

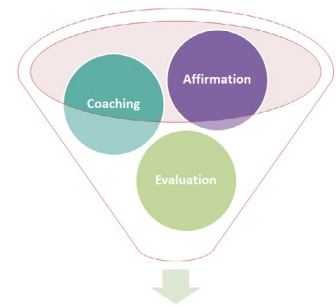
# Giving Feedback – Three Ways

## Fast Answers Coaching Session



Giving effective feedback to your team members is the food that nourishes the engagement of your team. It is critical that you are precise in giving feedback that is defined, focused, and clearly identifiable to the listener. Too many leaders make the critical error of delivering their feedback in the form of an unfocused “stew” of positive, negative, and mixed comments. Receivers make up their own stories contributing to confusion, disconnection, and distrust.

There are three types of feedback leaders deliver to their team members. **Affirmation** is feedback designed to bolster a team member or members by describing and complimenting their successful outputs, outcomes, and/or impact. Sincerely delivered with very clear articulation of the specific detail, affirmation brings a big dose of buy-in for team members. **Coaching** is feedback that has a precise goal of teaching, shaping, problem-solving, and growing shared understanding of projects, actions, or plans for how work will move forward in the future. **Evaluation** is feedback given to clearly describe the behaviors, outcomes, and contributions that are being observed with a clear expectation of shaping a desired future of behavior and performance. Whether you are delivering feedback to an individual or a group, the critical need is to keep a bright line of distinction between these three feedback clusters.



**Giving Feedback – Three Ways**

My rule of thumb is to resist delivering more than one type of feedback in any single session with an individual or a group. If multiple types of feedback are required, you must make a clear and direct “shift” to assure that receivers understand specifically the type of feedback you are delivering and when you are changing from one type to another.

An example:

*Jon, the CEO of a hospital, has a long-term VP, Jesse, who is responsible for a key service line in the organization. Jesse has a reputation of doing very good work generally but will “cycle” from very high-level work to modest and sometimes unacceptable performance. This pattern can cycle over a few months, or as quickly as moment to moment. There appears to be no clear “triggers” that prompt success or spiral. One of the most important features of the pattern happens about two to eight hours after an interaction they might have for any reason. The reaction would come in long, protracted emails from Jesse decrying a lack of caring, support, commitment, and backing. Jon would shake his head at these “email bombs,” his name for these communications.*

*Upon analysis of “what did I say in the meeting?” “what didn’t I hear in the meeting?” “what nonverbal cues were present that I didn’t see in the meeting?” and then sinking to “what did I do wrong?”, Jon and his coach found the answer. Jesse needed affirmation. Jon gave affirmation for the work well done. What Jon didn’t do was STOP THERE! Instead, Jon’s communication pattern was to give affirmation and then launch into coaching. But he didn’t even stop there; he threw in some evaluative feedback for good measure. “You did a great job on the accreditation review! Your team was really on their game. The hospital is so fortunate to have you on the leadership team. What needs to happen now is beefing up the patient satisfaction scores in your area to match the clinical expertise your team is demonstrating. Oh, by the way, these elements can be added into your performance goals for next year as we are right on the cusp of getting those goals finalized. This was a GREAT conversation.”*

*Jesse tossed aside any of Jon’s affirmations when Jon immediately marched into ways Jesse could get better and how measurement would be doled out for future performance. Jesse, being a person prone to “over-thinking” as a pattern of behavior, jumbled up the feedback, turned it all to the negative, and dished it back in ways that broke relationships and damaged potential for future repair and alignment of leadership.*

The best method of delivering **feedback** is in a stand-alone session.

**Affirmation** should be short, quick, heartfelt, and clearly directed at recognition for desired behavior and outcomes. If there are opportunities to announce affirmation, do so quickly. A personal note of thanks, flowers, or recognition in an email to the person and colleagues are examples.

**Coaching** should be done with clear labeling. For example, “We are having this conversation to discuss the best ways to move forward on the upcoming project. I have some ideas and want to offer my input as you set up leadership on this effort. I am confident and excited to have you lead this effort and want to make sure we are aligned as it begins.”

**Evaluation** should be more formalized and include written documentation and materials to reference during the discussion. The conversation should be labeled clearly with communication that conveys “We are here to discuss your performance on current issues and projects, set goals for the future, and align on issues and directions we are taking....”

If you **MUST** put more than one type of feedback into a single session, **LABEL** clearly what feedback is being given. I recommend being as clear as to say, “I’m delivering affirmation right now...GOOD JOB.” Then a coaching discussion can be introduced by saying, “Our discussion now is about coaching and aligning for success. Are you ready to have that discussion now, or is there a better time?” The final delivery of evaluative feedback should also be labeled clearly – “This is about your performance measures and goals for the future. Are you ready to discuss those now? I believe it is critical that we be clear in our communication as we venture into that discussion.”

Giving clear and intentional feedback with these three forms in mind will help you create trust, boundaries, and a successful relationship with your team.