

## Framework for Effective Communication

Communicating effectively and authentically can contribute greatly to getting the results you want. By honing your skills as an authentic communicator you will enhance your effectiveness and the quality of your relationships, save time and improve your likelihood of success in all areas of life. Taking Charge, that is, taking ownership of your thoughts, feelings and beliefs etc., in communications is an important component of communicating effectively.

The following framework may help you approach conversations in a way that strengthens relationships. It is effective for general communication as well as for expressing appreciation and respectful resolution of any issues that may exist.

- 1. Define Purpose** Be clear about your purpose before having the conversation. Make sure that your purpose is around honoring yourself, strengthening relationships, etc. before proceeding.
- 2. Check In** Ensure it's a good time for the other person and that they are willing to listen to what you have to say. "No" is OK. Let them know how much time it will take and schedule if necessary.
- 3. Use "I" Statements** It is important to use "I" rather than "You" statements when communicating. Share what you see, feel, think etc. and why.
- 4. Share Purpose** Share your purpose with the other person (i.e. you want to have a better relationship, get something off of your chest, understand them better etc.).
- 5. Determine Next Step(s)** Ask for what you want, let them know what you will do etc. What, if anything, do you want them to do or will you do about this?

By taking time upfront to be clear about these aspects of your communication it is more likely that you will deliver a clear message based on your experience and with a clear intention/purpose. The key here is to make it about you, rather than the other person... and to ask permission before you proceed.

Open, honest communications can be the most difficult to initiate. An example of this framework in action might go as follows:

**Scenario:** someone on your team regularly fails to meet the commitments s/he makes to you, coworkers, and customers.

### Applying the Framework:

- 1. Define Purpose** Purpose: to let them know how their behavior is affecting your business & your relationship with them. Valuable employee, want to understand why it is happening and offer assistance.
- 2. Check In** Jordan, I have something I'd like to talk to you about, it'll take about 10 minutes. Is now a good time? (If not, schedule time to talk.)
- 3. Use "I" Statements** I notice that you are dashing around the office and your responses are abrupt. I was expecting that project from you last week and it is not complete; I just learned that you missed an important customer deadline yesterday. Based on this, I think you are over committing and I'm frustrated because it's negatively impacting the business and my trust in you.
- 4. Share Purpose** The reason I'm mentioning this is to let you know that I value you as an employee and a person. I'd like to improve this situation and help you get back on track.
- 5. Determine Next Step(s)** I want to understand why you are missing deadlines and determine how I can support you so that we can avoid this in the future. I would like you to prepare a list of the commitments and deadlines you are working toward so that we can review it together and adjust it as appropriate. I'd also like you to make future commitments carefully and ensure that you meet them. How can I help?

**Scenario:** someone has gone out of their way to help you.

### Applying the Framework:

- 1. Define Purpose** Purpose: to express appreciation.
- 2. Check In** (this step may/may not be necessary) Kim, do you have a couple of minutes to chat? (If not, schedule time to talk.)
- 3. Use "I" Statements** I know that you rescheduled your class and dropped everything to come and help me prepare for my garage sale.
- 4. Share Purpose** I want you to know how much I appreciate the extra time and effort. I really value you and our friendship.
- 5. Determine Next Step(s)** I would like you to treat you to lunch; do you have some time this week or next?



## Summary:

Effective Communication does not happen by accident; it requires time, energy, focus and commitment. This goes for expressing appreciation and resolving issues. We often neglect to verbalize our appreciation for the things that people do for us. When it comes to resolving issues, our fear(s) about how we think the recipient will react often prevent us from expressing our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, etc. Over time this can cause resentment that may be based on inaccurate assumptions and/or beliefs. When we engage in the process of sharing our perceptions, communicating our feelings and clarifying our purpose we usually find that the reaction is much more positive than we anticipated. In fact, our relationships are significantly enhanced when we engage in honest, authentic communication. At a minimum we feel better about ourselves and that is reason enough to do it.