

# SECTION 4

## Evaluation Basics

# EVALUATION BASICS

POWER*talk* International's plan for encouraging the personal growth of individual members consists of three distinct parts:

- Providing source material for study. This includes this MASTER MANUAL and educational features and resource items that are available on the POWER*talk* International website- **[www.powertalkinternational.com](http://www.powertalkinternational.com)**
- Providing the opportunity to practise communicative, interpersonal and management skills in regular club meetings, in service on committees and boards of directors, and in liaison with higher levels of POWER*talk* International.
- Providing for an evaluation of whether the member has put into practice what has been studied, with recommendations for continued improvement and practice.

*“If you treat a person as he is, he will continue as he is,  
but if you treat him as he is capable of becoming,  
he will become what he is capable of becoming.”  
... Goethe*

# EVALUATION BASICS 1

## General

### **Evaluation – What is it?**

Evaluation is a shared learning process. In order to learn or improve skills, change and growth are necessary. Evaluation, if properly given and received, aids in the identification and setting of goals for improvement and in the measuring of progress towards achieving those goals.

To change old patterns of behaviour, or to seek to grow and develop, we need encouraging and supportive attitudes. A sense of belonging to a solid group support structure, such as a POWERtalk International; club, is helpful. In this climate, appraisals have an enriching, counselling character.

### **Criticism**

It can be difficult to equate a positive encounter in a POWERtalk International evaluation situation to what we encounter in life. We are so attached to the idea that criticism destroys that we scarcely notice the extent to which this damaging concept is carried.

The evaluation process is more generally experienced as “criticism”. When we think of “criticism” as a concept that can help us grow, it becomes evaluation. It is important that we understand the positive aspects of criticism, and equate it with the positive evaluation process used in POWERtalk International.

A common understanding of “criticise”, reflected in dictionaries, is “to stress the faults of”. “Criticism” is understood to be “the act of criticising, usually unfavourably”. The synonyms most often suggested for “criticise” include blame, censure, condemn, denounce and reprehend. If a hundred people were asked at random what the word “criticise” means, they would probably characterise it as a hurtful comment or negative opinion that finds fault and is destructive, humiliating and hostile.

Most see criticism as creating difficult situations resulting in painful reactions. Many refrain from critical comments in evaluations for these negative reasons. Yet criticism – in its original sense – plays a positive role in the evaluation process by:

- helping us to look realistically at our goals and progress toward achieving them:-
- suggesting methods for developing and improving our skills:-
- increasing our tolerance for a variety of opinions based on the reaction of others.

A neutral, objective, appraisal of ideas and actions was the original meaning of criticism. The root-meaning of the Greek word “KRITIKOS,” is “able to discern and judge”. One who criticised was expected to make judgments based on an assessment of the merits as well as the **demerits** of an object or situation.

## *Evaluation Basics 1: General continued...*

Against this background, the goals of criticism can be seen to be the same as those of evaluation: to communicate, to influence and to motivate. We can change the way we are prepared to think and feel about what we say and hear, as the giver and receiver of criticism, if we keep in mind these definitions, based on the original meaning:

**Criticise** – to communicate information to others in a way that enables them to use it to their advantage and benefit from it.

**Criticism** – a tool to encourage and enhance personal growth and relationships.\*

*\*from NOBODY'S PERFECT: Dr. Hendrie Wisinger and Norman M. Lobsenz*

These definitions make it clear that the criticised behaviour is capable of being changed, and that criticism is a positive interaction between giver and receiver. When both understand that they are taking part in a growth process, the giver is more likely to be sensitive to what is being said, how it is said, and the effect of the words used. The receiver is less likely to feel hurt or defensive, and more likely to understand that help is being offered.

How we think, feel and behave are each important in giving and receiving criticism/evaluation. In receiving evaluation, do we:

- see a personal attack, a put-down, or an attempt to help?
- feel angry, hurt, resentful or motivated and challenged?
- interrupt, defend or listen carefully?

When giving evaluation, do we:

- choose our words carefully and criticise only those things that can be changed?
- feel sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of the recipient?
- keep our negative reactions from being apparent?

An in-depth examination of our thoughts, feelings and actions in response to criticism will help us give and receive evaluation responsibly and effectively and take a giant step toward emotional maturity.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation, in *POWERtalk* International, is a tool to encourage and enhance personal growth and group interaction. The strengths and weaknesses of any performance, whether as a program participant, an officer, committee chairman or member, are analysed. Assets on which to build for continued improvement and areas that need more study and practice are pointed out.

## *Evaluation Basics 1: General continued...*

Everyone has a reaction to what is seen and heard. Evaluation is an opinion based on the evaluator's own understanding of the assignment and perception about the way it was carried out. Careful observation and analytical listening are necessary. Items on which to comment must be carefully selected, helping to improve critical judgment.

For evaluation to be helpful to the recipient, it must be communicated in a way that will encourage the member to use the information for growth and development. The evaluator must be concerned, considerate and constructive. The member receiving the evaluation must understand that it is a sincere appraisal of the performance or contribution to the meeting. It is not necessary that the performer agree with the appraisal. The key to growth is to keep an open mind to what may be useful. The focus of the member receiving the evaluation should be on identifying possibilities for change and improvement, planning and taking the necessary steps to achieve personal growth.

Speaking problems follow a common pattern. By applying the evaluations received by other speakers to your own presentations, you will progress more rapidly and gain confidence by listening. To achieve the greatest benefit from your *POWERtalk* International membership, evaluate at each meeting, even when not assigned as evaluator. Compare your evaluations with that of the assigned evaluator and note the differences and/or contribution to the meeting and make a note of any suggestions for improvement that may help you.

### **General Use**

The use of good evaluation skills is not limited to *POWERtalk* International meetings. Too often, members feel that evaluation is geared only for the meetings of the club or other levels of this organization. We are missing the real purpose of evaluation training if we do not utilize the skills outside the *POWERtalk* International setting. To get the full benefit of membership these skills should be used in every facet of each member's life. Evaluation techniques offer opportunities for improved performance, encouraging openness to varying points of view. The result can be a constructive exchange of ideas, resulting in cohesive solutions to problems. Each of us evaluates and is evaluated regularly, whether it is labelled "evaluation" or not. Recognising that it is a part of our daily lives will assist us in dealing with life situations and will improve our communication skills.

# EVALUATION BASICS 2

## Accepting and Using Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to give an objective appraisal; to communicate information in such a way that it can be used to advantage and be a tool to enhance personal growth. The evaluator is expected to assess the good as well as that which needs improvement and to make appraisals accordingly.

Evaluation often fails because we are dealing with people – the evaluator, the evaluated and the audience. Positive interaction must transpire between all of these for the evaluation to be effective. The audience learns by participating in a silent evaluation. With all members participating, either orally or silently, the evaluator will be more motivated to provide a constructive and sensitive appraisal of the performance. Each participant must recognize and be receptive to the part taken in this vital growth process.

Before we can develop the skills necessary to give or receive evaluation effectively, we must analyse our thoughts and feelings and decide how they respond to this subject. Evaluation may leave us angry, resentful or belittled if we have not prepared ourselves psychologically. For this reason, an evaluator will often refrain from giving an honest evaluation to avoid causing offence.

Evaluation is meaningless unless we are willing to accept it. No one likes to feel “criticised.” It is therefore necessary to see evaluation for what it actually is – a useful learning tool providing feedback on how others perceive what has been done. Be prepared – mentally and emotionally – to make constructive use of the information provided as a vital means of personal growth.

The ability to accept evaluation – complimentary or critical – is a positive step toward the basic aim of *POWERtalk* International; self-development. To accomplish this, skills must be developed to give thoughts, feelings and actions the power to work toward this goal instead of against it.

### **Confidence in Evaluator**

Possibly the most important single factor in accepting evaluation is confidence in the person appraising our performance. All of us have a tendency to react poorly if we believe the evaluator is unqualified or is merely trying to impress the audience with superior knowledge. However, even an evaluator who may be biased, negative, lacking in background knowledge or skill may provide clues to improvement. Additional effort and analysis on our part, as well as emotional maturity, may be necessary in recognising these clues.

## *Evaluation Basics 2: Accepting & Using Evaluation continued...*

*Learn to...*

- think of evaluation as a source of new information
- channel the emotional energy generated by criticism into fruitful avenues
- take necessary steps to put needed changes into action.

Reaction is dependent upon our personal background, talents, education, appearance and health, beliefs, fears and hopes – all of which shape our individuality.

How a person responds to any type of evaluation depends to some extent on a person's vantage point. Seat four people at a table, and place a block with the letter "M" on it. Depending on where each sits, they will see it as an "M," an "E," a "W" or an angular "3." In the same way, upon receiving evaluation one person may be insulted, another depressed, a third angry, still another grateful for having had a flaw pointed out. Effective acceptance occurs when action is taken to make the changes necessary to improve the performance or activity.

A negative response to evaluation results in making it ineffective. Instead of keeping an open mind to points that are useful in the evaluator's comments, a tendency can develop to block them out in an effort to defend our own ideas or ways of doing things. This prevents us from seeing the need to improve and blocks any chance to gain useful new information.

Verbal acceptance only is another negative approach. By superficially agreeing with the evaluation, we think we are "off the hook" – free not to have to deal with criticism in a realistic and productive way. Accordingly, no changes are made and no growth takes place.

The tendency to defend ourselves or to make excuses, is also negative.

Several steps can be taken to overcome this tendency.

- Ask for more information. One of the fine points of a good evaluation is that it is specific. If the evaluation is vague or generalised, seek out the evaluator and ask for details.
- Ask for specific suggestions on how to improve the performance.
- Make sure what has been said is understood.

### **Using Evaluation**

Each evaluation received should be carefully studied and used. Analyse the information and compare it with notes from previous evaluations. Consider the frequency with which a specific weakness is identified. If the same ones are pointed out repeatedly, it is a strong indication of verbal acceptance only. Willingness to change attitudes will determine present and future growth.

## *Evaluation Basics 2: Accepting & Using Evaluation continued...*

### **Level of Expectation**

A second thought process that influences our response to evaluation is governed by our own expectations. The standards and goals we set for ourselves and for those around us determine expectations for both the giver and receiver of evaluation. When the desired results are not forthcoming, it is more difficult for us to either give or receive it. It is important that our expectations be realistic and flexible.

### **Listening**

It is essential that the receiver use good analytical listening skills. It has been said:

*“Hear what the person says:*

*Hear what he intended to say:*

*Hear what he would have said if he could have said what he wanted to say.”*

Listen attentively. Try to keep emotions from hindering your listening ability. Make notes. Research shows the average person absorbs only one-third of what is said and remembers only one-half of that one-third. There is a tendency to screen out what we do not wish to hear. NOTE: For further in-depth study on Listening Skills refer to Section 5.1 *POWERtalk* International.

### **Positive Versus Negative Acceptance**

A positive response to evaluation means accepting it both constructively and effectively.

Constructive acceptance involves:

- being receptive even when the advice does not coincide with selfappraisal;
- keeping the lines of communication open with the evaluator;
- controlling negative emotions;
- recognising the need to change.

### **HINTS**

- Consult with the evaluator; let that person know what areas you wish to have evaluated.
- Have an open mind; receive suggestions in an objective manner.
- Take notes to assist with the next presentation.
- Mentally appraise and then accept or reject specific comments.
- Determine to improve.
- Remember that evaluation is just “one person’s opinion”.
- Resolve not to become defensive, even if you do not agree with the analysis of the evaluator.

## *Evaluation Basics 2: Accepting & Using Evaluation continued...*

### **Self-Evaluation**

Because each evaluation we receive is only one person's opinion, reaction, or appraisal, it is important that it be weighed against our own objective personal evaluation of the activity we have completed. In order to fully realise the benefits of evaluation, we must measure ourselves against our own standard, goals and the desired results. Answer that all-important question, "*How am I doing?*" by constantly evaluating your growth.

Through self-evaluation we can see and benefit from the smallest evidences of growth. We are the first to be aware that our hands are no longer shaking and our throats are less constricted. Self-evaluation also helps us analyse and appraise the evaluations received. By comparing our self-evaluation with that given by another, we can determine what the differences are and why they occurred. In order to derive the benefits from this process, we must be completely honest, determine what changes are needed and the method of accomplishment.

### **Progress Review**

At periodic intervals, measure your progress against goals. We cannot measure our gains by comparing ourselves with more experienced members, only by comparing our present achievements with previous performances.

**Review the following to help define personal growth and determine whether it is time to set new goals.**

- Review assignments completed.
- Which areas indicate the greatest progress?
- Discuss and compare this assessment of progress with an experienced member.
- Are you now more capable of preparing, presenting or participating in your assignments skilfully?
- Has your word power improved?
- Have your listening skills improved?
- Do you retain and use what you hear?
- How do your "silent" evaluations compare with the evaluations presented at meetings?
- How could your progress be improved?
- Identify any persistent problems you have that need continued emphasis (your goals).

Learning to accept and use evaluations in a confident manner helps us to grow into mature and responsible adults. Remember – we are all constantly evaluated in everything we do. It is essential to our well-being that we learn to accept and use good evaluation in a constructive way.

# Evaluation Basics 3

## Learning the Skills

It is not an easy task to learn proper evaluation skills. The more we recognize and correct our shortcomings, the greater the chance we have of becoming an effective evaluator, both within *POWERtalk* International and in everyday situations.

An effective evaluator must have:

- knowledge of the educational program;
- a real interest in, and respect for, the opinions of others;
- a genuine desire to be helpful;
- a willingness to develop personal skills;
- a measure of poise, self-confidence, friendliness and humor;
- the ability to express ideas clearly;
- an awareness of the importance of preserving self-esteem of the appraised individual.

These skills are not inherent, they must be developed. They must be strengthened through effort expended each time in preparing for and giving an appraisal of performance.

To help someone else grow involves risk – the risk of exposing our own inability to analyse and assess performance by applying the appropriate standard. There is also the risk that what we say will not be well-received or misunderstood.

One of the first, and possibly the most important points to learn is to feel comfortable when giving an evaluation. This requires careful advance review and study of the standards for a presentation or performance as profiled in other sections of this Master Manual. It also requires the practice of good listening skills, critical judgment and careful presentation of information in order to increase the recipient's feeling of inner security.

### **Listening**

In order to evaluate properly, careful observation and analytical listening are essential qualities. Listening is possibly the most talked about, least understood and least practised principle in evaluation. Learning to listen analytically is essential to the process of becoming an effective evaluator.

We sometimes erroneously assume that learning to read and talk automatically teaches us to listen. Tests have shown that immediately after listening to a ten-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, properly evaluated and retained approximately one-half of what was said.

### *Evaluation Basics 3: Learning the Skills continued...*

We think much faster than we speak. The average rate of speech is 125 words per minute while our thought process is at a much higher rate. While we listen we continue thinking at this high speed, but the spoken words register more slowly. Our brain then works with hundreds of words in addition to those we hear, and assembles thoughts other than those actually spoken. The use or misuse of this “spare time” holds the key to how well we concentrate on the performance of the participant.

Listen with ears and mind. Listen so that which the other person says is understood and evaluated. Listen for both content and context, so that your evaluation can be considered, rather than superficial.

- Learn to listen for ideas.
- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Concentrate.
- Work at listening; avoid distractions.
- Keep your mind open; remain objective.

By applying these principles, fact and opinion become less confused. Appraisal becomes easier.

TO IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS PERIODICALLY REVIEW LISTENING SKILLS, SECTION 5.1 in this manual.

#### **Development of Judgment**

Everyone has a reaction to what is seen and heard. Evaluation reflects the reaction of the evaluator. It is an opinion - a judgment about the way in which the assignment was carried out, based on the evaluator's own perceptions and understanding of the assignment. Judgment is learned through comparing the presentation of the speech to other speeches or other performance standards and in selecting points on which to comment. To help develop good judgment:

- plan for the assignment carefully;
- prepare a checklist or develop a form to use as a guide. The form should NEVER be a duplicated form used for all assignments. It should be one designed for the particular presentation being evaluated. Use suggested evaluations guidelines – to be found in Project Basics Section of this Master Manual;
- remember that this assignment is to examine the performance in order to determine suggestions for improvement;
- concentrate on one or two points. Do not overwhelm the member with too many areas of necessary improvement.
- No performance is so good it cannot be improved, nor so poor there are no good points.

### *Evaluation Basics 3: Learning the Skills continued...*

#### **Presentation**

While observing the activity being evaluated, keep in mind the question, “How can I convey this evaluation so that it will be accepted and used in the most beneficial way?” This shifts emphasis from fault-finding to problem-solving. It will bring out three essential qualities of a good evaluation:

- The evaluator takes a closer look at personal motives for any particular comment.
- The focus is on possibilities for improvement.
- There is an acknowledged commitment between the giver and receiver, a recognition that both share the responsibility for change.

Obviously, what is said and how it is said are intertwined. It is against human nature to feel appreciative or receptive when having our flaws pointed out, even when the comments are meant to be helpful. The task is to instil in the participant a confidence in self and in the evaluator, making continued improvement possible.

The manner in which you convey your intent is more important than the words you say. Ask yourself a question: “*How can I phrase my statements in such a way the member being evaluated will be receptive to the assessment?*” Make it clearly understood that the evaluation is not an absolute statement of fact but simply an opinion based on the materials provided by POWERtalk International and your own experience, background and knowledge. Stating an opinion as absolute fact can definitely put the receiver on the defensive.

A participant can often be led to recognize inadequacies by the use of a thoughtprovoking question: “*Do you think your conclusion would have been more effective if you had ended on a positive note rather than with an apologetic statement?*”

#### **WAYS IN WHICH AN APPRAISAL MAY BE PRESENTED**

<b>AVOID ABSOLUTES</b>	<b>PREFACE STATEMENTS WITH</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Always</li><li>• Never</li><li>• All</li><li>• Invariably</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In my opinion</li><li>• I think</li><li>• I believe</li><li>• In my experience</li></ul>

If a judgment is stated as your perception of a performance, the receiver will be more willing to listen and compare ideas.

## Evaluation Basics 3: Learning the Skills continued...

### Approaches to Avoid

There are several approaches to evaluation that should be avoided:

#### “Summary” Approach

This type of evaluation summarises what the participant said, sometimes even giving their own opinion on it. Little feedback is given on how to improve the presentation.

#### “Generalities” Approach

This type of evaluation gives a great deal of information in general terms, but little help towards improvement of specifics. Abstract principles are difficult to apply and tend to leave the receiver with a feeling of confusion and helplessness.

#### “Do It My Way” Approach

This evaluator gives the participant a set of rules and procedures, but rarely considers any specific problems, why they occurred and how they can be prevented or improved. The implication is that there is only ONE correct way – the evaluator’s. Such an attitude reveals rigidity of thinking and blocks communication.

#### “Shallow” Approach

This evaluator probably does more to prevent the personal growth of a member than any other! All members have the right to serious evaluation. Words of praise with only vague suggestions for improvement are more offensive than an honest, adverse evaluation offering constructive help. A shallow evaluation is not consistent with self-development. Most people thrive on complimentary remarks, true or not, and if there is any way to convince themselves a compliment is true, they will do so. Praise can go a long way but it must be sincere and deserved. An evaluator who fails to point out those areas that need further study and practice does not help a participant who believes that a performance leaves room for improvement. An evaluator who avoids giving constructive criticism is insulting the participant.

DO NOT	DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ridicule or embarrass</li><li>• Upstage the performer</li><li>• Show partiality to anyone</li><li>• Pretend to superior knowledge</li><li>• Be dogmatic</li><li>• Evaluate handicaps that cannot be remedied</li><li>• Repeat the content of the performance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare carefully</li><li>• Use tact</li><li>• Convey honesty</li><li>• Approach the assignment seriously</li><li>• Suggest methods for improvement</li><li>• Be concise</li><li>• Be constructive</li></ul>

# EVALUATION BASICS 4

## Evaluation Techniques

### **Special Techniques**

The following techniques can be used to vary evaluation training in the club. Each has a special value and answers unique needs.

### **Round Table Evaluation**

This technique can be used to enhance the evaluation process at club level. It should involve each member of the club giving everyone an opportunity to participate in this growth process. This method is especially helpful when the meeting procedure of the club is in need of review.

A round table evaluation provides an excellent vehicle for enhancing our skills. Each club should use this technique at least once during each term. To be effective, this type of evaluation must have structure. A moderator should be assigned to direct the evaluation, giving each member an opportunity to speak, and keeping the discussion on target. To achieve this the moderator can pre-assign certain portions of the program to specific individuals. The round-table evaluation can be conducted in an informal manner. It is a free and open discussion of the entire meeting, of the participants and of the format followed.

Time is an important consideration when planning for an evaluation of this sort. The program chairman should allow more time than is allowed for a general evaluation.

### *The Moderator*

The moderator needs to plan carefully in advance to make this a meaningful experience for all members. An outline giving specific assignments should be provided to all members two weeks prior to the meeting.

### *Example:*

*Member A* – Study and be prepared to evaluate the opening of the meeting, welcoming remarks, introductions and the general tone of the meeting.

*All Members* – Be prepared to comment and ask questions.

*Member B* – Study and be prepared to evaluate the business portion of the meeting.

*All Members* – Be prepared to comment and ask questions.

*Member C* – Study and be prepared to evaluate the first speaker (workshop or whatever is planned for this program).

*All Members* – Be prepared to comment and ask questions.

## *Evaluation Basics 4: Evaluation Techniques continued...*

Specific evaluation assignments can be made to cover the complete program. Time must be considered and the program may, by necessity, be shorter when a round table evaluation is scheduled.

This type of evaluation should never be used as an excuse not to prepare. This needs to be a well-planned meeting and requires all members to prepare in advance. It is an ideal time to introduce new members to evaluation skills. A new member may be given an assignment, ask questions, make comments, and in this way begin training in evaluation. At the close of the evaluation the moderator should summarise the thoughts of the group and conclude the evaluation process.

### *The Members*

Members should take notes on their specific assignments. Other members need to take notes in order to make constructive comments, as well as ask questions about the procedures used during the meeting. This is a time of learning for the entire group and questions should be encouraged. The moderator may answer or direct the question to a member.

### **Panel Evaluation**

This technique is more formal than the round-table evaluation. Definite assignments are given to four or five members (the number of panellists would vary with the size of the club and the time allotted). Each of the panel members would evaluate a specific portion of the program.

Advance preparation is necessary to make this technique workable. Assignments for the panel should be given two weeks in advance of the meeting allowing members time to prepare. When possible, experienced members should be used as panellists. New members can be used if proper instructions are provided and guest evaluators can be utilised in this technique.

Time is essential. At least twenty minutes should be allotted for a successful panel evaluation. A moderator would call on each panellist and summarise the evaluation at the close of the time allotted. Each member of the panel should be told in advance the amount of time allowed for the assigned portion of the evaluation.

### *Example:*

*Panel Member # 1* – Evaluate the opening of the meeting, the introductions, wordpower and education.

4 minutes.

*Panel Member # 2* – Evaluate the Issues of the Day Leader and participants.

5 minutes.

### *Evaluation Basics 4: Evaluation Techniques continued...*

*Panel Member # 3* – Evaluate the business meeting.

4 minutes.

*Panel Member # 4* – Evaluate the program.

5 minutes.

*Moderator* – Evaluation summary.

2 minutes.

An outline may be given to panel members covering the main points they should consider in preparing for the evaluation.

Each panellist should prepare a set of questions necessary to guide their evaluation. They should be pertinent to the meeting, thought-provoking and not to be answered with a YES or NO. Questions of this type discourage creative evaluation and should always be avoided.

*Example:*

- What is the real strength of the performance?
- Give specific examples that will assist the member receiving the evaluation.
- How can this performance be improved? Give methods to enhance the performance with suggested reading or other methods of improvement (i.e., use of tape-recorder, etc.)
- How was the purpose of the assignment achieved?
- How does the evaluator see this performance? Give specific areas of help to the member who is being evaluated.

#### **“On the Spot” Evaluations**

This is an excellent technique to use for variety in programming. Each segment of the program is evaluated as it happens. Careful assignments should be planned and given to the evaluators in advance of this type of evaluation. For Issues of the Day, the leader could assign one member to address an issue and another to evaluate the presentation immediately. The leader should give specific instructions. Another member would be assigned to evaluate the business meeting, giving that evaluation immediately following the close of the business meeting. Following these “on the spot” evaluations, a general evaluator could be assigned to comment on how this type of evaluation addressed the needs of the members.

Again, the program chairman must carefully plan the program so the necessary time is available for this technique. The program may be shorter than the usual club program, one or two speeches may be adequate depending on the length of time normally allotted for your meetings. These “on the spot” evaluations are an excellent vehicle for newer members to learn the techniques of evaluation.

## *Evaluation Basics 4: Evaluation Techniques continued...*

### **Dialogue between Evaluator and Performer**

A member wishing to obtain special help may request an evaluation by dialogue. It is important that this be used prudently. A dialogue evaluation should always be prearranged and done only with prior agreement of both the evaluator and the participant. Both performer and evaluator must be mature and knowledgeable in discussion techniques.

The participant initiates a dialogue with the evaluator about the performance and how it could be improved. Sometimes we do not understand the intent of the evaluation given and would like to ask further questions or discuss alternate methods of presentation. This technique provides the framework for such a discussion and should never be used to argue, but rather discuss together the strengths and weaknesses of a performance. Dialogue is particularly helpful when a member wishes to have an evaluation on a presentation to be given in the work situation, or in the community.

#### *Example:*

During the evaluation, the participant might ask: “How did you feel about the introduction? Would it have been stronger had I used a question?” A dialogue could then follow between the participant and the evaluator. The participant could take issue with the evaluator, saying: “My purpose was to — — — —. How could I have made you understand what I wanted to say?”

More time must be allowed for this special session than for a regular evaluation. Keep in mind that it will serve as training for the rest of the membership.

The value of dialogue between evaluator and performer is obvious. Caution must be exercised to ensure training time for other members is not curtailed by this technique. The two participants might want to continue their discussion after the meeting, if time is not sufficient. On occasion, the participant might ask other members for suggestions. Dialogue evaluation is a neutral transition to exchanges we encounter in business and community life.

### **Other**

There are additional approaches, limited only by the program chairman’s creativity. Some of these techniques are:

- tape recorder
- video tape
- written evaluation
- guest evaluators
- comparative – where several members evaluate the same portion of the program.

**CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH APPRAISAL IS LIKELY TO BRING ABOUT IMPROVEMENT**

- It is within the individual's ability to make the desired improvement.
- The individual agrees to the goal for improvement and makes a commitment to its achievement.
- Only one or two specific, measurable goals are set, not a large number.
- The goals represent increased knowledge or skill, not personality changes.
- The goals represent improvement in something the individual requires and uses.
- While working toward achieving the goals, further evaluation is given.

# EVALUATION BASICS 5

## Evaluation of Officer, Board & Committee Performance

Evaluation does not end with the appraisal of individual speaking or other performances during meetings, or even with appraisal of the meeting itself. It can help to improve interpersonal, organizational and general management skills.

To gain the greatest benefit from our entire experience as a member of POWERtalk International, evaluation techniques must be applied to the functioning and performance of officers and committees. Every member is exposed to officer performance and committee reports at meetings, and is expected to serve on committees at club level. Evaluation of performance in each of these roles can provide valuable knowledge useful in improving skills and performance in organizational and management roles both within and outside the organization.

Members who serve as officers and on committees should:

- set measurable goals
- request assessment of performance to determine progress
- make a commitment for improvement
- evaluate and establish new goals based on appraisals received.

### **Officers and Committee Chairmen**

#### *Performance During Meetings*

Appraisal of officer performances at meetings should take place either during a separate business meeting evaluation or as a part of the general evaluation of the meeting. The general principles of good evaluation discussed earlier in this section apply to these evaluations. Be familiar with the standards of performance for officers that appear in:

- Club Bylaws;
- Master Manual;
- Parliamentary Procedure Manual;
- Club Officer Manual;
- Protocol Manual;
- other educational features/materials.\*

*\*Refer POWERtalk International Website [www.powertalkinternational.com](http://www.powertalkinternational.com) Resource section & Officers' Manuals section of the Master Manual.*

## ***Evaluation Basics 5: Evaluation of Officer, Board & Committee performance continued...***

Review the relevant standards prior to the meeting and develop guidelines for your evaluation so the appraisal will be most helpful. Prepare a specialised checklist for each officer and committee chairman. Items to be covered in the evaluation should include those most critical to that officer or chairman's improvement.

Among the elements of performance that may be evaluated are:

### *Presiding Officer*

- advance planning and preparation;
- confidence in presiding;
- knowledge and skill in parliamentary procedure;
- handling of introductions and transitions between portions of the meeting.

### *Secretary*

- preparation and presentation of minutes, correspondence and board recommendations.

### *Treasurer*

- preparation and presentation of the financial report and presentation of bills.

### *Other officers and committee chairmen*

- presentation of committee reports.

The evaluator should cover the general conduct of the officers during the meeting. This includes deportment at the head table, attentiveness, and cooperation in making members feel part of a successful meeting.

## **General Conduct of Office**

At regular intervals throughout the term, officers should be evaluated not only on their performance and conduct during meetings, but on their general performance in office. To be most helpful, this appraisal should include an assessment of whether or not the officers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, have matured and improved, have built on past experiences and evaluations received during the term, and whether or not they are still developing. This assessment is similar to what is often referred to as an employee appraisal.

In order to perform this appraisal, every member should:

- collect information and observations concerning performance;
- weigh this information as a whole and in light of the responsibilities the officers have to other levels and others on the management team;
- reach conclusions regarding the work most critical for each officer to accomplish;
- provide information for the officers on their performance that can be used in further goal setting;
- itemise specific actions that can be taken to improve performance.

## ***Evaluation Basics 5: Evaluation of Officer, Board & Committee performance continued...***

Any one of the techniques of appraisal may be practised in providing assessment for the officers:

- individual evaluators;
- panel;
- round table;
- dialogue;
- combination

Club committee chairmen should also receive appraisals. In addition to the quality and presentation of reports given at club meetings, members should observe whether or not a committee is functioning, and whether or not it is functioning within the confines of its prescribed role. The appraisal of committee functioning may be done at the same time as the appraisal sessions for the officers of the club.

### **Appraisal as part of a board or committee**

A skill of great importance in working with others is that of accurate observation of behaviour and its effect on other people and events. Board and committee members must first recognize and accept the fact that evaluation of the group, and of each individual member's performance in the group, is a vital part of the leadership process. Seeing ourselves as others see us, becoming aware of our mistakes and weaknesses, as well as our assets and strengths can be of great value. Team effectiveness stems from shared obligations for the organization and understanding of the role and responsibilities of each member. Each member of the group should do an in-depth self-appraisal by asking:

- Do I have reasonable understanding of how others see me?
- Am I working as part of the team?
- Do I understand the team mission?
- Is my role clear and do I understand my responsibilities?
- Do I show an interest in the welfare of others?
- Am I committed to a successful team accomplishment?

Generally, evaluations within boards and committees should be done by the group itself using group discussion techniques. This evaluation technique requires that:

- the appraisal discussion is an accepted and routine part of the meeting;
- no individual is singled out for appraisal – all are evaluated;
- there is agreement to work on specified areas of improvement.

## *Evaluation Basics 5: Evaluation of Officer, Board & Committee performance continued...*

The general principles of evaluation apply. All members should review relevant materials prior to the meeting and prepare a checklist of things to be considered. One or two goals that represent increased knowledge or skill should be identified for each member. Additional feedback is given at later meetings so that improvement can be gauged. In these evaluation discussions, it is important to:

- *Avoid* antagonism, resentment and defensiveness.
- *Encourage* fairness, constructive thinking, commitment toward improvement and efficiency.

Adequate time must be allowed for the evaluation portion of the meeting. When it is made a part of the agenda on a regular basis, members learn to improve interpersonal, organizational and managerial skills.

Boards of directors and committees should also examine particular aspects of their functioning to achieve the greatest degree of improvement in these skills and to improve the productivity of the group. The aspects chosen for evaluation will depend on the goals of the members of the board or committee but may include:

- leadership
- discussion techniques
- conflict management
- use of time
- goal-setting and planning
- decision-making techniques

Evaluation of officers and committees will only be successful if there is a good understanding of the purpose and techniques of evaluation, and a commitment to the improvement of knowledge and skills.

# EVALUATION BASICS 6

## Using your Evaluation Training

Some suggestions have been made for techniques and guidelines to make evaluation work for you, not only in the *POWERtalk* International setting, but in everyday situations as well. This does not mean that by using these techniques only good things will happen. It does mean that you will be able to cope with what does happen, good or bad. Everyone should use these methods. Unfortunately, that will not happen. Not everyone you deal with will listen analytically or evaluate constructively. Knowing that you understand these techniques and how to accept and use criticism will make those times less difficult. More important than any formulas or guidelines is the spirit in which evaluation is offered and accepted.

Learning the different methods of evaluation in a constructive manner is one thing; making it part of your life is far more important. When we can see it as a natural form of support rather than an attack, we will be better able to give, receive, assess and make it work – in or out of the *POWERtalk* International environment.

The following are some of the ways the skills learned and developed in evaluation training can be applied in all areas of life.

### **In the Home**

#### **A. Adult Family Members**

- Organising our thoughts, thinking through what needs to be said, so that effective communication can be established within the family unit.
- Listening and identifying what another is saying.
- Providing increased self-confidence to handle delicate situations in the home through a good “self-image.”

#### **B. Parenting**

- Listening to “hear” what our children are really saying, not only with their words but in their actions as well.
- Using the “commend, recommend” principle when dealing with discipline of children.
- Improving coping techniques so you “act” rather than “react.”
- Helping deal with the “teenage dilemma”. Expectations of a certain kind of behaviour can often be more destructive than helpful. The listening techniques practised in good evaluation procedures can be useful in keeping lines of communication open with the teenage child.

## *Evaluation Basics 6: Using your Evaluation Training continued...*

### **In the Community**

#### **A. School**

*As a student:*

- Handling conflict and dealing with “issues” rather than personalities.
- Defining and setting personal goals.

*As a parent:*

- Identifying and addressing concerns involved with school, teachers, and school organizations.
- Demonstrating leadership skills to assist your child in accepting evaluation.
- Establishing good rapport with teachers to receive the best kind of help from teacher conferences.
- Learning to ask questions that will establish an effective working relationship with the teaching staff.

#### **B. Other Organizations**

- Making a worthwhile contribution to other organizations within the community.
- Assuming leadership roles in other civic organizations.
- Acting as “problem solver” in other organizations with evaluation skills learned in POWER*talk* International training.
- Identifying personal as well as organizational goals.

#### **C. Politics**

- Learning to analyse the political climate.
- Using the privilege of voting intelligently. Reading and listening to ascertain exactly what you believe to be best and why.
- Becoming active in politics in your own community, confident that the skills you possess both in listening and speaking are adequate to make a meaningful contribution.

### **D. In the Church**

- Identifying your individual faith through evaluation techniques.
- Contributing effectively to the church of your choice.
- Practising listening skills to make your own faith a greater influence

## *Evaluation Basics 6: Using your Evaluation Training continued...*

### **In Business**

#### **A. As an Employee:**

- Accepting authority and increasing productivity.
- Practising self-discipline and accepting responsibility.
- Evaluating assignments and work produced.
- Analysing and determining what is important.
- Knowing what your responsibility is and taking pride in that responsibility.
- Asking pointed questions, getting necessary answers from management.
- Learning to make “*job reviews/appraisals*” a positive experience. Your poise will show management your willingness to accept constructive suggestions and make them work, as well as encouraging “*give and take*” conversations with management.

#### **B. As Management:**

- Accomplishing the task using the talents available.
- Developing sensitivity to the needs of personnel.
- Encouraging “*give and take*” conversations with co-workers, maintaining a professional attitude and motivating employees to do the best job possible.
- Being flexible and sensitive to change. Personnel will be aware of your desire to help and productivity will improve.
- Making “*job reviews/appraisals*” a positive session, where change can be made, and positive reinforcement given.

#### **TIP**

Avoid the word “*but*” even when you need to criticise. “*But*” is a transition word that signals, “*Stop. Turn in another direction.*” Most listeners won’t remember what you said before the “*but*” – only what you said after it. EXAMPLE: “*You made a fine presentation today, ‘but’ ...*” SUGGESTION: “*You made a fine presentation today. ‘And’ you would do even better if...*”

## *Evaluation Basics 6: Using your Evaluation Training continued...*

### **CONCLUSION**

Evaluation skills are not acquired in one practice. Evaluation is an ongoing learning process. It is an essential part of our membership contract. Only the members themselves can measure the benefits received. Continued, careful study of the material in this section plus a sincere desire to understand and practise the techniques discussed, will enable you to develop skills both as a giver and a receiver of evaluation. In addition, you will also benefit from improved communication, organization and management skills.

Learning the techniques of constructive criticism is one thing; making it an integral part of your thinking is far more significant. If we can come to see evaluation as a natural form of emotional support rather than an emotional attack, we will realise the full benefit of this portion of our *POWERtalk* International training.