



Use the SBI Feedback Model to Understand Intent

When somebody disappoints you, fails to deliver what you expected, or lets you down in some way, what do you do? If you're like most people, you make assumptions that are usually not positive:

That guy is not a team player...he's lazy...doesn't care...just doesn't get it.

And then you take action:

I'll just find a workaround...get somebody else to do the work...rethink responsibilities...talk about him to someone else...initiate discipline.

We often don't even realize that we create stories about people in our heads, especially when they disappoint us. This happens all the time. We see a behaviour and assume we know why the other person acted a certain way, and react based on those assumptions without checking their accuracy.

Many difficulties can be avoided by having a clarifying discussion. Though people usually intend to do the right thing, sometimes something gets scrambled or misinterpreted along the way, and the impact is far from what they intended.

But the only way to know what someone intended is to ask them – and the only way to let a person know their impact is to tell them. These important conversations rarely happen, though, and we move through our days in a tangle of misperceptions and actions based on incorrect assumptions.

So, how do you have conversations to find out why a person chose to behave a certain way? We recommend closing the gap between intent and impact by using SBI to explore intent.

<https://www.ccl.org>

The Paper Industry Technical Association (PITA) is an independent organisation which operates for the general benefit of its members – both individual and corporate – dedicated to promoting and improving the technical and scientific knowledge of those working in the UK pulp and paper industry. Formed in 1960, it serves the Industry, both manufacturers and suppliers, by providing a forum for members to meet and network; it organises visits, conferences and training seminars that cover all aspects of papermaking science. It also publishes the prestigious journal *Paper Technology International* and the *PITA Annual Review*, both sent free to members, and a range of other technical publications which include conference proceedings and the acclaimed *Essential Guide to Aqueous Coating*.



What Does SBI-I Stand For?

CCL's widely-recognized model for delivering feedback, the Situation-Behaviour-Impact Model (SBI), is proven to reduce the anxiety of delivering feedback and also reduce the defensiveness of the recipient. SBI is simple and direct: You capture and clarify the Situation, describe the specific Behaviours observed, and explain the Impact that the person's behaviour had on you.

Situation

Describe the situation. Be specific about when and where it occurred.

Behavior

Describe the observable behavior. Don't assume you know what the other person was thinking.

Impact

Describe what you thought or felt in reaction to the behavior.



How Can You Use SBI-I to Give Feedback?

SBI can be used for giving both positive and negative feedback, as in these examples:

1. Situation. Describe the specific situation in which the behaviour occurred. Avoid generalities, such as "Last week," as that can lead to confusion.

Example: "This morning at the 11 a.m. team meeting..."

2. Behaviour. Describe the actual, observable behaviour. Keep to the facts. Don't insert opinions or judgments.

Example: "You interrupted me while I was telling the team about the monthly budget," instead of "You were rude."

3. Impact. Describe the results of the behaviour. Because you're describing exactly what happened and explaining your true feelings – not passing judgment – the listener is more likely to absorb what you're saying. If the effect was positive, words like "happy" or "proud" help underscore the success of the behaviour. If the effect of the behaviour was negative and needs to stop, you can use words such as "troubled" or "worried."

Example: "I was impressed when you addressed that issue without being asked" or "I felt frustrated when you interrupted me because it broke my train of thought."

This success of SBI is enhanced when the feedback, which is one-way, is accompanied by an inquiry about intent, which makes the conversation two-way:



4. Intent. Ask about the person's original intentions. This enables you to close the gap between impact and intent.

Example: "What were you hoping to accomplish with that?" or "What was going on for you?"

Inquiring about intent prevents us from veering off in the wrong direction based on faulty assumptions.

Extending the SBI feedback model to SBI-I allows the conversation to address what's behind a person's actions. This not only clarifies things, but it also builds trust and understanding. Simple solutions usually follow.

Inquiring about intent is also where good coaching starts.

When you inquire about intention, motivation, or what is behind the action, you are essentially in a coaching conversation – one that can make a positive difference well before a performance review or disciplinary conversation.