Helpful Responses to Unhelpful Feedback

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In a perfect world, 100% of the client feedback you received would be clear, consistent, thoughtful, and prompt. In this section's Warm Up, we listed four types of tricky client feedback, outlining tips on how to handle each. If you've been on the receiving end of any of these complicated critiques, the email templates below can help you request the information you're missing—and steer an inef-fective feedback cycle back on track. (Read more about this in our Deep Dive!)

⊛ Tyrus

1. Use this template if you've received vague feedback.

> Hello _____,
>
> Thank you for sending over your feedback.
>
> I've read through your comments and have a few questions before moving on to next steps.
>
> To start, would you clarify what you meant when you said [insert client feedback]? Any further concrete direction you can provide will help me determine next steps. In this case, that could look like [insert examples].
>
> I'm happy to do more iterations, but want to make sure I'm on track in terms of timing and budget.

2. Use this template if you've received conflicting feedback.

> Hello _____,
>
> Thanks so much for sharing your feedback!
>
> I'm looking forward to getting started on revisions. Before I begin, I'd love to get clarity on a couple of key points. First, when you say [insert client feedback], do you mean [insert your translation]?
>
> Similarly, regarding your comment about the color being too [insert client feedback], are you thinking that the palette should look more like [insert alternate option]? Let's hop on the phone to discuss further.
>
> Also, let me know if you need a day or two to realign with your team. I understand how hard it can be to give comprehensive feedback when there are multiple moving parts and opinions at play—and on my end, it would be better to know that I have the green light from all parties before moving forward.
>
> Thanks!

3. Use this template if you've received narrow-minded feedback.

Hello _____,

Thank you for sharing your feedback.

I'm looking forward to getting started on the next draft! One thing I did want to address beforehand, is your note about [insert client feedback].

While I'm generally happy to accommodate client requests, I'd like to offer my thoughts about why it might be worth considering a different approach in this case. Over the years, I've noticed that it's much more powerful to show [insert reframing of feedback] because [insert reasoning]—and in the interest of creating the most impactful, effective, and current work possible, I wanted to share this perspective before moving forward.

I'm happy to discuss further if you'd like!

Note: With sensitive conversations like these, it can be easy to misinterpret someone's tone in writing. If your client responds to this email confirming that they're interested in talking more, consider planning a follow-up phone call rather than discussing further online.

4. Use this template if you've received feedback that's out of scope.

Hello _____,

Thanks for sharing your feedback.

While I aim to be as accommodating as possible with revision requests, what is outlined here is out of scope based on what we originally agreed upon.

I'm happy to address these changes, but since doing so will require a major restructuring of what's already been completed, I'll need additional time and budget: [list your specific needs here].

If that isn't possible on your end, I can move forward with the current illustration, incorporating some of the smaller tweaks you mentioned, including [insert smaller edits].

Let me know which option you'd prefer.