/purpose of the speech/leadership project] was where you [give a specific example]."

"I noticed you seemed most confident when you were discussing [give a specific example]."

"I noticed you seemed least confident when you were discussing [give a specific example]."

"I would have liked to see you [give specific example]."

TIP #6: Make it specific: it does not do the speaker/leader any good when evaluations are vague. In order to catch them doing something right, state exactly what they did: *"I was impressed with your ability to stay focused on what you were saying when the cell phone rang during your opening."* As a way to help them improve, give them a clear example: *"What I find helpful in maximizing the time when delivering a report in a staff meeting is to provide a written report with specific details and to deliver a verbal report with highlights of a few details."*

TIP #7: Be confident: your delivery will influence your "**balanced**" evaluation just as much as your words. Use the evaluation guide for the speech/leadership project to make your words specific, helpful, and encouraging. Then use a confident delivery by using appropriate volume and vocal variety; giving eye contact; and moving with purpose to avoid pacing. Speaking of avoiding, avoid saying, *"I'm sorry"* or *"That's just my opinion."* Both phrases detract from your confidence and minimizes the "**balanced**" evaluation you wrote on the evaluation guide.

In closing, a **"balanced" evaluation** is one that can help a speaker or leader improve their communication and/or leadership skills. It is not too harsh nor is it overly kind. It covers what they did well, what they can improve, and suggestions for making their next speech or leadership project better.

When you use the seven (7) tips for a **"balanced" evaluation**, you will catch the speaker/leader doing something right in both your verbal and written evaluations.

Test them out for your next evaluation!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cassandra "D.I.V.A. of Dialog™" Lee, DTM, PDD became exposed to Toastmasters International in 1996 as a member of a Speechcraft class sponsored by a Toastmasters club in Evanston, IL. However, her career as a Toastmaster started in January 1998 when she became an official member of the ABA SPEAKeasies #9424. She credits her growth as a person and development as a professional to the communication and leadership training of Toastmasters. Her professional career flourished from administrative professional to mid-level manager to full-time entrepreneur thanks to Toastmasters. At the same time, her involvement in Toastmasters shifted from member to club officer to Area Governor to Division Governor to Club Sponsor, Club Mentor, Charter Member, Division Governor again, Club Retention Chair, Program Quality Director, and the first-ever District Director for District 103 Toastmasters. She is a Career Advancement Strategist™ who uses **"Divine Inspiration Vocally Applied™"** to educate and empower professional audiences toward workplace satisfaction and career success. She is sponsor, mentor, and charter member of the award-winning Wrightwood-Ashburn Overcomers (WAO) Toastmasters club #771880. Besides "Pivoting Towards Pathways" for 2020, she is working to become certified as an Accredited Speaker (AS) by Toastmasters International. To learn more information about her, visit www.d103tm.org; <http://wao.toastmastersclubs.org> and/or www.divaofdialog.com.

ABOUT THE LEEdership LEGACY SERIES™

The **LEEdership LEGACY SERIES™** is a collection of informational, leadership resources created from the perspective of Cassandra "D.I.V.A. of Dialog™" Lee. She is a distinguished Toastmaster and the first-ever District Director for District 103 Toastmasters. Each report in the series contains details, strategies, tips, and/or plans which can be used for the educational achievement of club members and the distinguished success of club leaders, Area Directors, Division Directors, and District TRIO members of Toastmasters International.



Recipient of the Excellence in Program Quality Award

Past District Director (PDD) and Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) Cassandra "D.I.V.A. of Dialog™" Lee knows a thing or two about education and training. She advised members toward educational achievement and leaders toward distinguished success in her role as Program Quality Director (PQD) for District 30 in the 2016-2017 club year. Her commitment to education and training earned her the "Excellence in Program Quality Award" from Toastmasters International.

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