

# You have duty to offer professional feedback

Feedback.

We all need it from time to time, don't we? Remember when you had the bit of spinach in your teeth and your best friend told you? That's the kind of feedback we like.

The other day I was at a large gala event and a woman had her beautiful black taffeta dress tucked into the back of her pantyhose. Ouch!

We women have nightmares about stuff like that. No one close to her seemed to notice and as time went on I felt more and more obligated to leave my snickering group and cross the huge room to tell her. Finally someone else did and she looked horrified, even annoyed at the person who had told her.

That was a classic example of the old "shoot the messenger" response that we all fear when we give feedback.

Last year I was coaching an attractive, well-dressed man who looked the part of the polished business executive – until he opened his mouth.

Right there, front and centre on the bottom row of his teeth...a gap, a hole. He had a tooth missing!

At that moment, in my mind, he became Jed Clampet. The music from Deliverance began playing in my head.

But I was his coach – was it my job to

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## HUMAN CAPITAL



tell him how this looked?

Had no one else mentioned it? How about his colleagues? His wife?

Feedback.

The problem is, people don't like to give it – it makes many of us uncomfortable. Partly because of the possibility of the "shoot the messenger" response but also

because we fear that maybe it's not any of our business.

Mostly we hope that maybe, just maybe, someone else will do it.

Now to the workplace.

I think we're all good with feedback about spinach in our teeth, but do you embrace feedback when your employer tells you that your manner with colleagues is abrasive?

Not quite as easy to accept, is it?

Receiving and giving employee feedback has always been one of the most avoided corporate tasks. Oh sure, we give feedback on measurable performance goals, but we avoid the human areas, like behavioural styles, patience, communication and just playing well with others.

As a manager, knowing what to comment on, when to say it, and how to say it are all delicate decisions many of us would rather not make. And unlike the spinach in the teeth, most employees are loathe to discuss their foibles, flaws and idiosyncrasies with their bosses.

Why? Simple: they either don't believe their flaws exist or they'd rather not look there.

Too many employers avoid giving the kinds of feedback that would help employees to hone their people skills. This represents a disservice to employees

who, with a little coaching and support, could improve their communication styles, interactions with others and relationships with colleagues.

And frankly it could help ward off a number of dismissals that, in my experience, almost invariably relate to personality issues.

So have some courage, managers, and tactfully tell your employees how they could improve in those areas. Be gentle, be kind, but do it, and then duck. For the really faint of heart there is a new website out: [www.secretmessage.com](http://www.secretmessage.com) that allows you to send anonymous messages to people about their inappropriate behaviour and even helps the 'offender' with resources to resolve their problem.

Personally, I always consider the source when someone gives me feedback, so if the source is anonymous...well I'm not sure about this, but I am intrigued.

Check it out and let me know what you think.

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### Siemens secures contract for Hydro Telecom's Toronto Wi-Fi zone

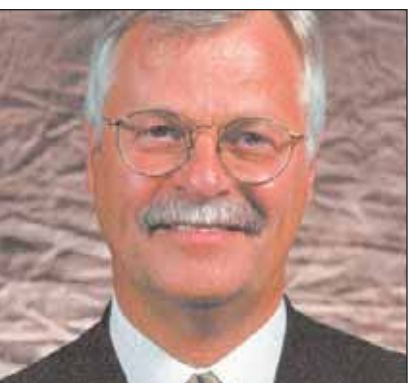
Toronto Hydro Telecom Inc. last month announced that Siemens Communications Group, a division of Siemens Canada Limited headquartered in Mississauga, has been selected vendor of record for equipment supply, implementation and services in support of Toronto Hydro Telecom's plans to make Toronto the largest ubiquitous Wi-Fi zone in Canada.

Negotiations relating to the terms and conditions of equipment supply, implementation and services are ongoing and have not yet been finalized.

"We conducted an RFP process, and the winner both in terms of depth of experience and quality of technology was Siemens," said David Dobbin, president, Toronto Hydro Telecom. "Siemens has global expertise in wireless technology, and their proposal was based on leading-edge third-generation wireless technology that more than meets our criteria for reliability, speed and scalability."

The agreement marks Siemens' entry into the Canadian wireless technology market, includes the use of a mesh Wi-Fi network that will provide coverage for an area of up to 10 square kilometres and it is anticipated that it will be fully deployed in downtown Toronto by year-end 2006.

"We are extremely pleased to be part of such an historic initiative in Canada's largest city," said Prof. Dr. Albert Maringer, president and CEO, Siemens Canada Limited. "Siemens has been intimately involved in building Canadian infrastructure for over 80 years. With the completion of this project with Toronto Hydro Telecom, the city of Toronto's wireless connectivity will be a benchmark for cities not only in Canada but across the world."



Dr. Albert Maringer

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