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# Situation – Behavior – Impact (SBI) Feedback

## Your 10-Minute Guide to Providing Clear, Specific Feedback



Inspire positive change  
with effective feedback.

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### Learn how to give feedback that motivates people to change.

Imagine that you recently gave some feedback to a member of your team – you told him that his reports looked great, but he needed to improve his telephone skills.

You followed up a few weeks later to find out why he hadn't made any changes. You discover that he didn't understand what he could do to improve – your feedback simply prompted more questions.

He was left thinking "What's good about my reports that I can transfer to other documents?" and "What's wrong with my telephone skills?"

The Situation – Behavior – Impact (SBI) Feedback tool helps you deliver more effective feedback. It focuses your comments on specific situations and behaviors, and then outlines the impact that these behaviors have on others.

This guide looks at a tool that your managers can use to deliver clear and focused feedback.

Please feel free to share it inside your organization.



## About the Tool

Developed by The Center for Creative Leadership, the SBI Feedback Tool outlines a simple process that you can use to give feedback:

1. Identify the situation.
2. Describe the behavior.
3. Explain its impact.

When you structure feedback in this way, your people will understand precisely what you are commenting on, and why. And when you outline the impact of their behavior on others, you give them the chance to reflect on their actions, and think about what they need to change.

The tool also helps you avoid making assumptions that could upset the other person and damage your relationship with them.

## Applying the Tool

Let's look at each part of the SBI Feedback tool, and discuss how you can use it to structure feedback.

### 1. Identify the Situation

When you're giving feedback, first define the where and when of the situation you're referring to. This puts the feedback into context, and gives the other person a specific setting as a reference.

For example:

- "During yesterday morning's team meeting, when you gave your presentation..."
- "At the client meeting on Monday afternoon..."

### 2. Describe the Behavior

Your next step is to describe the specific behaviors that you want to address. This is the most challenging part of the process, because you must communicate only the behaviors that you have observed directly.

You must not make assumptions or subjective judgments about those behaviors. These could be wrong, and this will undermine your feedback.

For example, if you observed that a colleague made mistakes in a presentation, you should not assume that she hadn't prepared thoroughly. You should simply

comment that your colleague made mistakes – and, ideally, you should note what the mistakes were.

Don't rely on hearsay, as this may contain others people's subjective judgments. Again, this could undermine your feedback and jeopardize your relationship.

The examples below include a description of behavior:

- "During yesterday morning's team meeting, when you gave your presentation, you were uncertain about two of the slides, and your sales calculations were incorrect."
- "At the client meeting on Monday afternoon, you ensured that the meeting started on time and that everyone had handouts in advance. All of your research was correct, and each of the client's questions was answered."

Aim to use measurable information in your description of the behavior. This helps to ensure that your comments are objective.

### 3. Explain the Behavior's Impact

The last step is to use "I" statements to describe how the other person's action has affected you or others.

For example:

- "During yesterday morning's team meeting, when you gave your presentation, you were uncertain about two of the slides and your sales calculations were incorrect. I felt embarrassed because the entire board was there. I'm worried that this has affected the reputation of our team."
- "At the client meeting on Monday afternoon, you ensured that the meeting started on time and that everyone had handouts in advance. All of your research was correct, and each of the client's questions was answered. I'm proud that you did such an excellent job and put the organization in a good light. I feel confident that we'll get the account, thanks to your hard work."

## Next Steps

Once you've delivered your feedback, encourage the other person to think about the situation and to understand the impact of his behavior. (The [Perceptual](#)

**Positions technique** can help him explore how other people may think.) Allow the other person time to absorb what you have said, and then go over specific actions that will help him to improve.

Also, where someone has done something well, help him think about how he can build on this.

## Key Points

The SBI Feedback tool helps you deliver clear, specific feedback. SBI stands for:

1. Situation.
2. Behavior.
3. Impact.

To use the tool, describe the “when” and “where” of the situation. Next, describe the other person’s behavior, only mentioning actions that you have observed. Then, communicate the impact of her behavior on you and others.

Finally, discuss what your team member needs to do to change this behavior in the future, or, if her behavior had a positive impact, explore how she can build on this.

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