

Working at Level III with Your Colleagues in Group Mentor Coaching

(Searching for words to replace “feedback” aka the most horrifying word in the workplace)

“I’m always ready to learn. I’m not always ready to be taught.” Winston Churchill

When you, as a coach or coaching leader, engage in “level 3” communication:

1. You speak from calm authority, from your authentic grace-and-truth coaching presence (p.74), using yourself, and being open to learning and being influenced.
2. You speak as closely as possible to the “event” or observation (vs. saving up for the next 1:1 or annual review).
3. And with curiosity and specifics. You speak to what is changeable and growing (a 10% shift?).
4. Over time, your level 3 communication reflects the positivity ratio (remember? p.78?). A persistent focus on failure never results in more life or personal growth.
5. You speak to the strengths and values of your coachee/employee. Great coaches remember that everyone’s version of “excellent” is a little bit idiosyncratic.
6. And, of course, you speak with respect and, unless the house is on fire, you are unhurried.

Recently, I was listening to a business owner as he provided some timely course-correction to a valued leader in his organization.

Biz owner: “I know you care about doing the job right, you just have this one little thing,” (he smiles and his voice gets soft).

Customer-facing team leader (CFTL): “My cursing?”

Biz owner: “Yeah.”

CFTL: “That’s just how I am. The people I hang out with, that’s just how we talk, that’s just how we are.”

Biz owner (listening): “I want you to change your behavior.” (He pauses, CFTL listens and nods.) “I’m very protective of (the business’s) image. The last thing I want is for people to think we’re all about profanity. Would that be good for business?”

CFTL: “Possibly not and that’s something I could work on.”

Biz owner (smiling): “Good to hear.”

CFTL: (laughs easily)

Biz owner, returning to the larger agenda: “OK. We were talking about the performance system I’ve created . . .”

The biz owner above was able to avoid one of the big three errors Marcus Buckingham discusses in [Why Feedback Fails](#):

- **“You don’t know and I do”** (that your numbers are bad, that your slides are boring, that people are complaining, or that your cursing hurts our culture and business). This biz owner knew that CFTL knew. CFTL sensed his respect and responded to it. The biz owner used himself and his values in describing the his personal response to the CFTL’s leader’s behavior.

In watching their connection and interaction, this proved to be far more powerful than a request for her to comply with the rules.