

SBI Feedback Model: Situation, Behavior, Impact

Knowledge file for an HR communications Gem or Project. Use it when drafting feedback, including a not-selected email where feedback has been requested or approved. Not legal advice; confirm language with college counsel.

1. What it is

SBI is a feedback tool developed by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) that gives a simple structure for clear, specific feedback. [1][2] CCL states it reduces the giver's anxiety and the recipient's defensiveness. [1] It works for positive and for negative feedback. [3] SBI is a CCL trademark, so credit CCL when teaching it. [2]

2. The three steps

Step	What to write	In a hiring context
Situation	Name the specific when and where. [1]	The interview or application stage, date, and position.
Behavior	Describe the actual, observable behavior, not a judgment of the person. [1]	What the candidate said or submitted, tied to a posted, documented criterion.
Impact	State the results of that behavior. [1]	How it affected the match to the posted requirements and the committee's scoring.

3. Optional extensions

- **SBI-I (Intent):** after the impact, ask about the person's intent so the conversation becomes two-way. [1] **SBI+A (Ask):** add a clear request or next step. [4] Intent fits a live conversation; in a written email, replace it with an invitation to reply (adaptation).

4. Using SBI in a "not selected" email

- **Feedback is optional.** Employers are not required to give feedback to candidates they do not hire. [5] Many skip it because candidates who believe they were rejected for gender, race, disability, or religion can file EEOC claims. [7] Default to a brief, courteous decision email.
- **Use SBI only when feedback is requested or approved.** Give feedback only to candidates who ask for it. [6] Have HR or counsel approve the wording.
- **Tie every Behavior to a documented, job-related criterion** from the posting or scoring rubric. Do not invent a reason to soften the blow. [5]
- **Leave out protected characteristics, health, and family status,** even unintentionally. [5] Also leave out anything an AI research tool found outside the application (social media, news, personal background).
- **Keep it short and human.** Short beats long. [5] A personal message beats a generic note, and a call is often best. [8] Specific, factual feedback also lowers the chance a candidate invents their own explanation. [6]

5. Template and fictional example

Structure: (1) thanks and a clear decision; (2) Situation, Behavior, Impact in two or three sentences, only if approved; (3) Ask or close with future openings and a contact.

Subject: Your application for Academic Advisor, [College]. Dear [Name], thank you for interviewing with us on [date]. We selected another candidate for this position. You asked for feedback, so I will share one observation. (S) When asked in your interview how you would manage a 300-student caseload, (B) your examples focused on individual coaching and did not address caseload tracking, (I) which the committee scored against the posting's required advising-systems experience. We encourage you to apply for future openings, and you are welcome to reply with questions. Sincerely, [Name].

6. Gem behavior rules

(1) Ask whether the candidate requested feedback and whether a rubric criterion exists; if neither, draft the brief standard email. (2) Use only facts the user supplies; never add or infer background information. (3) Keep drafts under 150 words, warm and professional. (4) Label every draft "Draft for HR review."

References

- [1] Center for Creative Leadership. How to Use Situation-Behavior-Impact (SBI)[™] to Explore Intent vs. Impact. <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/closing-the-gap-between-intent-vs-impact-sbii/>
- [2] Mind Tools. The Situation-Behavior-Impact[™] Feedback Tool. <https://www.mindtools.com/ay86376/the-situation-behavior-impact-feedback-tool>
- [3] Untools. Situation-Behavior-Impact. <https://untools.co/situation-behavior-impact/>
- [4] Seid, C. (2023). More Effective Feedback for Results. Noomii. <https://noomii.com/articles/13287-more-effective-feedback-for-results>
- [5] Intervue. Interview Feedback for Unsuccessful Candidates: Examples and Templates. <https://go.intervue.io/blog/interview-feedback-for-candidates>
- [6] ERC. A Rejected Candidate Asks for Feedback: Should You Provide It? <https://yourerc.com/blog/a-rejected-candidate-asks-for-feedback-should-you-provide-it/>
- [7] The Job Hopper. Why Employers Don't Give Interview Feedback. <https://thejobhopper.substack.com/p/why-employers-dont-give-interview>
- [8] Holloway. Rejections (Technical Recruiting and Hiring Guide). <https://holloway.com/g/technical-recruiting-hiring/sections/rejections>

Sources accessed October 6, 2026. Item [5] includes a vendor-reported statistic about candidate impressions that is not used here. Items [5] to [8] are practitioner and vendor sources, not legal authority.