

I've spent 20 years in HR, and here is the ugly truth: Most managers are terrified of giving real feedback.

Let's be honest: The traditional feedback session is often just a conversation disguised as coaching. In reality it's actually just a check-the-box exercise that leaves employees defensive and leaders exhausted.

After 20 years in HR, I've seen enough "feedback" sessions to know that most are failing for the same seven reasons:

- **It's personal, not situational:** The manager attacks the person, not the circumstance.
- **It's behavioral, not impactful:** You're critiquing how they walk, not where they're going.
- **It's political:** Feedback is used as a tool to justify agendas or protect the manager's position.
- **It's ambiguous:** "You need to be more proactive" means nothing to a high-performer who doesn't know what that looks like in numbers.
- **It's sugar-coated:** The "feedback sandwich" usually buries the actual message, leaving the recipient confused about the core issue.
- **It's purely backward-looking:** Discussing what happened last quarter doesn't fix what happens tomorrow.
- **It's subjective:** If your feedback isn't backed by data, it's just your opinion. And honestly? Nobody cares about your opinion.

If you want to stop the cycle of ineffective feedback, you have to shift from "Feedback" to "Feed-Forward."

Feedback is about the past (which is unchangeable). Feed-forward is about the future (which is moldable).

Here is how you actually drive performance:

- ❖ **Focus on Impact, Not Just Behavior:** Connect the action to the business result. If the behavior didn't move the needle, explain why and what the new metric for success looks like.
- ❖ **Ask, Don't Tell (The Socratic Shift):** Stop telling people where they went wrong. Ask: "If you were in this situation again, what would you do differently to improve the outcome?" Let the revelation come from them.
- ❖ **Objective Data is Your Anchor:** Bring the instances, the metrics, and the artifacts. When you ground a conversation in reality, you remove the emotion and the politics.
- ❖ **Coach for the Future:** Use the "Feed-Forward" mindset. Spend 20% of the time on the past (to learn) and 80% of the time on strategies for the upcoming challenges.

If you are navigating challenges on Culture or Performance, I'm happy to help you through.

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