

FEEDBACK THAT LANDS

8 REASONS FEEDBACK IS HEARD, IGNORED OR RESISTED.

Most feedback training focuses on how to say it. That's not usually where it breaks down. Feedback fails or lands based on timing, trust, specificity and intent — often before a single word is spoken. This guide is about why feedback works, not how to deliver it.



LANDS AS HELP,
NOT ATTACK



BUILDS FASTER
IMPROVEMENT



STRENGTHENS
TRUST



PREVENTS
REPEATED MISTAKES



MAKES DIFFICULT
MOMENTS EASIER

1



FEEDBACK IS HEARD THROUGH THE RELATIONSHIP, NOT THE WORDS

- The same sentence lands completely differently depending on how much trust is already in the account.
- People don't just hear what you say — they hear what they think you think of them.
- If the relationship is thin, even accurate feedback gets read as an attack.

ASK YOURSELF: Is there enough trust already banked with this person for what I'm about to say to land as help, not judgment?

2



TIMING MATTERS MORE THAN TECHNIQUE

- Feedback given a week later is a history lesson, not help.
- The longer the gap, the more the moment gets rebuilt from memory instead of fact — by both of you.
- Fast feedback, even imperfectly delivered, beats perfect feedback delivered late.

ASK YOURSELF: What feedback am I sitting on right now that's losing value the longer I wait?

3



VAGUE IS THE SAME AS SILENT

- "Great job" and "that needs work" give someone nothing to actually repeat or fix.
- Specific feedback names the exact behaviour, moment or decision — not the person's character.
- Vague praise feels nice and changes nothing. Vague criticism feels bad and changes nothing either.

ASK YOURSELF: If I said this feedback out loud, could the other person tell me exactly what to do differently next time?

4



PEOPLE FEEL THE INTENT BEFORE THEY HEAR THE WORDS

- Feedback given to help lands differently from feedback given to prove a point or protect yourself.
- You can't fully disguise the difference — tone, timing and body language give it away.
- If your real motive is "I need this on record" rather than "I want this to improve," the other person usually knows.

ASK YOURSELF: Am I giving this feedback for their benefit, or mine?

5



A MONOLOGUE ISN'T FEEDBACK, IT'S A VERDICT

- Feedback delivered as a finished statement leaves no room for the other person's version of events.
- The most useful feedback conversations include a question before the conclusion — "what was going on for you there?"
- People resist verdicts. They engage with conversations.

ASK YOURSELF: In my last piece of feedback, did I ask a genuine question — or just deliver a decision I'd already made?

6



ONE CRITICAL LINE CAN DROWN IN FIVE COMPLIMENTS

- Padding hard feedback with excessive praise doesn't soften it — it hides it.
- People often leave "compliment sandwich" conversations remembering the praise and missing the point entirely.
- Clarity is kinder than cushioning.

ASK YOURSELF: Did the actual point survive everything I wrapped around it?

7



THE SAME WORDS LAND DIFFERENTLY IN PUBLIC

- Feedback that would be received well one-to-one can trigger defensiveness the moment an audience is present.
- Public correction protects the leader's convenience, not the other person's growth.
- If it's not urgent or safety-critical, it can wait for privacy.

ASK YOURSELF: Am I giving this feedback here because it's the right moment — or because it's convenient for me?

8



FEEDBACK NOBODY FOLLOWS UP ON TEACHES PEOPLE IT DIDN'T MATTER

- A single feedback conversation with no follow-up signals it was a box-ticking exercise.
- Checking back in — even briefly — is what tells someone the feedback was real, not performative.
- Follow-through is what turns feedback into development instead of an event.

ASK YOURSELF: Of the last three pieces of feedback I gave, how many did I ever actually go back to?



REFLECT

Before your next feedback conversation, reflect using these prompts:

- Which of these eight is most often the reason my feedback doesn't land?
- Whose feedback have I been sitting on for too long?
- What's one piece of feedback I gave recently that I never followed up on?



TRY TOMORROW

Pick one behaviour to practise this week:

- Give one piece of feedback within 24 hours of noticing it
- Replace one vague comment with a specific one
- Ask a question before you give your next piece of feedback
- Follow up on something you said last week

Say it soon.
Say it clearly.
Follow it through.



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Download and
keep for reference



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Share with your
team and peers

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