

Filtering Feedback

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Making sense of judges' feedback can be a confusing and arduous process. When you're receiving comments, tips, and suggestions from multiple sources, weeding out the crud from the credible can become overwhelming. While I still consult various individuals for advice, I have learned to discriminate....but there IS a process. Here are my tips for making the feedback work for you.

1. LISTEN CAREFULLY

Make sure you understand what the person has told you—are you confused by his/her wording? (For example, “You need more muscle” or “You need to work on your quads”?) What does this mean?

2. ASK QUESTIONS

So if you are told that you need more muscle, don't you want to know where? Do you need 5 more pounds overall or are you lacking in a particular area? If you need “to work on your quads,” is it more separation they are looking for, or is your lower body lacking in muscle as compared to your upper body? GET THE SPECIFICS!

3. KNOW YOUR FUTURE CONTEST GOALS

Let your future goals guide your inquiries. Many judges have been on the national level panels and have a sense of the criteria you'll be subjected to if that's where you are headed. Ask them what you might expect at your competition and if they have any advice for tweaking your physique or stage presence before the competition. Find out how your presentation compares to those you may be competing against and where you might gather additional resources to learn more as you prepare.

4. GATHER YOUR SCORE CARDS AND USE THEM

Find the judge who scored you the highest and the judge who scored you the lowest. Ask the former what gave you the competitive edge (and ask for specifics)! Was it your symmetry, posing, walking, hair/make-up, presentation, suits, color?

Ask the lowest judge what you could have done differently to move up just one placing. Again, specifics are key—you need information you can use. Ask what gave the competitor ahead of you the edge.

5. ASK FOR TIPS

Many judges are or have been trainers and/or competitors and have significant experience with contest prep, dieting, and gaining that competitive advantage! Find out if they can give you techniques! For example, if you were told that you were not dark enough/too dark, what tanning techniques would they suggest? If they felt your hairstyle was not flattering, how would they suggest you do it? If

you came in too soft, do they have ideas for how you can lean out more appropriately for the next contest?

6. GET CONTACT INFORMATION

Many judges would love to spend more time talking to you about your strengths as well as how you can improve—IF they see that you are serious! If you have been in front of the same panel of judges numerous times, and they do not see that you have made any suggested improvements between shows, do you think they will take you seriously? The judges are scrambling after shows to give you feedback, and oftentimes they are as hungry as you are and want to get away to eat! There is usually a long line of competitors waiting to talk to them. Show them that you value their opinions, and if there is not ample time to discuss their feedback, ask if you can contact them by phone or email. Some would even love to set up a date to talk more in depth!

7. REMEMBER THAT WHAT WORKS FOR ONE PERSON WILL NOT ALWAYS WORK FOR ANOTHER

We really AREN'T all created equal! Judges will have ideas for you, and you may try them and find that they aren't effective. *Prior to attending NPC Jr. Nationals Figure Championships, I competed in a regional competition and took overalls in figure, bodybuilding, and drug free for life bodybuilding. But I was told that a different tanning technique would serve me better at the national level. Under the brighter lights I would be exposed to, this technique would be more conducive to showing my definition. I gathered the instructions from this judge and learned that this technique was one that a number of the pros he trains use consistently. Well, to make a long story short, I followed those instructions meticulously, and I swear I looked like a martian – I was green under the stage lights! Okay, so maybe it wasn't that bad (I have since looked at the pictures), but my old technique, my tried and true, would have produced better results. My color was not right- no doubt about that!* Lessons learned: Don't assume what you are told to do is going to work, AND certainly don't try something new for the very first time right before a big competition!

8. NETWORK

Last but not least, use the opportunity to talk with the judges to your advantage! You have this time to speak with some very knowledgeable, influential individuals. They can provide you with valuable information, AND so can others! Inquire about whom they might know whom you could contact for further information, and work on getting to know those people!

Your success depends a lot on how well you can use the information you're given. Educate yourself and be discerning about the feedback you receive. If you tried to do everything each person suggested, you just might go crazy. But if you're hearing a common theme, trust it and then learn more! Good luck in your competitive endeavors!