The Feedback Model

A Simple Framework for Crunchy Conversations With Your Team



HIGH VOLTAGE Leadership

Sometimes the employee isn't the problem.

If someone on your team is missing deadlines, pushing back on feedback, or not delivering the work you know they're capable of, it's frustrating. When you're running a growing business, it affects everybody.

But the answer isn't always to push harder, become more directive, or have yet another conversation telling them what they're doing wrong. Sometimes we need to get a little more curious about what's actually happening.

This **doesn't** mean making excuses for poor performance. It means **understanding the situation before you decide how to respond.**

This framework walks you through how to do exactly that.

Check In With Yourself

The first leadership challenge is managing yourself.

Dealing with employee performance issues is a real leadership moment. You're allowed to be frustrated. You have a business to run, and performance matters.

But if you walk into the room already irritated, expecting the employee to be defensive, and mentally preparing for an argument, that's probably going to influence how you communicate.

Ask Yourself:

- What am I feeling about this situation?
- What assumptions am I making? What do I know to be true?
- What do I need to accomplish in this conversation?

Remember: Your job is to understand what's happening, communicate what needs to change, and work toward an outcome that supports the employee *and* the business.

Prepare

It might sound obvious, but founders skip this step all the time. And when they haven't really prepared, the conversation can go in all sorts of directions.

"They're not doing a good job" isn't specific enough. Define what's actually happening.

Ask Yourself:

- Which timelines are slipping?
- Which deliverables aren't being completed?
- What's the impact on the team or clients?
- What does successful performance look like?
- What are they doing well?

Practice out loud. There's a big difference between knowing what you want to say and actually saying it, especially when it's uncomfortable.

Set the Right Conditions

Don't:

- ✗ Ambush someone in the hallway
- ✗ Squeeze it into the five minutes before your next meeting
- ✗ Deliver important feedback in front of other team members

Do:

- ✓ Find a private space
- ✓ Make sure you have enough time
- ✓ Let them know it's a two-way conversation

Try saying: *"I'd like us to spend some time talking about how things are going in your role. I've got some feedback I'd like to share, and I'd really like to hear your perspective as well."*

That sets the tone. You're being direct about the purpose of the conversation, but you're also making it clear that this is going to be a two-way discussion.

Have the Conversation

Here's the simple framework I use with my clients:

1. Explain What's Going Well
In most situations, there are things we can genuinely acknowledge. Be specific. This isn't about giving a compliment just so you can deliver criticism afterward. It's about recognizing their actual contribution.

2. Identify What's Tricky
"*Here's what's tricky right now*" feels very different than "*here's everything you're doing wrong.*"

For example: "*What's been tricky over the last few weeks is that several of your deliverables haven't been completed on time.*"

3. State What Needs to Change
Get clear on what needs to be delivered, by when, at what quality, and with what support.

If they get defensive, it doesn't mean the conversation has failed. Stay calm, listen to understand, and stay clear on the issue.

4. Build a Plan Together
When someone helps develop the plan, they have more ownership of it. Set agreed next steps and a check-in date.

Remember, Clear Is Kind

Having one good conversation doesn't automatically solve a performance issue. You still need to follow through and make sure the expectations you've agreed on are being met.

And sometimes you can do all the right things and the employee still doesn't improve. But the kindest thing we can do is be honest about what needs to change and what happens if it doesn't.

And my friend, you don't have to figure it out alone.

If you're dealing with an employee performance issue right now, my **Deep Dive Session** is a focused two-hour working session where we:

✔️ **Unpack what's really happening**
✔️ **Understand the impact on your business**
✔️ **Identify the gaps**
✔️ **Work through how to approach the conversation**
✔️ **Develop a practical action plan**

So instead of feeling anxious, frustrated or unsure, you can move forward with clarity and confidence.

→ Book a Deep Dive Session