



## **Critiquing a Colleague's Work**

Have you ever been asked to review a colleague's writing? Sometimes it can be a bit challenging to offer constructive feedback. Here are some guidelines to use the next time one of your associates asks you to evaluate a writing project.

### **Understand what your colleague wants**

Is your colleague asking you to simply proofread for spelling, punctuation and duplicated words? Or is the request to critique the document? Before you give your colleague feedback, make sure you know what is expected of you.

### **Know the audience**

Understand the audience who will read the document. Are the project specifications you review for the customer or the supervisor? Knowing the audience will make your review of the document more accurate.

### **Assess your colleague**

Does your colleague mistakenly believe she's a good writer? Does he recognize that writing is one of his weaknesses and willingly accepts feedback? Think about your colleagues and treat them with care to maintain good working relationships.

### **Use the "track changes" feature**

If you're proofreading and making minor edits then the "track changes" feature of Microsoft Word is a great tool. It's also a convenient way to make comments within the document. But be sure to save the file with a different name such as *Monthly Report\_KD edits* to identify the edited document.

### **Try "I" statements as feedback**

"I" statements will help keep your review professional and prevent it from becoming personal. Statements like *I'm confused about this paragraph* or *I might include a graph here* soften the feedback. Asking questions is also a good way to give feedback. *Are you writing about sales or profit?*

### **Focus on the message**

Most likely your colleague will ask you for general feedback, not just proofreading. And while it might be tempting to look for every misspelling and misused punctuation mark, focus on the message. If the structure of the document is illogical or choppy, address that issue first. Your colleague might need to rewrite the document and you'll have wasted time correcting mechanical details.

### **Critique with a smile**

Return your colleague's writing with a compliment about the document and an offer to answer any questions. If you think your comments might be too critical, deliver the review in person with a few written notes and a general statement about what needs to be improved.

If you need help reviewing and critiquing your training materials, give me a call. I'll give you constructive feedback to make your curriculum easy to read and informative.

*Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.*

DeYoung Consulting Services  
Helping People Learn up to Their Potential  
4834 Park Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55417  
(612) 822-8872  
(612) 220-3440 mobile  
[deyoung4@aol.com](mailto:deyoung4@aol.com)  
[www.deyoungconsultingservices.com](http://www.deyoungconsultingservices.com)