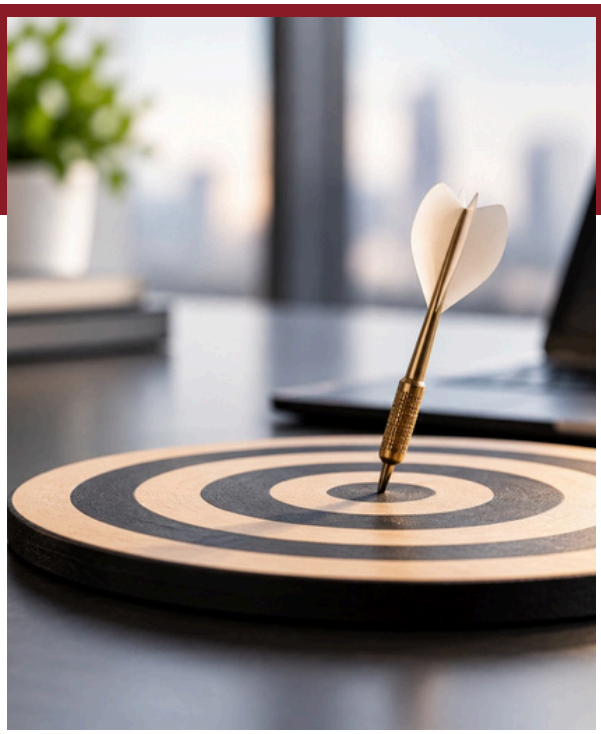
The Right Feedback Delivered Poorly Wastes Time

by Cathy C. Bonczek



The fault is not in the feedback, but in the delivery.

You've heard the quotes:
"Feedback is a gift." "Feedback is the breakfast of champions." "There is no failure, only feedback."
They sound great, but if you've ever received hurtful, derailing feedback, you know that it is not always a gift. In fact, it can be so poorly delivered that the "package" sits unwrapped for many years.

The fault is not in the feedback, but in the delivery.

It is essential to offer feedback in a way that the person you are giving it to, can hear you and receive it well. I was conducting role plays with some very senior sales professionals a few months back. I gave one gentleman some direct feedback on ways he could make his interactions even more impactful. He looked at me for a long while and said, "No one has ever been that direct with me, and yet, I feel somehow that you just gave me a hug." I laughed and shared that I had assessed that he wanted real, powerful feedback, but I had also used voice modulation to soften the edges of what I was saying. He said, "I want to learn how to do that…"

Crafting your feedback starts with targeting your recipient's values: do they value candor over kindness, connection over accuracy, exactitude over approximate truth? Do they hear better in stories or facts? Are they so hard on themselves that any directional feedback will feel like a rebuke, or worse, a failure? **Your audience matters the most.**

One common mistake is to give feedback in the way that YOU would want to receive it. I repeat, it's not about you. I've had people say, "I would have wanted someone to tell me that I was messing up." I counter with, "Not everyone can handle that."

I remember in my banking days, that more hours were spent, post review season, conducting meetings to untangle messages and the feelings that occurred than actually creating development plans. As you start to craft your feedback messages, think first about who is receiving the message and how they can best unwrap what you are trying to give them. Next, figure out if there's a way to offer incremental feedback. What needs to be addressed most urgently, and then what can be layered on after some initial growth and success?

If you craft your feedback to suit the ear of your recipient, they will understand that it comes from a place of support. They will be able to put new plans into action to develop further and all of your time will be well spent.

CCB Communications©