**Career Headlines**

**Watch Your Language**

Jamie watches as customers at the checkout counter become impatient while Rick talks. They just want him to ring up their sale and keep the line moving. After a customer snaps, “Rush it up, buddy,” Rick complains about “rude” people. Jamie decides to give Rick some advice and says, “You talk too much, Rick. The customers are in a hurry.” Rick glares and barks, “Who asked you to butt in?” and storms off.

What caused the blow-up between Jamie and Rick? While Rick should have shown more willingness to listen to advice, he was defensive because Jamie damaged his self-esteem. To Rick, Jamie came across as critical, instead of helpful.

Giving constructive criticism is an important form of communication. Here are some advice-giving guidelines:

* Be nonjudgmental. Constructive advice doesn’t imply “you’re stupid.”
* Focus on the issue, instead of the person. Constructive advice concentrates on the current difficulty, not on the abilities or qualities of the person you’re advising.
* Balance your comments. State a positive before a negative. “You’ve had a lot of customers today, Rick. They don’t really like to talk to us when they’re checking out because they’re in a hurry.”