

Giving Feedback to Junior Colleagues

When working with junior colleagues, I try to provide feedback on how their work might be bettered. I do this so that they can learn lessons that might improve their work product.

Having had no training in providing feedback, my method of review is derived largely by asking myself how I would have liked to receive feedback on my work. The method that I've settled on goes like this:

I ask my colleague to identify three key problems with their work.

I do this to prompt my colleague to think about their work. This is so that the review is more a dialogue about the thinking behind their work and less of them listening to my preaching.

I do this also to focus the feedback on specific key points that can be delved into. This avoids the review descending into a shallow discussion on numerous points, leaving my colleague overwhelmed.

The drawback to limiting the discussion to three problems is: Only on these three aspects (at best) can I expect improvements in subsequent pieces of work. Improvements may therefore be incremental and time-consuming.

I do this so that the time at the review is well- spent.

Having identified these issues, I listen to see if my colleague is in agreement on these points. If my colleague is not, I listen for the reasons for the differences.

The drawback here is that the review is not something that I can pull off off-the-cuff. I must spend some time reviewing the drafts prepared by my colleagues and determining how best to provide feedback.

I identify the three key problems with their work.

I ask what can be done to put into place the solutions identified.

This portion is usually clear once the two stages above have been discussed. But I make it a point to discuss it so that there is no doubt that a route to improvement has been identified.

In identifying the route I try to reach a landing on something that is specific, yet broad enough so that it is translatable across different pieces of work.

So I don't say: It is important to read the provisions in the Companies Act before drafting a statutory demand.

This feedback is usable only when drafting statutory demands.

Instead I might say: It is important to know the law before drafting anything.

This feedback is translatable across different pieces of work, say, when drafting cause papers or even emails.