

Ace your work report card

The three friends met years ago while they were working at different divisions of Time Warner in Manhattan.

One of them, Elaine Meryl Brown, took an executive development class that helped her decide leaders aren't just born — leaders can be made. Brown formed a support and mentor network. Over time, the three friends decided to turn their life lessons into a book, a savvy "mentor in your pocket."

The trio — Brown, who worked for HBO till last year; Marsha Haygood, who worked at New Line Cinema until 2006 and now runs StepWise Associates, a career and personal development company; and Rhonda Joy McLean, who's still at Time Inc. — have just released "The Little Black Book of Success."

This excerpt is from a chapter titled, "To Measure Your Performance, Get Feedback."

You may think you're doing a fabulous job and you probably are, but you'll need to get confirmation from the person who matters most, the one who reviews your performance, and is qualified to give you a raise, bonus or promotion: your boss.

Feedback helps you grow, develop and gives you a chance to correct your mistakes. You're



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Co-authors (l. to r.) Marsha Haygood, Elaine Meryl Brown and Rhonda Joy McLean at a reading last week at the Hue-Man Bookstore in Harlem.

news is an instigator for interpersonal conflict instead of growth, feel uneasy about the process in general or simply don't know how to approach this task. But feedback is information that measures how well you achieve your work objectives and results.

When you have your feedback meeting, don't rely on memory. Review the notes of your contri-

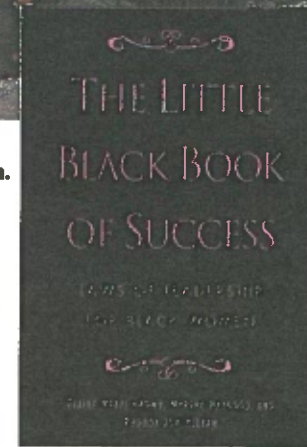
play. Be sure to take notes on your feedback and, most important, don't take negative feedback personally. Remember this is about your performance, not personal criticism. And if you receive constructive criticism, which you will because nobody is perfect, know that these are areas for improvement that simply require more of your time, energy, focus and attention to

when this could not be further from the truth.

Just because your boss is not criticizing your work or reprimanding you for not doing a good job doesn't mean she doesn't think that way every now and then. It's your responsibility not to make any assumptions about your overall performance. It's your boss' job to tell you how you're doing. Consequently, even if she feels uneasy about giving you feedback, it's something you must ask her to do. In addition to this, be open to hearing honest feedback from your co-workers and others you interact with on a regular basis, as well.

As your boss begins to recognize your performance change and see your growth — which you may have to bring to her attention — she'll see you as someone who takes the performance feedback seriously, which is a good way to get noticed and rewarded.

On the other hand, sometimes we sabotage ourselves by ignoring constructive criticism and refusing to change. Other times, we get an attitude and internalize these feelings, which block us from moving forward, and being stuck prevents us from growing. In general, be open to feedback, use it as an opportunity for self-evaluation, and make appropriate changes to your



is negative. Positive feedback should give you reassurance that