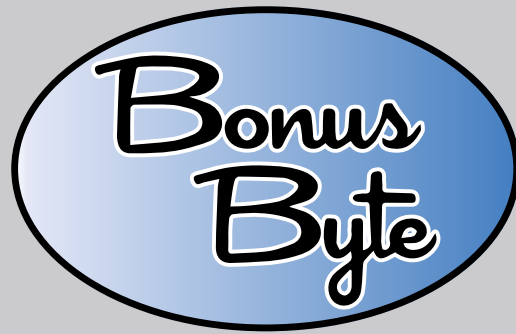


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Making Feedback Easier to Swallow

MAKING FEEDBACK EASIER TO SWALLOW

by Kevin Eikenberry

Everyone has received feedback that was hard to take – perhaps you didn't agree with it, it was a surprise, or it was given in a way that made it hard for you to accept.

The first key to giving better feedback is to learn lessons from when you have been given feedback. If you can correct the errors others have made with you, you are further down the path to giving more successful feedback to others.

One of the most common pieces of advice about successful feedback is what I call “The Feedback Sandwich.” More on the ingredients in a minute, but like any other sandwich, making The Feedback Sandwich incorrectly can make it less palatable, and perhaps even not edible at all!

Hopefully your desire when giving feedback is that people hear it, understand it and put it to use. So it's important to make feedback as valuable and “easy to eat” as we can. When you prepare the feedback sandwich correctly, it will have the maximum possible impact.

A Feedback Sandwich?

Here's how the feedback sandwich is most often described:

When giving someone potentially negative feedback, make sure to give positive feedback first, then any negative feedback, and close with more positive feedback.

Do you see the sandwich? Think of the positive feedback as the bread for the negative feedback in the middle.

Think about the times when you have received feedback like this, and reflect on how well you liked it. If it was done correctly, you probably found it helpful. If not, your sandwich may have left a bad taste in your mouth.

What Makes It Unsavory

In most cases, the main appeal of a sandwich is what's in between the bread.

It's not a sourdough sandwich with salami and provolone, it's a salami and cheese sandwich. You may make a bread choice, but the focus is clearly on what is inside. While this makes sense for a Club or a Rubeen, it makes less sense for a feedback sandwich. Let me explain.

Feedback sandwiches can sometimes be tough to eat because the entire focus is on the middle – the negative feedback. Usually when a coach or leader or parent says they want to give someone feedback, they mean *corrective* (read negative) feedback. And so, while they may want to share a combination of positive negative feedback, the focus is generally on the negative, corrective feedback. This means that even though they may have thought about some positive things to say; they are more specific about the middle (the negative), more passionate about the middle and more focused on the middle.

When the receiver gets that sandwich, the positive feedback is either weak, vague or general, and it's clearly not the focus of the conversation. This leaves the receiver with not much of a sandwich at all.

One common reaction? "They tried to sugar coat their comments with some positive stuff, but all they really wanted me to hear was what I'm doing wrong."

And the result? That feedback isn't well received and perhaps not "eaten" at all (or is the cause of indigestion for a long time).

None of this means the feedback sandwich isn't an effective way to give feedback, it absolutely is – but only when that sandwich has been well constructed.

Making it Most Appetizing

A sandwich can't live by meat alone – the bread is also important! Here are three ways to make your feedback sandwich most appetizing:

Specific. All of the feedback you give – both positive and negative – needs to be specific. Giving specific corrections with a vague "nice job" for the positive won't work.

Helpful. The best sandwiches are about more than the main ingredients. The condiments make it all work together. The condiments for a feedback sandwich are your intention. If your intention is truly about helping people understand their performance and improve, let them know that. Also know that whatever your intention is when giving feedback, it will have an impact on how well the feedback will be received.

Balanced. There are two slices of bread and just one middle to most sandwiches. So it is with your feedback. I'm not saying you have to have a two-to-one ratio for positive to corrective feedback. However, it is important to balance your conversation by sharing (specific and helpful) positive as well as corrective comments.

When you build your feedback sandwich with planning, preparation and thought, the result will be comments people will want to hear, will listen to, and will use. Otherwise, your feedback may be like the sandwich that is nibbled and tossed in the trash, or never sampled at all.

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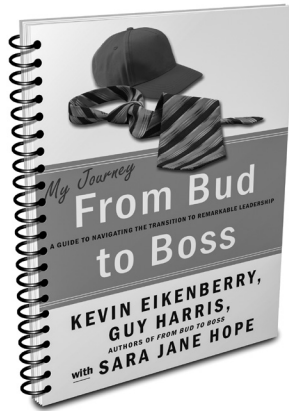
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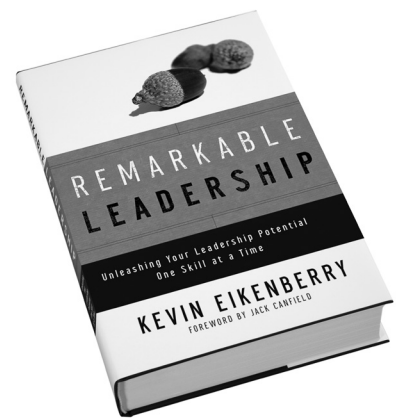


My Journey From Bud to Boss

A companion volume to the From Bud to Boss book, the Journey is a workbook designed to help you apply the knowledge gained to actual work experiences. It includes activities, questions, and exercises designed to take you beyond the concepts introduced to you during the Workshop or the book. And while this book is completely designed to be written in, all of the templates and tools are available in both PDF and Word document form so that you can use them over and over.

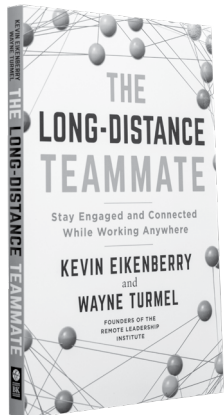
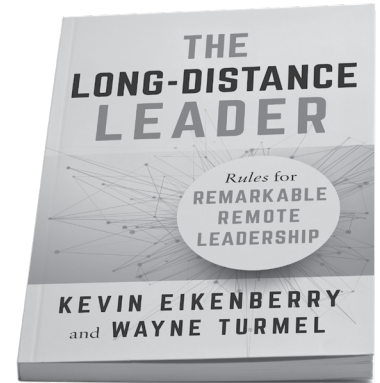
Remarkable Leadership

is a practical handbook written for anyone who wants to hone the skills needed to become a remarkable leader. This book outlines a framework and a mechanism for both learning new things and applying current knowledge in a thoughtful and practical way. It explores real-world concerns such as focus, limited time, incremental improvement, and how we learn.



The Long-Distance Leader

is a practical, candid look at what it takes to lead people, projects and teams in today's dispersed workplace. The book showcases 19 rules for being a remarkable remote leader, and offers practical models, tools, and best practices to tackle the real-world challenges from how we work and communicate virtually.



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