

Do You Want Feedback or Validation?

“I want the truth.”

“You can’t handle the truth.”

This powerful exchange between Tom Cruise’s character, LTJG Kaffee, and Jack Nicholson’s character, Col Jessep, is one of the most memorable scenes in the movie, *A Few Good Men*.

Can you handle the truth?

A few weeks ago, I sat in my writer’s group as we reviewed each others' works. Two of the participants said: “Don’t make me cry, now.” “Try not to hurt my feelings.” Nothing meaningful followed those two requests.

It reminds me of a conversation I had with a young salesperson. He invited my comments about his performance. I said, “Do you want feedback or validation?” He said, “A little of both hopefully.”

As a salesperson, do you want feedback or validation from your managers and customers? Validation reassures, nurtures, and supports your efforts. Feedback corrects, if it’s honest. Feedback is growth-oriented, as it focuses attention on areas of improvement. It is based on the premise that the person being coached can and wants to improve. Validation for the sake of affirming presumes the person being coached cannot handle honest feedback. It burdens with low expectations the person being coached.

There are three important facts about feedback.

1. Corrective feedback can be constructive.
2. Corrective feedback is growth-oriented.
3. Corrective feedback is for benefit of the person being coached.

If you want to grow, ask for honest feedback. When it came my turn to be evaluated by my peers in the writing group, I told them to hold nothing back, that they would not offend me. The floodgates opened, and they gave me corrective feedback. My writing improved because of their unvarnished comments.

Author byline: Tom Reilly is literally the guy who wrote the book on *Value-Added Selling* (McGraw-Hill). You may visit him online at www.TomReillyTraining.com.

Read Tom’s new blog at www.TomReillyBlog.com.