

Giving Motivating Evaluations

"Focus on your best and forget the rest."

By Sean Sheedy

You've read about evaluations in the manuals and on countless web sites. But you're still wondering, how does one give a good evaluation? You feel like showing the person you're evaluating ways they can improve, but you don't want them to feel bad. And you would like to point out the things that they did well. How do you spin it into an effective evaluation? Here are some tips:

The Sandwich

A classic evaluation technique is called "the Sandwich." This is where you first tell the good news, then the bad news, and then more good news. The bad news is sandwiched in between the good. This technique is slightly better than random talking. At best, the person being evaluated forgets the good news, and starts dwelling on the bad. At worst, you end up looking like you're applying sugar-coating and not being sincere.

The Modified Sandwich

The first step to rectifying the situation is to change "good news" and "bad news" into "strengths" and "weaknesses." Right at the beginning of the evaluation, you point out the person's strengths, and how they were manifested during the speech. In the middle, you point out one flaw or weakness that detracted from the speech. At the end, you point out a couple more strengths that you feel the person already has, that they should develop.

This is much better, because now you've identified strengths that the speaker can work on. This technique, however, is not yet perfect. Here's why. You've pointed out a weakness that the person can work on, but not a way to overcome it. I've blown many a speech working so hard to overcome a weakness, stumbling and stammering while I forced my way through my weakness, that my strengths never had an opportunity to shine through.

The Modified, Modified Sandwich

The last modification is to give the speaker a way to overcome the weakness you pointed out. Here's how you might do it: First, you point out the person's strengths, using examples of how they were manifested in the speech (as in the Modified Sandwich.) Then, you point out one weakness that detracted from the speech, and how it detracted (again, as in the Modified Sandwich.) Finally, you show the user how they can use one or more of their strengths to overwhelm or overcome the weakness.

Here's an example, illustrated recently in a speech by one of our members. Have you ever heard a charismatic speaker speak? They move you, they inspire you. But if you listen very carefully and technically, you find that there are plenty of errors in their speeches. Did you care about these errors? No. The content and the speaker's focus on his strengths carried him far above and beyond any errors or speaking weaknesses he might have had.

Let's suppose that the speaker you're evaluating made pretty good use of hand gestures, but spoke much too quickly. You noticed that whenever he used his hands for a grand gesture, his speaking slowed down somewhat. Here's how an evaluation might go:

"Today Joe wowed us with a great speech. Did you notice how his presence is one of his strengths? His use of gestures helped make the connection between Joe and the audience.

"Joe, however, sometimes speaks very quickly, which detracted somewhat from his speech.

"However, I noticed that whenever Joe used gestures to make a point, his speech slowed down as he moved his hands to augment the point he was making. Joe, I'd suggest that rather than worrying about speaking too fast, simply make use of your presence and hand gestures as a way to naturally meter your speech."

Here, you've complimented Joe and pointed out a natural talent that he should further develop. Then, you pointed out a weakness. You did not say very much about it, because Joe and the audience already know this is a weakness, and neither need to be beaten over the head with it. Finally, you not only complimented Joe's strengths again, but you pointed out a believable way for him to improve his speaking ability without spending any more time berating himself up about a weakness.

Tips for Making Your Job Easier

One thing you should always do is ask the speaker this question before listening to their speech: "What do you consider to be your strengths?" Some people give glib answers, or immediately focus on their weaknesses, so press them for an answer. Rephrase it: "What strengths have people pointed out to you on the evaluation slips you got from previous speeches?" or "I've noticed that you have a tremendous presence, would you consider this your strength?"

This question has two benefits: it tells you what the speaker's strengths are before the speech, so you can focus on finding examples of this strength in the speech. It also gives you something positive to talk about in your evaluation. Of course, if you find a strength that the person did not mention, point it out!

Don't then ask "What are your weaknesses!" Instead, you might ask, "What one thing are you trying to improve most in this speech?" At the end of the speech, you'll find either that it wasn't a problem (in which case you should definitely point this out so they can move on!) or that it was. Either way, knowing this ahead of time will allow you to look for strengths in the speaker's style that can be used to mitigate the weakness.

Additionally, the speaker is supposed to meet some of the goals stated for that speech in the manual, and if there is a divergence, this is another opportunity for you to point out strengths that can be used to help the speaker better meet those goals.

In the beginning of this article I placed a quote, "Focus on your best and forget the rest." I like this quote, not only because I penned it, but also because it really says that if you focus on your strengths and find ways to use them to manage your weaknesses, you won't need to focus on your weaknesses. Your strengths will simply overpower them, and you'll be able to forget them.

"Tact is the ability to describe others as they see themselves."
– Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the U.S (1809– 1865

Effective Evaluation

(The powerful art of constructive listening)

We all grow, learn and improve as a result of the feedback we receive from others — in all areas of our lives. Positive, constructive counsel encourages us to recognise and enhance the things we do well. Feedback presented in a critical, negative manner is destructive to our self-image, and produces a closed-down, hostile reaction within us, no matter how well we try to hide it.

The key to effective evaluation, therefore, is to present the feedback in a way that will leave the recipient feeling open, encouraged and eager to have another go... and above all, feeling receptive to the suggested recommendations for improvement.

There is no point in giving an evaluation unless it is going to be:

- ◆ Readily accepted, and
- ◆ Happily acted upon.

Structuring an Effective Evaluation

We are all familiar with criticism. All too often, we are quick to spot — and point out — mistakes, or to notice the things we and others do wrong. We are less skilled at seeking out and acknowledging what has been done well. Effective evaluations are built on the foundation of a point of excellence. The terms we use are **commendations**, for things done well, and **recommendations**, which are opportunities for improvement.

Surround every set of recommendations with a layer of equally true and relevant commendations. This “sandwich” of positive feedback is referred to in Toastmasters as C-R-C (**C**ommend, **R**ecommend, **C**ommend.) And along with recommendations, we should be offering suggestions on how to improve.

In evaluating a speech, you are being asked to give your opinion not on *what was said*, but on *how it was delivered*.

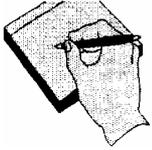
Look for

- ◆ Objectives of the speech (What was the speaker trying to achieve?)
- ◆ Attention-grabbing opening. Structure. Logical sequence. Definite powerful ending (and possibly a call to action, if appropriate.)
- ◆ Body language, use of gestures, hand movements, posture, stance.
- ◆ Eye contact — did it encompass the whole audience?
- ◆ Vocal variety — to enhance emotions — pitch, volume, cadence, rhythm, flow.
- ◆ Word usage — creating vivid word pictures.
- ◆ Use of notes.
- ◆ Manner — enthusiasm, confidence, etc.
- ◆ Notice audience response, level of interest.

Presenting the Evaluation

- ◆ Remember the correct introduction.
- ◆ State the speech objectives.
- ◆ Use third person language – talk about the speaker as ‘he’ or ‘she,’ to include the whole room.
- ◆ Be encouraging, supportive, sincere, and, above all, honest.
- ◆ Illustrate your recommendations if possible. e.g. “Because Sandy was angry she could have raised her voice (demonstrate) to show this better.”
- ◆ Summarise, re-stating only the commendations and recommendations. Don’t introduce new material in the summary.
- ◆ **Use C.R.C.**
- ◆ **Remember to evaluate in the third person.**
- ◆ **Summarise, and leave the listener feeling motivated and encouraged.**

Sandwich every bit of criticism between two layers of praise.
– Mary Kay Ash (1915 – 2001), founder, Mary Kay Cosmetics



EVALUATE TO MOTIVATE

By Joan Hook DTM PDG

Definition: An evaluation is one person's reaction to a presentation by a speaker

Purpose of Evaluation:

- To assist the speaker.
- To improve listening skills.
- To develop analytical skills.

Responsibilities of Evaluator:

- To determine the general and specific effects of the speaker's performance on you. i.e. how did the speech affect you?
- To provide the speaker with descriptive feedback on the impact of the speech on you.
 - Why did this speech succeed/ fail? What you liked and why. What could be improved?
- To provide the speaker with constructive suggestions for improvement.
 - Show / tell how. Give reasons. Build the self esteem of speaker.
- Not to judge — the person or the content. However be HONEST.
- Remember an evaluation is only one person's opinion.

How can we achieve the purpose and carry out these responsibilities to the best of our abilities?

Preparation before the speech.

- Know the manual speech and objectives.
- Talk to the speaker — “what else could you look at?”
- Prepare some notes in advance — an opening sentence, the objectives, set out a sheet as you wish to evaluate.

Listen and analyse during the speech

- Note what you liked and why.
- What you felt could be improved and show how.
- Note aspects of delivery.

Present your Evaluation

- Organise your thoughts — be logical. An evaluation is a mini speech.
- Be specific and constructive.
- Be effective — honest, C–R–C, congratulate early, sympathetic and watch your choice of words.
- Summarise your main points using C–R–C.

Points to Ponder in the evaluation.

- Objectives — were met? What was the purpose? Did the topic suit the objectives?
- Structure — open, body, close. Logical flow.
- Language grammar, — appropriate, word pictures.
- Style — convincing, sincere, warm, relaxed.
- Voice — Pace Pitch Pause Quality Volume.
- Gestures — appropriate, distractions, eye contact, face.
- Remember there is a time limit so you cannot cover everything. Be selective.

Summary

- An evaluation is your opinion: express it as your opinion, and don't apologise for your opinion.
- You are there to assist the speaker with constructive and honest feedback.
- Do your homework.
- Present your evaluation effectively by being organised, specific and constructive.

SPEECH EVALUATION

Adapted from a structure developed by Jane Lusby, DTM

Speaker		LOOK FOR Opening, body, close. Flow of speech, ideas Subject appropriate, original, interesting statistics, research, preparation, humour Language appropriate convincing, imagery, quotes, grammar, adjectives Voice variety, cadence, volume, pitch, pause, clarity Gestures poise, hands, face, stance, eye contact, feet Personal presence sincerity, enthusiasm, relaxed, confident Other props, visual aids Timing Dynamic, innovative articulate, animated, energetic,
Speech title		
Objectives met/not met		
Commendation	1	
Commendation	2	
Recommendation	1	
How to improve		
Recommendation	2	
How to improve		
Commendation	3	
Commendation	4	
Summary		
Commendation		
Recommendation		
Commendation		

Table Topics Evaluations

#	Speaker	Subject or title	Commend	Recommend	Commend

Possible comment points:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Honorifics | Use of pause, rate, rhythm | Control of nervousness | Verbal crutches: ums, ahs, etc |
| Descriptive language | Passion and enthusiasm | Use of humour | Timing/duration of speech |
| Structure (opening, body, close) | Spoke to the topic | Sincerity | Subject for a future speech? |
| Handling of interjections | Eye contact | Humour, animation | A speech to remember? |
| Stance, body language, gestures | | | |