

The Feedback Formula

A structured model for giving clear, actionable feedback.

Legal professionals need feedback that's precise, timely, and tied to real outcomes. This 4-part framework keeps the conversation focused, respectful, and productive.

1. BUY-IN

A brief opener that signals what the conversation is about and invites the other person in.

Goal: Reduce defensiveness and create permission to proceed.

Example: "Do you have a minute to discuss how the meeting with Sales went yesterday?"

2. BEHAVIOR

Describe **exactly** what happened. No interpretation, labels, or judgment—just observable behavior.

Goal: Make the feedback concrete and observable.

Example: "In the meeting, you walked the Sales VP through every clause rather than leading with key risks."

3. IMPACT

Explain why the behavior mattered—to the team, the client, the timeline, or the decision-making process.

Goal: Connect the dots so the feedback feels relevant and not personal.

Example: "Because we didn't anchor on the main risks early, the VP got confused and the meeting ran 15 minutes long."

4. NEXT STEP

Offer a clear, forward-looking action the person can take

Goal: Shift the conversation toward improvement and restore momentum.

Example: "Next time, how would you feel about starting with the two key risks? Then, you can pull in details as-needed or when the business partner asks questions."

PRO TIPS

Anchor feedback to expectations, not personal style. Where possible, connect the impact to client trust, risk clarity, or cross-functional alignment.

Need more help navigating professional relationships? [Book time](#) for a free, initial 30-minute coaching consultation.

About the Author

Ryan Black is an executive coach with extensive experience in BigLaw and in-house legal departments. He works with lawyers, legal ops professionals, and paralegals to build strong career narratives and represent themselves confidently. His approach is grounded in behavior-change science and proven, practical frameworks that make an impact.