

The Manager Feedback Toolkit

Practical tools, scripts, and frameworks for giving feedback that actually changes behavior — without damaging the relationship.

The four kinds of feedback

Most managers default to one. Great managers use all four, deliberately.

- **Appreciation** — naming specific effort or impact. ('That run-of-show you put together held the meeting together.')
- **Coaching** — helping someone get better at something they're already doing.
- **Evaluation** — telling someone where they stand against an expectation or peer.
- **Course correction** — telling someone a behavior needs to change, and by when.

Framework 1 — SBI (Situation, Behavior, Impact)

Best for: in-the-moment feedback on specific behavior. Removes opinion, focuses on what happened.

1. **Situation** — when and where it happened. ('In the client call on Tuesday...')
2. **Behavior** — what you actually saw or heard, not your interpretation. ('You interrupted Maya twice before she finished her point.')
3. **Impact** — what the consequence was. ('She stopped contributing for the rest of the call, and we missed her perspective on pricing.')

Framework 2 — Radical Candor Script

Best for: harder feedback where you're tempted to soften it into uselessness.

- Care personally: *'I'm telling you this because I want you to succeed here.'*
- Challenge directly: *'The work you submitted on Friday wasn't at the level we need for this role.'*
- Be specific: *'Specifically, X, Y, and Z were missing.'*
- Invite dialogue: *'What's your read on what happened?'*
- Agree on next step: *'By Friday, I'd like to see...'*

Framework 3 — Feedforward

Best for: when the past can't be changed and you want to focus on the next attempt.

- Name the situation that's coming up again.
- Ask: 'What would you do differently next time?'
- Add one specific suggestion, not a list.
- Agree how you'll both know it worked.

Scripts for hard moments

Underperformance — first conversation

"I want to flag something while it's still fixable. Over the last [period], [specific observations]. I'm not putting you on any kind of formal plan — I'm telling you now because I'd rather we course-correct than have this become a bigger conversation later. What's your read?"

A direct report pushes back on your feedback

"I hear that you see it differently. I want to understand your view — and I also want to be clear that the behavior I described is the one I need to change. Help me understand what's getting in the way."

You delivered feedback badly and need a redo

"I've been sitting with the conversation we had on Tuesday and I don't think I gave you what you needed. The point I was trying to make was X — and I think it landed as Y. Can we re-do it?"

Praising someone without it sounding generic

"I want to name something specific — [behavior] in [situation]. The reason it mattered is [impact]. Keep doing that."

Pre-feedback checklist

- Have I observed this behavior myself, or am I working from secondhand reports?
- Am I clear on the specific behavior — not the personality trait?
- Do I know what 'better' looks like, concretely?
- Have I separated my emotion from the observation?
- What outcome do I actually want from this conversation?
- Am I delivering it within 48 hours of the behavior, while it's still useful?
- Is this a coaching conversation or a course-correction conversation? They sound different.

Common traps

- Sandwiching — burying the message between two compliments so the person walks away unclear.
- Saving it up — collecting weeks of small frustrations into one overwhelming conversation.
- Giving feedback about a pattern when you've only seen it once.
- Letting tone do the work — being so gentle the message doesn't land.
- Asking 'does that make sense?' instead of 'what's your reaction?'