

# GIVING FEEDBACK REQUIRES TRUST. NO TRUST, NO FEEDBACK.

By Shari Harley



Making it easier to tell the truth at work™

ASK MORE.

Assume Less.®

“THOSE PANTS ARE NOT YOUR FRIEND.”



The ability to **SPEAK CANDIDLY** has **everything** to do with the quality of your relationships and **little** to do with the difficulty of the messages.

If you feel you can't speak up, **BUILD TRUST**. Then work on how to say what you want to say.

When I led leadership development training for a large mutual fund company we offered a lot of training focused on helping people have hard conversations. Over time I realized that despite that I'd bought and offered the best training programs I could find, the training wasn't helping. Managers didn't give enough feedback, and when they did give feedback, employees were often left confused, wondering what they needed to do differently.

I decided that what was missing was the conversation before the crucial conversation. It wasn't that managers didn't know what they wanted to say, but many managers felt they couldn't say what they wanted to say. There wasn't sufficient safety or permission for giving feedback, so managers said little or delivered messages that were so vague, employees were left wondering if there was a problem. This is when the idea for Candid Culture was born.

If you're struggling with giving feedback, I doubt it's the message that's the challenge. The distinction between being able to tell

the truth (as you see it) and saying nothing, is the quality of your relationship.

Think about the people – personal and professional – who can say anything to you. These are the people who can tell you that the person you're dating is wrong for you, that a piece of clothing is not flattering, that you disappointed them, or that you dropped the ball. You may not enjoy getting the feedback, but you're able to hear what they have to say and take it in because you know they care about you and have your best interests at heart. You trust their motives. When you trust people's motives, they can say anything to you. When you don't trust people's motives, there is little they can say.

**If you're struggling to give feedback, evaluate your relationship by asking these three questions:**

1. Does this person know that I have her back under any circumstances?

2. Does this person trust me?
3. Does this person know that I accept her just as she is?

If the answer to any of the questions above is no, it's not giving feedback you're struggling with, it's the quality of your relationship. Work on building trust with this person and you'll be able to say whatever you feel you need to say.

### **Here are five steps to building trusting relationships:**

1. Get to know people better than you know them now. Get five free conversation-starting [Candor Questions](#) to have these conversations.
2. Tell people you want them to succeed and demonstrate that by being supportive of their efforts.
3. Don't be judgmental. No one likes to be told that she is wrong.
4. Set the expectation that you will give both positive and negative feedback when appropriate because you want the person to win. And if you remain silent, you are of no help to the other person.
5. When you deliver feedback, be extremely specific. Feedback that is specific will be received much better than vague feedback, which is typically judgmental.

When people know that you respect and want good things for them, you have a great deal of freedom to speak up. When people don't trust your motives, giving feedback is almost impossible. The recipient will become defensive and dismiss whatever you say, rationalizing that you don't like her and never have.

Worry less about giving feedback – for now. Instead, build trust. Get to know people better, then work on giving feedback.

## **ABOUT**

Shari Harley, author of *How to Say Anything to Anyone*, is known globally as an engaging, funny, content-rich business speaker. Her international training firm, Candid Culture, is making it easier to tell the truth at work. Shari is bringing candor back to the workplace. A former HR practitioner and operations leader, Shari's practical approach has led her to speak and train in Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Dubai and Australia. From "Making Meetings Work" and "Delegating Better" to "Managing Your Career" and "Saying Anything to Anyone," Shari's tips are sure to delight and inform in a real, direct and very funny way. Watch videos and learn more about Shari at [www.candidculture.com](http://www.candidculture.com).

Shari Harley is speaking on [Thursday, September 24, from 11:00 – 12:00 p.m. PT.](#)

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