

Using **FEEDBACK** to Feed Forward

By Erik Lilla, Metro Stars Gymnastics

As club owners, managers, and coaches, we are all on a quest make our gyms and our programs the best of the best! The most common method that we use to get ourselves to the next level is through self-assessment, where we evaluate the different aspects of our gym. We may take a closer look at our customer experience or perhaps the results of our competitive teams. We then use that information to identify our strengths and our weaknesses and finally, we make the necessary improvements. While this is an important aspect of the growth and development of our facilities, there is another important opportunity that is often missed – feedback!

Feedback

Feedback from others gives us a unique insight into how our gyms are perceived by our customers and our team members. The most important element of feedback is that it has the ability to shed some light on our blind spots, i.e. things that we may not even know about! Sometimes we are so innately involved in the daily operations of our gym, we don't get a chance to see things and experience things from an outsider's perspective. As the saying goes, "You can't read the label from inside the jar!"



Feedback comes in two unique forms, solicited and unsolicited. Solicited feedback occurs when we specifically go looking for people's opinions. Anytime we send a survey to our customers, ask a gymnast how they liked their class today, or open up the floor to our staff to see how a new process is working, we are soliciting their feedback. We want to know how things are going so we can make them better, so we did the logical thing and we asked them!

When soliciting feedback, sometimes we may not like what we hear. It may be because it hurts to

hear the ugly truth, or it may be because it is way off base. Either way, rather than argue with the person about why they're wrong or sharing your opinion of the feedback in the moment, just say, "Thankyou!" You'll avoid a potential confrontation and you'll give yourself time to process what you just heard.

Unsolicited feedback occurs when someone shares their opinion without being asked. The complimentary e-mail from last weekend's birthday party, the parent that corners you in the hallway after class to share a concern, and the coach that shares all the problems with the lesson plan today are all forms of unsolicited feedback. While it can also sometimes be tough to swallow, unsolicited feedback is truly a gift because it generally means the customer or the employee really cares about your gym and wants you to succeed. Consider the alternative – they leave or quit and never tell you why, allowing you to make the same mistakes over and over again.

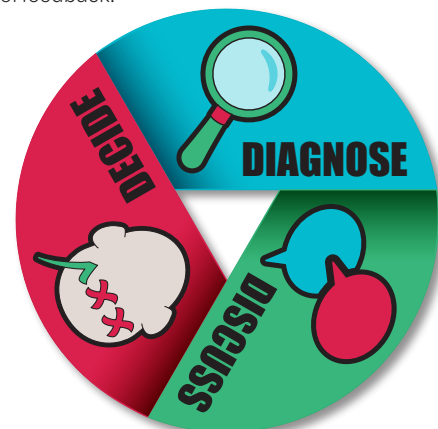
The Three D's

Once we've gotten the feedback, the next challenge is what we do with it. At Metro Stars, we use a three-step process to propel us forward – Diagnose, Discuss, and Decide.

The first thing we do with customer or employee feedback, and where we spend by far the most time is diagnosing the problem. As a team we begin by determining if the feedback that we received is actually the problem or is a symptom of a much bigger problem? As an example, a parent may share that their child is struggling in a recreational class because every single station is too hard. Upon taking a closer look we find that the coach of that class isn't following the lesson plan, and when they do, they aren't setting up the stations correctly. By taking a little time investigating, we will not only solve the real problem, but we avoided wasting a bunch of time fixing something that wasn't even broken.

Once we've figure out the real issue, the team discusses the best course of action to take. Everyone on our leadership team has a chance to weigh in, and we all try to listen with an open mind. In the previous example with the rogue rec coach, the General Manager may advocate for extra training, while the Recreational Director may share that this has been an ongoing problem with this coach and she thinks it's time to part ways. Once everyone with a stake in the outcome has had a chance to speak and be heard, it's time to decide. The person that owns the problem takes a moment to consider all of the ideas and

opinions of the stakeholders, and then makes the final decision. In this case the troublesome coach falls under the Rec Director, so the Rec Director gets to decide how the situation will be handled. She then shares her planned course of action with the whole team, which creates a level of accountability, and we move on to the next bit of feedback!



By relentlessly pursuing customer and employee feedback we create unlimited opportunities to make our gyms better. At the end of the day we'll end up with happier clients, more satisfied employees, and stronger businesses.

Now get out there and find out what you're doing right, and where you've got opportunities to learn and grow!

Meet **ERIK**



Erik and his wife Elizabeth co-founded Metro Stars Gymnastics over 12 years ago in Omaha, Nebraska, where they've grown their initial enrollment of 5 athletes, to well over 2500 weekly gymnasts. That rapid growth has landed Metro Stars on the Inc. 5000 list of the country's most quickly growing companies in both 2017 and 2018. In his spare time, he runs a taxi service for his four children, Katie, Juliette, Samantha, and Charlie.