



## Innovations in Feedback Efficiency

No matter how large your institution may be, it is vital that each and every employee benefit at least annually from a one-on-one performance appraisal discussion. With the current trend toward the thinning and flattening of management structures, this places an immense time burden on the first-line supervisor. Managers, of course, know that over 90% of the time spent in such discussions is a reiteration of the same irreducible set of themes. One encounters many signs on the road to success. The one pictured here reflects one institution's solution to the mechanics of appraisal. Apparently it was possible to reduce the essential messages to just two.

We can't tell whether the "canned" speeches to which the winners and sinners are directed are live or recorded. Studies of passenger response to airline safety briefings have demonstrated that it doesn't matter.

## Off-the-Cuff Advice for the Well-Dressed Manager

(Excerpted from the "*Pocket Guide to Advantageous Apparel*," which is *repleat* with paragraphs similarly *laced* with incredible insight)

Have you ever been *buttonholed* by someone with a *z* interest in a crazy scheme who wanted to ride your *coat*. someone who clearly wasn't wearing an institutional *hat*? *v*. I were in your *shoes*, I wouldn't just toss the proposition into the *garbage* outright. Let's be *slicker* than that and bureaucratically *cloak* a *brief* retort. For example, I'd *hem* and haw and try to *skirt* the issue explaining that the *sole* mechanism available is the *ur* form procedure already in place for *broaching* new ideas. Of course, this approach is best *suited* to one who doesn't mind being thought of as a *heel*. But if the idea knocks your *socks* of, you can *suspend*, *ergo*, your disbelief, you might get a *feather* in your own *hat* if you were to *scarf* up some resources and *collar* the genius before the idea *slips* away. It is better, after all, to fly by the seat of your *pants* than to be *straitjacketed* by timidity. Naturally, when your institution is in the midst of *belt* tightening, you may need to *sugar-coat* the truth to sell the notion. We can *cap* off our advice by simply saying, "If this *shoe* fits, go for it." And if it goes so badly that you think you'll get the *boot*, you can always go out and *tie* one on or *brace* yourself for the consequences while *pinning* your hopes on your boss taking the foregoing advice too.

## Exit Lines and Other Puns

Some of us have had careers blessed in many ways, not the least of which is to have worked for organizations with names susceptible to puns, double-entendres and so forth. *Postterminaries* welcomes all but the most offensive examples. Of course it would not do for this author to invite readers into territory I have not myself explored.

Let me therefore confess that upon departing my first serious job at the then Bell Telephone Laboratories, my colleagues sent me off with the warning, "You'll get no Bell prize for this!" Indeed, I did not.

An equally ominous message greeted my next departure from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. My alternatives were succinctly stated as, "It's Livermore or less!"

One must naturally be more circumspect when alluding to a current employer. I can only say, respectively, to all the brightest upcoming materials researchers and to my senior colleagues, "May all your anneals be done in Argonne!" and "Those who retire Argonne but not forgotten."

You needn't write. I just heard all *Postterminaries* readers groan in unison.

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