



Leadership Communication 101 - How to Give Effective Feedback

A Resource for Your Leadership Development

For more leadership development resources
contact Stanley J. Ward, PhD
stan@coachingforinfluence.com
coachingforinfluence.com

HOW DO I GET PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR?

Do any of these personalities sound familiar?

- The brilliant contributor whose emotional outbursts alienate coworkers.
- The well-intentioned associate who can't seem to stay on task - always busy, but accomplishing nothing.
- The star manager who discourages the team by micromanaging.
- The manager who constantly points out problems without offering solutions.
- The manager who is always talking and never listening.

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK HELPS.

While no magic formula exists for guaranteed behavior change, you can develop skills that are fundamental for leading well and influencing others. The first skill you need to master - no matter what your position in the organization: **effective feedback.**

Read this guide and you will learn:

- ▶ Three types of feedback.
- ▶ Common struggles with feedback.
- ▶ Formulas for giving and receiving feedback.

Types of Feedback

In their book, *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*, authors Douglas Stone and Shiela Heen define three types of feedback.

1. Appreciation – *is about communicating success.*

Appreciation can be as simple as a fist bump or saying “good job.”

2. Coaching – *is about giving corrective feedback that focuses on how to do something differently. Coaching is future oriented. “Here is how to do it next time.”*

3. Evaluation – *is providing negative feedback. “What you did here is not acceptable.”*

Common Struggles with Giving Feedback

Stone and Heen point out that a common struggle for those of us receiving feedback is that when we receive **coaching**, we often perceive it as **evaluation**. In other words, we focus on the negative connotations rather than the positive future that coaching offers.

What's interesting about Stone and Heen's observation is that The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) also warns about how feedback can be confusing. CCL explains that, when we give feedback, **it is important not to mix messages**. Don't confuse a positive message with negative side comments.

So, to apply that insight to the three types of feedback described by Stone and Heen:

- ▶ **When giving appreciation**, we need to make sure the entire message is positive.
- ▶ **When giving coaching**, we need to make our intent clear and focus on positive behaviors and outcomes for the future.
- ▶ **When giving evaluation**, we need to be clear and not sandwich the negative between positives. To do this, we must make sure we give appreciation and coaching prior to the need for giving evaluation.

Steps for Giving Feedback

Here is a helpful model for sharing feedback, adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership's SBI model. We can call this the SBI-F model.

*Start with the **(S)ituation** – When and where did the behavior happen?*

Next, describe the **(B)ehavior** – What were the specific actions? Describe this with details.

Then, discuss the **(I)mpact** – What were the consequences for the organization? The consequences on the purpose of the mission? The feelings of the people involved?

INFLUENCE TIP

True coaching conversations unlock potential because the coach spends more time listening than talking. Four simple questions to help start a coaching conversation are:

1. What was your goal?
2. How did you do?
3. What did you learn?
4. How can you apply what you learned next time?

For any kind of feedback conversation, be it **appreciation, coaching,** or **evaluation,** this is helpful. If you want to make this a coaching conversation, be sure to add one more component, and make it the heart of your conversation.

*Discuss **(F)uture** behaviors and outcomes.*

Because coaching is future-focused, it opens up a world of possibilities rather than getting stuck in blame and shame. Good coaching conversations can set your team free to do their best work.

When thinking about future behaviors, I suggest you also think through old behaviors you want someone to **stop** doing, new behaviors you would like for them to **start** doing, and current successful behaviors that you want them to **continue** doing.

While advice on what to start or stop may seem obvious, it's easy to overlook feedback on what should continue.

INFLUENCE TIP

Effective feedback works both ways. Don't just give feedback, ask for it as well.

Try some questions like these:

1. In order for me to help you achieve your goals, what do I need to start doing?
2. In order for me to help you achieve your goals, what do I need to stop doing?
3. In order for me to help you achieve your goals, what do I need to continue doing?

In order to get feedback on what I should continue doing, I often joke with my wife and daughters: “Just because I did something right once doesn't mean I actually knew what I was doing. Please help me know when I'm being successful so I can continue doing that.”

*When I asked my youngest daughter for **start, stop, and continue** feedback while we were out on a father-daughter date, her advice was, “**continue buying me gelato.**”*

These feedback skills work in both personal and professional settings. And, you can use these skills for feedback to direct reports as well as feedback to managers (assuming you've built some trust first).

So, the next time you provide feedback for someone:

- ▶ Be clear about what kind of feedback you are giving. Don't mix types. Let the listener know your intent.
- ▶ Use the SBI model for all three types of feedback, and make sure you add and emphasize the (F)uture component for coaching conversations.
- ▶ When thinking through future behaviors, communicate behaviors to start, stop, and continue.

INFLUENCE RESOURCES

- Listen to this [podcast](#) on *Thanks for the Feedback*
- Watch this Center For Creative Leadership [video](#) on “Top 10 Mistakes When Giving Feedback.”
- Read this Forbes [blog](#) on 5 common feedback mistakes.
- If you are introverted, read this blog: “[Giving the Tough Talk with Candor, Compassion, and Courage.](#)”
- Read the [Ethical Leadership blog](#) at Claremont Lincoln University.

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