

The Case for Clear Feedback

Most people avoid giving direct feedback because they're afraid it will feel like an attack. That fear is reasonable. Feedback that blurs the person with the issue does land as an attack. And once someone feels attacked, they stop listening for what's useful and start listening for what's next to defend. Everything you say after that point is wasted, including the parts that mattered.

Feedback that stays focused on what happened, not who someone is, isn't harsher. It's kinder. It's the only version that has a chance of actually being heard.

That distinction, separating the person from the issue, is the single most important skill in delivering feedback well. SBI is a simple structure that makes it automatic.

S

ituation

The specific moment. When and where this happened, kept recent and concrete. Not "you always" or "lately."

B

ehavior

The observable action. What was said or done. Never a trait, a label, or an assumption about intent. This is where person and issue split apart.

I

mpact

The effect. What that behavior caused for the work, the team, or the person you're speaking to.

SBI in Action



Behavior is not character.

"You're careless" is a judgment about someone. "You missed the filing deadline twice this month" is a fact about what happened.
Only one of those gives someone something to change.

Missed deadline (manager → team member)

Instead of: "You've been really unreliable lately."

Try: "Yesterday (S), the client report wasn't submitted by the 3pm deadline (B). That pushed our review meeting back a day and delayed the rest of the week's plan (I)."

Upward Feedback (team member → manager)

Instead of: "You never give me a straight answer."

Try: "In our last two 1:1s (S), when I asked about the project's priority, the answer changed both times (B). It's made it hard for me to know where to spend my time this week (I)."

IGNORE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT: THE FEEDBACK SANDWICH ISN'T WORKING

The formula, praise, criticism, praise, was built to soften the blow. The research says it doesn't. Studies of peer feedback found people believe the sandwich helps performance, but there's no evidence it does. It just makes the moment feel comfortable while the message gets lost in the bread.

The cost shows up downstream. Only 14% of employees find their feedback conversations genuinely meaningful, according to Gallup. **A structure built to protect feelings ends up protecting no one. It just delays the real conversation.**



FEEDBACK IS A SKILL. SO IS EVERYTHING AROUND IT.

SBI is one piece of the puzzle. **Mastering Workplace Collaboration** builds the rest. Scan the QR Code to learn more.

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