



Question:

Some of our managers give feedback that's vague and unhelpful. Is there a feedback model you'd recommend we teach them?

Answered by the HR Experts

Yes, the Situation Behavior Impact (SBI) model might do the trick. It's a formula for providing clear, specific, relevant, and factual feedback. In short, you identify the situation, describe the behavior observed, and note the impact of that behavior. This method works whether your feedback is positive or negative, simple or complex.

Here's a breakdown of the model:

- *Situation* identifies the context of your feedback so the employee knows exactly what you're talking about. It's best to be specific—"during the customer call yesterday" or "in this morning's meeting," for instance.
- *Behavior* describes the specific actions of the employee, observed by you or others. When explaining what you or someone else observed, it's important to keep assumptions and speculation out of it. For example, "you kept your voice calm while the customer yelled at you" or "you used last quarter's slides with outdated data." These descriptions are factual and, as a result, difficult to dispute.
- *Impact* highlights the effect the behavior had on others or the organization. The impact could be how the behavior made people feel, the outcome the behavior had on someone's work, or the business results the behavior led to. For example, "which helped de-escalate the situation," or "this confused the customer, delaying their signing of the contract."

You don't need to be super rigid when using the SBI model. Feedback should sound natural and sincere, not robotic or overly formulaic. This is just one tool, but a helpful one, especially for managers who struggle to provide meaningful feedback to their direct reports.

*This Q&A does not constitute legal advice and does not address state or local law.*