

Business English *with Christina*

Janeen (00:00): I, I think the cultural sensitivity, um, when we're working internationally, which everyone is now, yeah, the cultural sensitivity is really, really important.

Christina (00:15):

How should you handle criticism and feedback and how should you give criticism and feedback? This is an important skill in your professional life, but also in your personal life. And in this episode, I'm really excited because I'm speaking with Janeen, who is a specialist in business communication, and we're talking all about criticism and feedback. And something really interesting is a cultural difference between Americans and Australians in terms of feedback and criticism. We also talk about some French cultural differences, and of course there's tons of idioms and expressions in this episode as well. So very excited to have you listen to our conversation about handling and giving feedback and criticism. Hey Janeen, how are you doing today?

Janeen (01:05):

I'm really great. Thanks.

Christina (01:07):

Awesome.

Janeen (01:08):

You can see it's raining outside, which is actually really good, cuz we need water.

Christina (01:13):

You need water? Yeah, it's, no, it's just hot here in Grl, but it's good. It it at, in about 30 minutes, the storm will break and it will pour down rain, um, which is always a good thing. Anyway, um, so yeah, so here, let's see. In today's episode

we're talking all about handling criticism and feedback because this is something that is very useful for, I would say, any professional, like anyone who's working in, in a job and has to interact with other people, probably needs to know how to handle and to give criticism and feedback. Um, I know that you are really good at this topic and so yeah, I'm really excited to get into it today. Um, so I guess

Janeen (01:57):

I'm to interrupt there. Um, it's actually really important to everybody in life

Christina (02:03):

That true this is true. Yeah.

Janeen (02:04):

In life we always, we're always giving feedback and, and often, you know, we receive feedback and if we, and we, it's very easy to get offended and go, no, no, I can't handle that.

Christina (02:19): Exactly right. No, you're right. So yeah, even in your personal life, this, this stuff could, could very much, uh, be useful and practical and avoid a lot of tension and conflict. So, um, right. So I would say in maybe giving some criticism and feedback, what would be your number one tip on how to do that

Janeen (02:40):

In giving feedback? My number one tip is be honest with, be open and honest with respect and empathy. Mm. Which is my number one tip for communication. Always <laugh>,

Christina (02:57):

Right? Yeah. Right.

Janeen (02:59):

Feedback especially.

Christina (03:01):

Yes. It's

Janeen (03:02):

Really important.

Christina (03:02):

Yeah, exactly. Like I think it's, you know, like you said, you wanna be honest. You don't want to, you know, to lie to the other person because that doesn't help anybody. Um, but you really do have to maybe think about like how you deliver your message. Like you said, empathy. Think about the person who's listening to you. How is your message going to be perceived? How are they going to take it? Um, yeah. I would say, you know, deliver your message with like, tact, you know, respect, empathy, all those things you said. I think that's really important.

Janeen (03:36):

Yeah. Tact is really important. And I mean, tact means being conscious of what we're saying Right. And making sure we're not saying something that the other person is likely to feel insulted by. Mm. So, so it's really important that we don't make any per I, I'll give you another phrase. Yeah. Personal slights. Mm-hmm. So when you make a slight on someone Yeah. We put them down and and insult them. Yeah. And we definitely don't want to do that.

Christina (04:09):

Yeah, exactly. Cuz it, it's not, you know, I feel like in, you know, if if the person is delivering their feedback and their criticism with tact and they're, you know, respecting you, et cetera, then you shouldn't take it personally because it, like you said, they're not there to slight you, to insult you, to criticize you. Like for free, let's say. You know, they're not there to be mean to you. Um, so I would say like, you, you don't wanna, you know, don't, don't be a, I'd say don't be a snowflake. Um, you know, don't think that the world is against you and you're, you know, overly sensitive because someone says something and you don't, it's, it's hard to take. And, and all of that, um, I think there's an art to giving criticism and feedback, but then there's also an art to handling criticism and feedback.

Janeen (05:01):

Absolutely. And I think, I think it's very important that we distinguish between criticism and critiquing. Cause often with our feedback, what we want to do is critique,

Christina (05:14):

Right.

Janeen (05:14):

Rather than necessarily criticize. Mm.

Christina (05:17):

Right. And so how would you make the difference between those two?

Janeen (05:21):

Okay. So when we are critiquing something, someone, or actually we are not critiquing someone that's really important. Mm. Right. We're critiquing their behavior or their actions.

Christina (05:34):

Right.

Janeen (05:35):

And so it's really important to distinguish that difference. And then when you critique, you are looking for what can be improved and what can be done better. Right. And how you can help them Mm.

Christina (05:49):

Right.

Janeen (05:50):

Then criticize them is, is really quite negative. And it's just you, you're just focusing on the negative. Right. So I think if you go with the intent of I am giving you this feedback to help you Mm. Do a better job to help you do whatever it is, you're doing better. Right. And it has a great, like, that's gonna have an, a much better outcome.

Christina (06:16):

Yeah, exactly. No, and I think it, you know, we were talking about this before we started, uh, the recording because, you know, uh, we had, you know, a moment in our team, let's say, and I think this is a good example to show that, uh, you know, we are working as a team, which means a lot of things like team management, um, interpersonal communication, et cetera. But also it was very interesting for the cultural difference part. Um, and it was, you know, when, when you said, I would say, you said Australians are very open and very direct, um,

compared to us Americans who are maybe much more indirect. Um, and we like to really sugarcoat things. I would say, um, yeah.

Janeen (07:00):

That, that's a big difference. A Australians are very much like, they're well known for say it how it is.

Christina (07:07):

Mm.

Janeen (07:08):

We don't sugarcoat things. We Right. You know, we just say it. Look, this is how it is. And, and Americans, it, well, I don't know, you tell me, but I I got the impression that Americans can just get a little bit, let's say, offended by saying it how it is

Christina (07:27):

Exactly. I, and I would say it, it's, yeah, it's because it's, um, maybe part, I don't know, offended. Yeah. Maybe. Um, but I think it's also, it's just because in American culture it's like if someone sort of just like you said, tells you how it is and is very like directly honest, I mean, we have an expression, brutally honest. Um, yes. It's not something that's really expected or done a lot in American culture. And so it can, it can create a little bit of tension. Um, and I almost feel like the Australian culture is much closer to the French culture in this way, um, than the American culture. Even though we might tend to think of, you know, the US and the UK and Australia, we lump them together as Anglo-Saxons, but I think there's a big cultural difference and Australia is closer to maybe France and Germany and things like that in, in that aspect. Yeah.

Janeen (08:23):

Yeah. I I think it, you know, comes from the history of Australia, which has been a a, a hard no, like a hard knock, uh, culture growing up as a country. Yeah. And this she'll be right mate attitude, right? Yeah. Like, let's just get in and get it done.

Christina (08:43):

Right. Exactly. Yeah. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. And I think it's like when you, um, because you know what, what we had to manage was like, uh, you

communicating, I would say in in your natural Australian style. Of course, we've got a lot of Americans on the team and we're like, all right, Janeen, you gotta calm down a little bit because some of the people are, you know, taking it, taking it a little personally perhaps, uh, which was not your intention. Um, but again, it just goes to show that in, in the culture, because you were, like you said, critiquing versus criticizing the idea was critiquing and trying to point out and improve, et cetera. It wasn't like you were being mean or anything like that, but because of the cultural difference, it was like, all right, let's address this. And after, uh, like I, I was like, oh no, I'm gonna have to talk to Janeen about this.

(09:32):

Um, and I was like really nervous about it. And then because you know how to take criticism and feedback, you're like, oh, you know, I didn't realize it. Okay. I've noted, um, not at all my intention. And it, and it, we, we worked it out very smoothly. Um, but I think that was an, a very interesting, uh, conversation because it shows, it was like how to give criticism and feedback, how to accept it, and also how to manage cultural differences around this topic, which can be quite sensitive in a, in a lot of, you know, moments, let's say.

Janeen (10:08):

Yeah. I, I think the cultural sensitivity, um, when we're working internationally, which everyone is now Yeah. The cultural sensitivity is really, really important. Mm. And I can give you one example about the, the, the, the French Australian, um, project for the submarines. The one that the Australian Australian Prime minister canceled.

Christina (10:34):

Right.

Janeen (10:36):

So, you know, there you go. Someone not being

Christina (10:39):

Diplomatic incident.

Janeen (10:41):

Yes. But they, they wrote, um, they wrote the, the issues between the culture. Mm. And the French people said, the Australians just have to recognize that we

need two hours for lunch, and this is very important in our culture. Right. And Australians, you know, we eat at our desk. Right. Or, you know, it might be lucky if we take half an hour. Mm. You know, half. So Australians didn't understand that. Right. And the Australians to the French, well, the French need to recognize that when we stay, say a time for a meeting, we mean we start at that time. Right. Not 10 minutes, 15 minutes later.

Christina (11:21):

Right, exactly. And

Janeen (11:23):

So these sort of things really, we need to be aware of them.

Christina (11:27):

Exactly. Exactly. And then, like you said, there can be differences and you can address those differences. And then what you, what you have to do is sort of, you know, meet in the middle, decide on what's going to work for you as a team, um, and not say like, no, we're French, you must adapt to us, or we are Australians, and you must adapt to us and say, all right, we're clearly have different approaches here. Let's see what we can both be happy with. Um, and yeah, and I think I would say maybe as a conclusion to all of that, the idea is when you have situations where you have to handle, uh, I would say to give or to get criticism and feedback, look for the positive sides and look how you can use those opportunities to improve and grow together. Um, because that's, I mean, that's what it's about. It's about becoming better together and improving. And

Janeen (12:21):

I like that.

Christina (12:22):

That's

Janeen (12:22):

It. Becoming better together.

Christina (12:24):

Become better together. Words of wisdom. I think we're, yeah. <laugh> we'll, we'll end on those, those final words become better. Fantastic. Fantastic. Yeah. All right. Okay. Well thanks a lot Janeen. And uh, yeah. Talk to you soon.

Janeen (12:38):

Yeah, thanks Christina.