

## Smart Strategies Solutions for Workplace Challenges

Issue #9-3  
Spring 2009

### Dear Reader,

Here's another time management lesson - the difference between urgent and important. It was urgent on March 31 that I get this done if I was to get the March issue done in March....but was it important?

See the discussion below. As you might have guessed, March was a stressful month. A big *thank you* to our readers who sent in more tips on managing stress in response to the February issue - see below. I'm using them!!

Finally, we have an article on how to receive difficult feedback, as well as information on a new product that will be of interest to trainers and those who go to training - see the announcement below.

Hope you enjoy!



Alan Krieger

*Feel free to forward this to friends and colleagues.*

## URGENT! or Important?

### URGENT OR IMPORTANT - What's the Difference?

Last issue we talked about how to do more with less. Another key strategy to promote this is to prioritize. Steven Covey presented an interesting model based on the difference between urgent and important.

URGENT! means there's a deadline coming up quickly, e.g. the end of March and my March newsletter's not out yet!!

IMPORTANT means that getting something done will provide a significant positive payoff and/or will prevent a significant negative impact.



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### In This Issue

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It was urgent that I get the newsletter done by March 31, if I was going to have a March issue. But it wasn't high on the importance list. I know many of you enjoy this newsletter, but few anxiously await it's arrival, so it was no problem to let it slide into April.

The more astute of you out there will notice that it's now May. At this point, it becomes important to me and apparently to some of you as well who have asked me what happened to the newsletter. So, now it's getting done!

Think about the urgent issues facing you - are they all truly important? Covey discusses the "tyranny of the urgent" - because it's urgent we jump and do it without thinking through it's importance. See if you can find some of these tasks and cut them from your to do list. It's difficult, but the payoff is less stress and more time spent on truly important work.

We'll talk more about some of the important, non-urgent tasks next issue.

Let me know about your discoveries. Email me at [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com).

## Readers Write In

A number of you wrote in to say how much you enjoy the newsletter. Thanks for the positive feedback!

We also received two tips on ways to handle stress. Something I put to good use this month. Try them, they work!

1. Try taking a breath as if you were inhaling through the soles of your feet. (Might sound weird, but if you try it, it really does work). Feel your calming breath come up through the bottoms of your feet and through your legs and your entire body.

2. To be able to relax your muscles you need to know what tension and a relaxed state feel like. Once you know what tension feels like, you can recognize it and disarm it. Select a part of your body (head, neck, arms) and tense the muscles intentionally. Pay attention to how that feels for several seconds. Now relax the same body part. Pay attention to how that feels. With practice, you can learn to relax your muscles at will, without first tensing them, because you will KNOW how relaxed muscles feel.

Both of these tips are unobtrusive and can help you de-stress unnoticeably in any situation.

Send us your ideas: [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com)

## Video Clips for Leadership and Communication Skills Training

Training videos can be very boring or corny or both. As a trainer, I'm always searching for ways to make training more dynamic and interactive. Most videos fail on both counts.

*If you want something done right, do it yourself!*

So, I took that to heart and produced 7 short video clips that succeed in promoting dynamic, interactive training. They are very short 30-150 seconds, grab people's attention, and stimulate lively discussions.

The best part is that they are so short they can be used in a wide range of training programs, from giving and receiving feedback, listening and conflict resolution; to coaching and leadership.

Why am I telling you this?

If you conduct training, or know people who do, check out the clips on my web site:

[www.kriegersolutions.com/training/ad.html](http://www.kriegersolutions.com/training/ad.html)

I want to shoot some more clips and to help underwrite the costs I'm offering these clips for sale.

I'll be happy to give my readers a discount, so let me know if you're interested.

Email me at: [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com) or call 518-895-2939

## How to Receive Corrective Feedback

It's hard to give corrective feedback, but for most of us, it's even harder to receive it. Here are some tips to help you with that.

NOTE: As long time readers know, we think one of the keys to successful interactions is understanding people's communication styles, which we designate as T.E.A. or M. We've covered this in depth in past issues, and don't want to repeat ourselves.

Where we think this is helpful, we'll insert (T), etc. after a comment where we think the style is strongly displayed, so we can continue to highlight this for you. When we put a letter after a negative example, we don't want to imply that people with this style have negative actions, but that they are acting from their base and to others it often *appears* negative. (Remember the Platinum Rule?)

For new readers who want to learn more, go to [www.kriegersolutions.com/team](http://www.kriegersolutions.com/team) to take the assessment and follow the link to the article, or go right to [www.kriegersolutions.com/team1](http://www.kriegersolutions.com/team1) for the article.)

For most of us it's hard to give corrective feedback, but it's even harder to receive it. Note the term "corrective feedback" not "negative feedback" or "criticism". No one likes to be criticized, but we can all learn from feedback that is designed to help us change unhelpful behaviors.

Some people welcome this kind of feedback because they don't know where they stand, they are interested in improving their performance, and they are able to separate feedback on their performance from comments about their self-worth or self-image. Others don't seek out or welcome corrective feedback. People who are unable to hear this feedback constructively lose the opportunity to learn from it.

Part of the problem is the way this feedback is delivered - it can feel harsh and abrupt (T), detailed and picayune (A), vague (E) or evasive (M). It can be delivered in anger, sarcastically, or abusively. It can be negative and critical and not corrective.

No matter how bad it feels to hear this feedback, it's important to listen, take it in... and then ask for a time out to reflect on it. The anger or harshness can reflect a number of things; the feedback giver:

- has been upset about this for a long time and is finally getting up the nerve to say something;
- is very upset by whatever they are responding to; and/or
- is having a bad day or has anger issues

All 3 of these give us useful information if we take the time to reflect on and understand the message.

## About Krieger Solutions, LLC

We are a training and consulting company dedicated to helping people work together more effectively.

*We offer training, leadership coaching, facilitation, team building and organizational consulting services.*

Visit our website  
[www.KriegerSolutions.com](http://www.KriegerSolutions.com)

to find out more about our programs and services.

Or call Alan Krieger at  
518-895-2939

Or email us at: [info@krsol.com](mailto:info@krsol.com)

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## For Laughs!

For those of you attending the rites of spring:

"Graduation speeches were invented largely in the belief that college students should never be released into the world until they have been properly sedated." - Garry Trudeau

...and for those of you who aren't getting along with the box on your desk:

"To err is human, but to really foul things up you need a computer." - Paul Ehrlich.

Most people have a hard time hearing negative comments about their performance. Some of us take it to heart too quickly and use it against ourselves or lash out at the feedback giver. The key is to avoid acting on the initial "fight or flight" response - you'll feel this in the basic part of your brain almost instantly, and then you have to allow your higher level brain to separate feelings from action (this often requires a time out).

Instead of lashing out or running away... your brain will form the amazing words: *"Thank You!"* Following by: *".... for letting me know how you see this. I'd like to take some time to think about what you said. Can we pick up this conversation tomorrow around 10?"*

This gives you a break from the uncomfortable situation and time to ask the following questions:

1. What did the feedback giver really say? Did s/he say I was an awful person or that there was something I did that they didn't like?
2. What did I actually do? Why did I do it? What did the feedback giver perceive? Why might there be a mismatch here?
3. What's a constructive way for me to respond? If we see things differently how can I acknowledge their point of view and discuss the differences without sounding defensive?

(see archive issue [January 2009 www.krsol.com/oldnews/index.asp](http://www.krsol.com/oldnews/index.asp) for some tips on responding constructively in a conflict situation)

Now you can go back to the person with a plan for a constructive conversation.

If this is a regular problem for you with certain people, you might want to make a habit of checking in with them periodically about how they see your performance. You can bill these as "coaching" sessions. Let them know you value their input. (Remember, even if they are off base, their input gives you information about their perceptions and their reality, which, if you have to work with them, is valuable information).

In our next issue we'll offer some tips for how to give helpful, constructive, corrective feedback.

In the next few weeks, notice feedback interactions and see what you can do to improve them. Try to adapt your style to mesh with the style of the person you are talking with.

Email me at [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com) if you'd like more information on these communication styles.

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