



Deconstructing Training By Christopher Huston

A solid training program is the foundation, and most often the catalyst, for a professional fire department. When using an organized and systematic approach to training, the program will be clear, concise, and attainable. As Instructors we evaluate our students, but are we giving them the opportunity to provide feedback to us?

Depending on the level of instruction it may be difficult for the student to evaluate their performance. For our entry level members it is irresponsible for an Instructor to ask the student to be self-critical as they have not yet be exposed to, or unable to recognize, what the end result should look like. Members with skills and knowledge in higher domains can be much more acute in assessing both personal and crew aptitude. Understanding that overall crew performance is dependent upon the individuals of the crew seems to be a no-brainer. However, when gauging competence as a whole consider the proficiency of each student. To help collect the information to guide the next training evolutions use feedback from the students as benchmarks for determining if competencies have improved. Compiling and analyzing the feedback does not take a long winded or elaborate trip through the mind, it takes three simple to ask and answer questions; 'What went well? What can we do better? What are we going to do next?' That is it! The rest of this article will be an overview of these three simple, yet powerful feedback stimulants.

A few of the key functions of these questions are that they are **easy to answer**, they are **open-ended**, and you **get immediate feedback** to what was just performed.

To get started gather everyone to huddle up before starting to set up for the next evolution. Get them while it is fresh in their minds. This also gives them a break. Have hydration ready, tell them to open up, and grab some tailboard! Start off with a very quick recap of the scenario or evolution. Do not elude to how well or how poorly it went, just outline what was supposed to happen. Ask one question at a time and give every member who was involved the opportunity to answer all three questions. Depending on the size of the group go right down the line.

What went well? It can be easy to see positives within your own performance, but this sets the stage for open dialog. If it starts out on negatives then the students will 'check-out.' As you complete these roundtable style feedback sessions the students will start looking at themselves in a different way and will stop seeking the low-level fruit.

What can we do better? This question is looking for answers that the student may not be able to answer if they do not know what good looks like. But more importantly it includes the key word **WE**. Keep the students from pointing fingers at others, but get them to acknowledge deficiencies as a whole and include anything that the Training Division can improve on to benefit their performance.

What are we going to do next? This question provides ownership. Allow the students to take ownership of their improvement plan and contract with them to provide the guidance and tools to get there.

Ask these questions after your next evolution and let your members provide immediate feedback about themselves. As a Trainer or Instructor they are also in fact critiquing you!