

When They Win, You Win

Tags: [#management](#) [#feedback](#)

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Dialogue

Point: a lot of managers are still failing

Big 3 elements of leadership: direction, coaching, career

Where people go wrong with feedback:

I've seen people, often unconsciously, spend so much time talking about the impending conversation that they don't leave themselves enough time to actually have the conversation.

People can tell when you're going to give them bad news.

Avoid starting with:

How do you think things went in the team meeting?

Language:

I think I'm seeing some behavior that I believe is getting in your way. Are you in a spot where you can hear that right now?

Framework:

Situation - context

Behavior/Work - not just the behavior, but the actual work

Impact - impact on results

What does that sound like?

End with:

What are your thoughts about that?

There's a distinction between your truth and the truth.

What have you changed your mind on?

Quotes

Situation—Describe the situation (or context, scenario, or typical interaction type), and be specific about which work product you are describing.

Work—Describe how well the work product builds to results: the code, the copy, the customer service tickets, the sales pitch, the presentation slides, the presentation delivery, the financial model, the candidate experience strategy, etc.

Impact—Describe the impact of the work on the business and on others. Why does this work matter? What result does it contribute to? How well do you believe it contributes, or how poorly?

One of the common questions I receive about structuring feedback is, “How do I get started?” I’ve seen people, often unconsciously, spend so much time talking about the impending conversation that they don’t leave themselves enough time to actually have the conversation. That’s why I prefer a minimalist opening salvo.

“I think I’m seeing some behavior that I believe is getting in your way. Are you in a spot where you can hear that right now?” By asking this question, you are effectively flagging that this might be a tough conversation and requesting permission to have it. And you are doing it in a way that gets you quickly into the real conversation. It gets you out of talking about the coaching and into providing it. The answer will almost always be yes, regardless of whether they are actually in an appropriate mindset. People often ask, “Well, what if they do say ‘no’?” In that case, you honor that response. I might say something along the lines of, “OK, no problem, I get it. When is a good time for us to catch up on this? Will tomorrow morning work for you?” You just want to keep it on the books so that it doesn’t vanish courtesy of a low pass filter. The “escape and evade” approach to tough feedback, though common, is not a strategy for getting better or helping others around you get better.

And just to hammer the point home, we hypothesize that 99.9999 percent (you get it) of the universe is made up of so-called dark matter, but we aren’t remotely sure. This is basically all of the universe we’re talking about here, and we don’t know what it’s made of. So the idea that we know something about whether someone’s work or behavior is right or wrong, or that any one of us possesses the truth about some topic at work, is, for me, asymptotic with impossible.

When you offer someone feedback, the best you can offer is what you see. You cannot offer them truth, right, or wrong. What you see, however, while limited, is extremely valuable. When you offer your perspective to the feedback receiver, you should label your perspective as exactly that: what you see.

References