



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### Alleviating Criticism

Voicing criticism is a complex process with emotional undercurrents. Managers might feel guilty and sometimes anxious when criticizing employees for making mistakes. Managers can make use of these 10 pointers that will help make the criticism easier to hear without diluting its value.

1. **Plan.** This helps managers develop a framework for effective criticism. These two factors help managers deliver appropriate criticism:
  - What behavior do I want to alter?
  - How can I help the employee improve?
2. **Precise.** Vague criticism fosters anxiety. The statement, "You need to be more of a team player" is meaningless. Tangible examples about why the employee is not seen as a team player need to be provided. So be precise and specific.
3. **Motivate.** Criticism should be showcased as a payoff for the employee. For example, if the employee aspires to move into the management cadre but lacks presentation skills, link presentation skills to managerial advancement.
4. **Caution.** Avoid statements that invite hostility and resentment like, "I don't think you are committed to this job." 'Could' instead of 'should' creates options and flexibility.
5. **Focus.** Limiting criticism to one major or two minor incidents or behavior ensures a positive reaction.
6. **Sandwich.** Starting the session with positive comments, then getting to the criticism, and finishing with positive comments is a wise move.
7. **Prod.** The process needs to be a dialogue between the manager and the employee. Consequently, managers need to give the employee an opportunity to voice his or her point of view.
8. **Understand.** Some employees cannot express pain or disappointment; instead, they show anger. Underneath the anger is hurt, and managers must understand this and act sensitively.
9. **Proactive.** Discuss problem behavior whenever it occurs instead of waiting for the end of the year appraisal time.
10. **Reinforce.** Managers refrain from praise once the employee shows improvement since they feel that it might be viewed as condescending. However, the truth is that employees appreciate it when changes are noticed.