

# The Feedback Fallacy Upgrade

## Summary

"The Feedback Fallacy" is a principle related to giving feedback which comes from Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall.

The basis is that when we are giving feedback we can adopt one of three fallacies in our thinking:

### 1. The Theory of the Source of Truth Fallacy

This is where you as the feedback giver believe you possess the absolute truth in this situation, whereas in reality the truth is complex and nuanced, requiring a multi-faceted understanding.

### 2. The Theory of Learning Fallacy

This is where you as the feedback giver believe you know the 'best' way to learn and it's universally applicable, whereas people learn and develop in unique ways.

### 3. The Theory of Excellence Fallacy

This is where you as the feedback giver believe you can define exactly what 'excellence' is, whereas excellence is subjective and varies from person to person.

When we feel strongly about a topic or idea, it can be easy to fall into these traps when giving feedback. This can result in a tone which is confrontational or instructional, rather than helpful.

## Suggested Application

- Before giving feedback on an idea, remind yourself of the three fallacies
- Begin by openly stating to the team or individual that your feedback will be based on recognising that you only hold one version of reality and what you are saying is only your perspective
- Explore and understand, especially when disagreeing. Ask clarifying questions and paraphrase their responses to ensure you truly understand their viewpoint.
- Don't get stuck trying to seek agreement. The point about the fallacies is that you don't hold the universal perspective on truth, learning and excellence. But nobody else does either. Everyone is equally entitled to their reality and feedback isn't about agreement, it's about sharing a perspective.

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## Reflection Questions

- **Personal Reflection:** "How do you typically approach giving feedback? Do you find it more natural to rely on your own assessments, or do you seek to understand the perspective of the person receiving feedback? How does this align with the fallacy theories?"
- **Mindset Shift:** "Reflect on a recent instance of giving feedback where you were certain of your perspective. How might the outcome have been different if you had considered the complexities of the 'source of truth' or the individuality in learning and excellence?"
- **Impact on Relationships:** "How do you think adopting an understanding of these fallacy theories could impact your relationships with colleagues, clients, or team members?"
- **Practical Application:** "Can you identify a current or upcoming opportunity where you can apply these theories in your feedback process? How would you approach this differently?"
- **Critical Feedback:** "Recall a time when you received critical feedback. How did your response align or conflict with the fallacy theories? What are your reflections on that experience?"
- **Cultural Considerations:** "How might cultural or contextual differences influence your approach to giving feedback in light of these theories? Are there situations where certain aspects of these theories might be more challenging to apply?"
- **Emotional Intelligence:** "How do emotions influence your approach to giving feedback? How can emotional intelligence help you navigate feedback situations more effectively, considering these fallacies?"
- **Leadership Perspective:** "As a leader, how can understanding these fallacies help you foster a more open, constructive, and empowering feedback culture in your team?"
- **Professional Growth:** "How do you think embracing these fallacy theories in your feedback approach could contribute to your professional development?"
- **Challenges in Implementing:** "What challenges do you anticipate in adopting a more nuanced approach to feedback, considering the fallacy theories? How might you address these challenges?"

## Additional Resources

[The Feedback Fallacy, by Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall](#)