



Delivering Constructive Feedback Without Lowering Morale

Don't act impulsively - Think it through

If you think you need to criticize one of your employees, don't act impulsively. It's important to think through the entire situation. Ask yourself these questions:

1. How long has this behavior been occurring?
2. Why is my employee behaving this way?
3. Does anyone else notice this behavior?
4. What is the best way to approach the situation?
5. Do I need to make my instructions clearer?

Schedule a meeting or ensure private space

If you are confident that you need to address the situation, schedule a meeting with your employee or make sure you can speak to them privately and without being interrupted. This gives you time to plan out what you're going to say. Take into consideration what your employee has on their agenda that week. For example, don't schedule it on the same day as a meeting with a big presentation or project.

Deliver criticism gently

Once it's time for the meeting; make sure you discuss the matter in private.

1. Don't ramble; stay on topic.
2. Avoid 'You should have...' comments.
3. Utilize the Situation/Behavior/Impact approach
4. Emphasize that you're trying to help your employee improve.
5. Cushion your criticism with praise and reassurance.
6. Tell them where they succeed in their job.
7. Show trust in them and their abilities.

Hear them out

After you've delivered your criticism; ask your employee if they have questions or comments. Listen carefully if they want to share their side of story.

Suggest a solution

It's important to verbalize specific examples of solutions that will correct their behavior. Clearly explain how the person will benefit from taking the actions you suggest. Agree on a solution.

Set a timeline

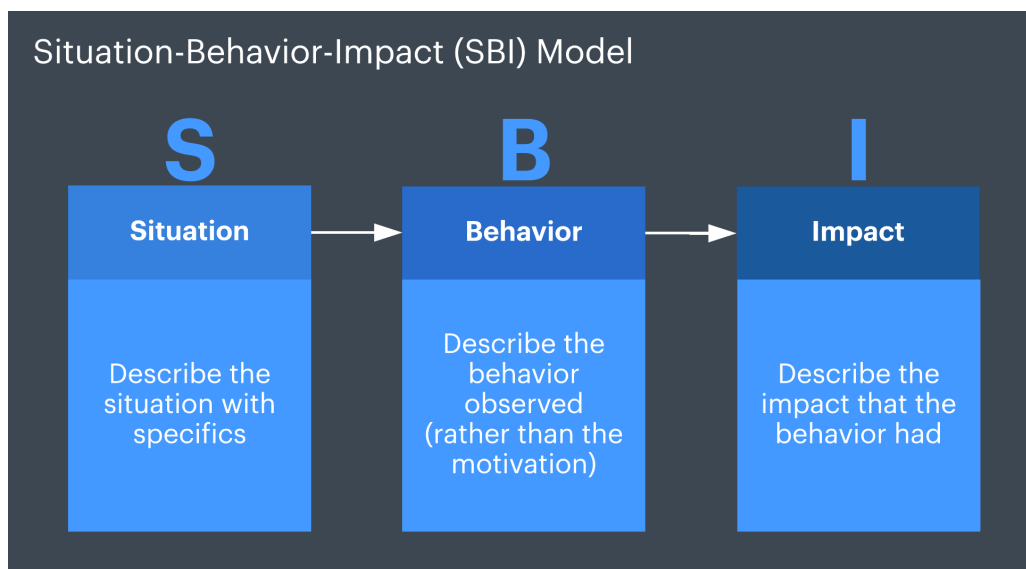
Determine and agree on a practical date in which the behavior needs to be corrected. Reassure your employee that you have faith in their ability to correct the problem.

Follow-up

Schedule a follow-up meeting, after the date in which the behavior was to be corrected. Discuss if there has been an improvement in your employee's behavior. If so, praise your employee for their success.

Situation – Behavior – Impact Feedback Model (SDI)

- Situation:
 - Describe the context in which everything happened
 - Facts, Place, Time, People involved, Circumstances
- Behavior:
 - Analyze how the person behaved and reacted in the situation
 - Ex: Defensively, Aggressively, Analytically, with Empathy, etc.
- Impact:
 - Objectively describe the consequences of what happened.
 - How it affected other employees, the department, etc.
- Intent:
 - Find out what was motivating the person to behave that way.
 - ‘What were you hoping to accomplish?’, ‘What was your goal?’





Scenario Discussions:

You really like Lewis. He is friendly and works hard. The problem is that Lewis is needy. It seems he is always dropping in your office to “talk things through,” or stopping you in the hallway to have you help him solve a problem. You feel that Lewis is bright enough and experienced enough to handle most of the problems he brings to you on his own. You are not sure if Lewis lacks confidence, or if he just wants someone to talk to. Lewis seeks you out so frequently that you have started to find ways to avoid him.

You are overseeing a department of 25 people. One of your team members comes to you and complains about Pat's (another team member) unpleasant body odor and how difficult it is to work in the same area. You agree to talk to Pat.

Kennedy is working at the bench setting up a restriction enzyme digest that hasn't worked the 1st few times they've done it, even after going over the protocol several times with them. You decided to check in one day while they're working on this experiment and realized that they've been pipetting 20 uL instead of 2 uL (and also using the incorrect pipettes). Kennedy has confidently expressed that they knew how to properly use the pipette, but now you realize they do not. As a mentor, you're frustrated because it's two weeks in and you see that they lack some of the fundamentals to perform the experiments correctly.

You are leading a department of 25 people. Your team works in close quarters with little physical separation between workstations. Drew is one of your best performers, yet you have received complaints that Drew tends to sprinkle conversations with rather crude and vulgar references. This is not a team of saints, but some have complained that Drew is crossing the line. You need to talk to Drew.

Claire is a high functioning high school student and has taken every science class in her school with high proficiency. One of the units in her research class focused on CRISPR, and after learning that you will be her mentor, Claire gets in touch with an outline for a CRISPR project. She is very assertive with her request. Your work does not have a CRISPR component, yet you feel pressured by Claire's assertiveness. You try to think of ways you can map out a project for Claire that involves CRISPR, but given your lack of experience with this technology you are feeling uneasy about incorporating it. You want to tell Claire that this isn't feasible, but do not feel comfortable with confrontation.