

# Criticism

## *If You Want To Be Successful ... Welcome Criticism*

Don't you just hate criticism? I mean, think about it. It doesn't make you feel good. You tend to question the agenda of the person giving it. Is their intention to help you or look better in the eyes of others at your expense? Pure and simple, criticism is a painful experience. So why should you welcome it?

That's a good question, and unfortunately you won't like the answer. In looking back over my life, I can think of nothing worthwhile that came particularly easy. All the skills I have come at the expense of time, effort and many failures before ultimate success. A carpenter has calluses on his hands from hammering day after day. A guitar player has the same on the tips of his fingers. This should be a representation to us all that the pain will eventually leave when we have practiced enough to toughen our skin; gain the experience or learn the skill. It should also serve us to remember that the skin will soften if the practice is not maintained.

But for most professions ... salesman, manager, doctor, banker, accountant, or as for myself, a public speaker, there is no skin to toughen. There is only failure to make the sale, the inability to recognize the problem and solve it, the wrong diagnosis, poor financial advice, or miscalculation of taxes. For myself, the loss of the attention of my audience is the worst thing that can happen. All of which we would like to attribute to reasons other than our own inability.

The guitar player understands that a Band-Aid will not help to lessen the pain because he can't play the guitar with Band-Aids. He must toughen the skin by practicing day after day, just as we must do. The pain in their fingers will tell them that they are not ready yet. Oh sure, they may be able to play some songs, but can they play them all? Is there someone else out there who is better; who has practiced more than they have?

I feel you can lessen the pain of criticism by channeling it into another direction. Once we understand what we are doing wrong we are well on our way to correcting it. Regardless of the agenda of the person giving the criticism, take it at face value. Use it to your betterment even if it was given for theirs. We must remember that to get better we must learn all aspects of our profession. The hardest subject to study though is ourselves; we are prejudiced and rightfully so; if we don't think we're good, who will?

We need to appreciate that there is a time for confidence and a time for learning. We are the only person that can allow pain to enter our minds from the words that are spoken. Therefore, filter out the pain and allow only the knowledge to enter.

I wrote this piece a long time ago, after having attended a four day training program with several of my peers. I can personally attest that this is far easier to write than it is to live. During the program, I felt one of my associates was trying to make himself look good at my expense. I was first angered by what I felt to be inappropriate and incorrect criticism. I remained silent to his attack but internalized the pain and anger. A few days passed after the program and I still felt the same way. It was then I realized I needed to do something. How could I rid myself of these feelings? How could I turn this unpleasant experience to my benefit? Fueled by the anger, I began to write about criticism. Having written it, I can attest that I am beginning to allow myself to learn more about something very important to myself, me. It's about time.

ã 2001 Robert Stevenson, *Seeking Excellence Publishing*

***The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined with praise  
than saved with criticism.***

Norman Vincent Peale