

ESSENTIAL INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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² Bolivia, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, The Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, United States, the West Bank, and Zambia.

HANDOUT

ESSENTIAL INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The following seven essential communication skills increase cooperation and help to reduce conflict:

1. Ask better questions.
2. Listen more carefully and responsively.
3. Give effective feedback.
4. Recognize agreement and explore the causes of differences.
5. Communicate your message effectively.
6. Make requests (instead of complain and criticize!).
7. Express appreciation, gratitude, and encouragement.

HANDOUT: ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

Asking good questions helps other people to talk about what they are feeling, thinking, wanting, and planning. Consider the differences between these two questions:

“Do you want to decide or shall I?”

“How can we work together to make the best decision for us both?”

The first version suggests an either/or, yes/no answer and doesn't invite much discussion. The person hearing this question may feel pressured to reach a decision and may not make the best one. The second question invites a variety of responses. Even if our goal is to persuade, we usually can't accomplish that unless we address the other person's concerns and needs. We won't understand those concerns and needs unless we ask questions that invite discussion.

There are three kinds of questions: closed, open, and leading:

- **Closed questions** are answered with "yes" or "no" or another one word answer.
- **Open questions** allow people to talk more about what they think, do, and feel. They begin with words such as “why,” “how,” and “what,” or phrases such as "Tell me about...," "Explain to me...," “Describe...,” and "How do you feel about..." Open questions have no right or wrong answers. They invite people to talk about their experiences and feelings.
- **Leading questions** "lead" people to give the answers they think you want them to give. Leading questions begin with phrases such as "Don't you think that...," "Don't you agree that...," "Isn't it true that...," or "I think... What do you think?"

Following are examples of the same question asked in a closed, open, and leading way.

Example 1

Closed: “Do you like Plan A or Plan B best?”

Open: “How would you compare Plan A and Plan B?”

Leading: "Don't you think that Plan A is better than Plan B?"

Example 2

Closed: “Do you need any more information to go forward?”

Open: “What kind of information do you need in order to go forward?”

Leading: “I think we have enough information to move forward, don't you?”

Example 3

Closed: "Is it OK with you if Julio facilitates the meeting?"

Open: "What do you think about asking Julio to facilitate the meeting?"
Leading: "Don't you agree that Julio should facilitate the meeting?"

Example 4

Closed: "Do you understand what they agreed to do?"

Open: "What did you understand that they agreed to do?"

Leading: "You understand what they agreed to do, right?"

You should **use closed and open questions** to help people talk about their concerns and needs. Communication that encourages cooperation and reduces conflict helps other people to say what they really think, believe, and feel—not what they think we want to hear.

HANDOUT

LISTEN MORE CAREFULLY AND RESPONSIVELY³

When people are upset about something and want to talk about it, their ability to listen is greatly diminished. Trying to get your point across to a person who is trying to express strong feelings usually causes the other person to try even harder to get that emotion recognized. On the other hand, once people feel that their messages and feelings have been heard, they start to relax and they have more attention available for listening

Listen actively to what the other person is saying with the goal of understanding his or her point of view. Show that you are listening by parroting, paraphrasing, or summarizing what the other person has said and asking for clarification as necessary. Affirm and acknowledge the other person's feelings and position. Even if you don't agree, tell the other person you hear what s/he is saying and are glad you are discussing the problem together. Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings doesn't have to mean that you approve of or agree with that person's actions or opinions, or that you will do whatever s/he asks. It means that you are acknowledging his/her feelings and point of view before you express your own needs or position.

Tips for Listening More Carefully and Responsively

- **Choose a quiet, neutral place** and a time when you and the other person are not busy or rushed and can listen to each other without interruption.
- **Stay calm** by breathing slowly and deeply.
- **Wait to speak** until the person has completely finished. Don't interrupt!
- **Focus on and be open** to what the person is communicating (rather than on what you will reply as soon as s/he stops talking!).
- **Encourage the speaker** to express him/herself with your:
 - Body language by nodding, sitting forward, making appropriate eye contact, uncrossing your arms and legs.
 - Verbal cues by saying “Can you tell me more about it?” “What happened next?” “Uh-huh.”

³ The concept of “listening more carefully and responsively” comes from Dennis Rivers, “Challenge One: Listening More Carefully & Responsively,” *The Seven Challenges: a Workbook & Reader about Communicating More Cooperatively* (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford Publishers, 2004), 1:1–7. Copyright 2004 by Dennis Rivers. Reproduced with author's permission. This workbook is available online in English, <http://www.newconversations.net/workbook.htm>, and Spanish, http://www.newconversations.net/siete_retos/tabla_de_contenido.html, accessed April 18, 2005.

- **Help the speaker clarify** what s/he is saying. Ask questions such as: “When did this happen?” “Can you give me a specific example?” “Can you help me picture the situation?”
- **Acknowledge** what the person has told you so that s/he knows you understand what s/he has said and recognize how s/he feels. **As Marshall Rosenberg reports in his book *Non-violent Communication, "Studies in labor-management negotiations demonstrate that the time required to reach conflict resolution is cut in half when each negotiator agrees, before responding, to repeat what the previous speaker had said."***⁴ Listen carefully to what the person tells you and parrot or paraphrase it back to him/her.
 - *Parroting* is simply repeating word for word exactly what the person has said.
 - *Paraphrasing* is saying in your own words what the person has told you.

When you parrot and paraphrase, **acknowledge the person's feelings** or empathize with him/her. Be sure that your tone of voice and body language do not indicate that you disapprove or disagree with what the person has said and be very careful that you do **not change the person's meaning**. For example:

“So the way you see it, I was being unfair when I gave you that assignment.”

“I understand that you are feeling upset because you think the organization refused you a promotion because you are an immigrant.”

- **Summarize** what the speaker has said. This is another way to acknowledge the speaker and demonstrate that you understand what s/he is trying to communicate. For example:

“Let me see if I understand what you are saying...”

“Let me try to summarize what I understand you to be saying...”

“You’re stressed because of the work load right now. When you asked for a couple of days off, I became angry and you don’t think that was fair. Do you feel that is a fair summary of what you’ve said so far?”

- **Validate the speaker.** Even though you don’t agree with what s/he has said, find a way to validate the speaker’s intention to discuss and resolve the issue.

“I know it has taken a lot of courage for you to speak to me about this.”

⁴ Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion* (Del Mar, CA: Puddle Dancer Press, 1999), quoted in Dennis Rivers, “Challenge One: Listening More Carefully and Responsively,” *The Seven Challenges: A Workbook & Reader About Communicating More Cooperatively* (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford Publishers, 2004), 1:2.

“Thanks for taking the time to speak to me about this.”

- **Ask for a break** to collect your thoughts or to release pent-up tension if you are unable to listen well because of reactions to or strong feelings about what the other person has said.

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

—*Winston Churchill*

People don't listen to understand. They listen to reply. The collective monologue is everyone talking and no one listening.

—*Stephen Covey*

The reason why so few people are agreeable in conversation is that each is thinking more about what he intends to say than about what others are saying. We never listen when we are eager to speak.

—*La Rochefoucauld*

In music we gain a sense of rhythm through the absence of sound. A similar process occurs in communication between two people.

—*Sheldon Roth*

He who speaks does not know, he who knows does not speak.

—*Anonymous*

I stop and taste my words before I let them pass my teeth.

—*Anonymous*

Listen as though your life depended on it. It does.

—*The Art of Pilgrimage*

First listen to understand the other person's point of view. Then reflect back what s/he has said. Only then think about how you want to respond.

HANDOUT: ACKNOWLEDGING EXERCISE

One person in each group will play the role of the **listener**. S/he will practice reflecting back what the other person has said without changing the other person's meaning or showing in any way that s/he does not agree with what the other person is saying.

One person in each group will play the role of the **speaker**. S/he will explain her opinion on the topic. The speaker can correct the listener at any time if s/he feels that the listener is not reflecting back what s/he said correctly.

The third person in each group will be the **observer**. S/he will use the "Acknowledging Observation Checklist" on the next page of the Training Notebook note how often and how well the listener acknowledges the speaker's content and feelings without changing the meaning and without showing judgment or disapproval. S/he will also be the timekeeper.

1. Decide who will play the role of the speaker, the listener, and the observer.
2. Select a subject from the list of controversial subjects on which the speaker and the listener disagree.
3. The speaker discusses the topic and the listener reflects back what she is hearing. The observer notes how often and how well the listener acknowledges the speaker's content and feelings without changing the meaning and without showing judgment or disapproval. She calls time after about 3 minutes.
4. After the role play, the observer and the speaker give feedback to the listener on how well s/he acknowledged during the role play. The observer calls time after about two minutes.
5. Rotate roles.

CHECKLIST ACKNOWLEDGING OBSERVATION

- Acknowledges what the speaker has said by parroting.
- Acknowledges what the speaker has said by paraphrasing.
- Acknowledges the speaker's feelings and empathizes with him/her.
- Acknowledges what the speaker has said without changing the meaning.
- Acknowledges what the speaker has said in a way that is not judgmental or disapproving.

Other observations and comments:

HANDOUT

HOW TO GIVE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK⁵

Catch people doing something right and praise them for it!

Feedback is information given to individuals about the quality of their work. Good feedback reinforces what people are doing well or correctly and, at the same time, gives them specific suggestions about what they can do to improve their knowledge or skills in the future. Knowing how to give effective feedback is a very important skill for you to learn and use in your work.

To be effective, feedback should be:

Specific: Describe exactly what the person did well and what s/he could do better next time.

Constructive: Describe in positive terms what the person could do better next time. Say, "try...", rather than "don't do..."

Pleasant: Always give feedback in a setting and manner that does not embarrass the other person. Remember that you are working together to improve his/her knowledge and skills.

Individual feedback also depends on the person's current level of knowledge or skills. Beginners should be given verbal approval for any improvement, even if it is just a small step towards achieving the final goal. Praise them for doing something right, no matter how small.

During this training, you, you will be observing another trainee practicing skills, using a checklist of the actions s/he should be doing while practicing those skills. While you are observing, you will make a "tic" or a check mark beside each action that you observe him/her to do. When s/he has finished, you will give him/her feedback on how well s/he did:

- **First, praise the person for the specific actions that s/he did well—the actions you observed the person to do and checked off on the checklist.**

⁵ The text of this handout is reprinted and adapted for this training from Peace Corps and Elizabeth Mills Booth, *Promoting Powerful People: A Process for Change* (Washington, DC: United States Peace Corps, 2000), 70. Available online, http://www.peacecorps.gov/library/pdf/T0104_promotingpower.pdf, accessed April 18, 2005.

- **Then advise the person about the specific actions that s/he can do better next time**—the actions you did not observe the person to do and did not check off on the checklist.

You should be very positive in both your praise and your advice. The person you are observing should note down what actions s/he did well and what s/he plans to do better next time she practices this skill.

When you give feedback in your work, you won't necessarily have a checklist (except in formal training sessions), but you can still praise the specific actions that a person does well and then advise him or her what specific actions s/he could do better the next time. Remember, praise people for doing something right, no matter how small!

HANDOUT CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES⁶

People deal with conflict in a variety of ways depending on their personality, their objectives, and the context of the disagreement. In conflict situations, a person's behavior may be analyzed in terms of two elements:

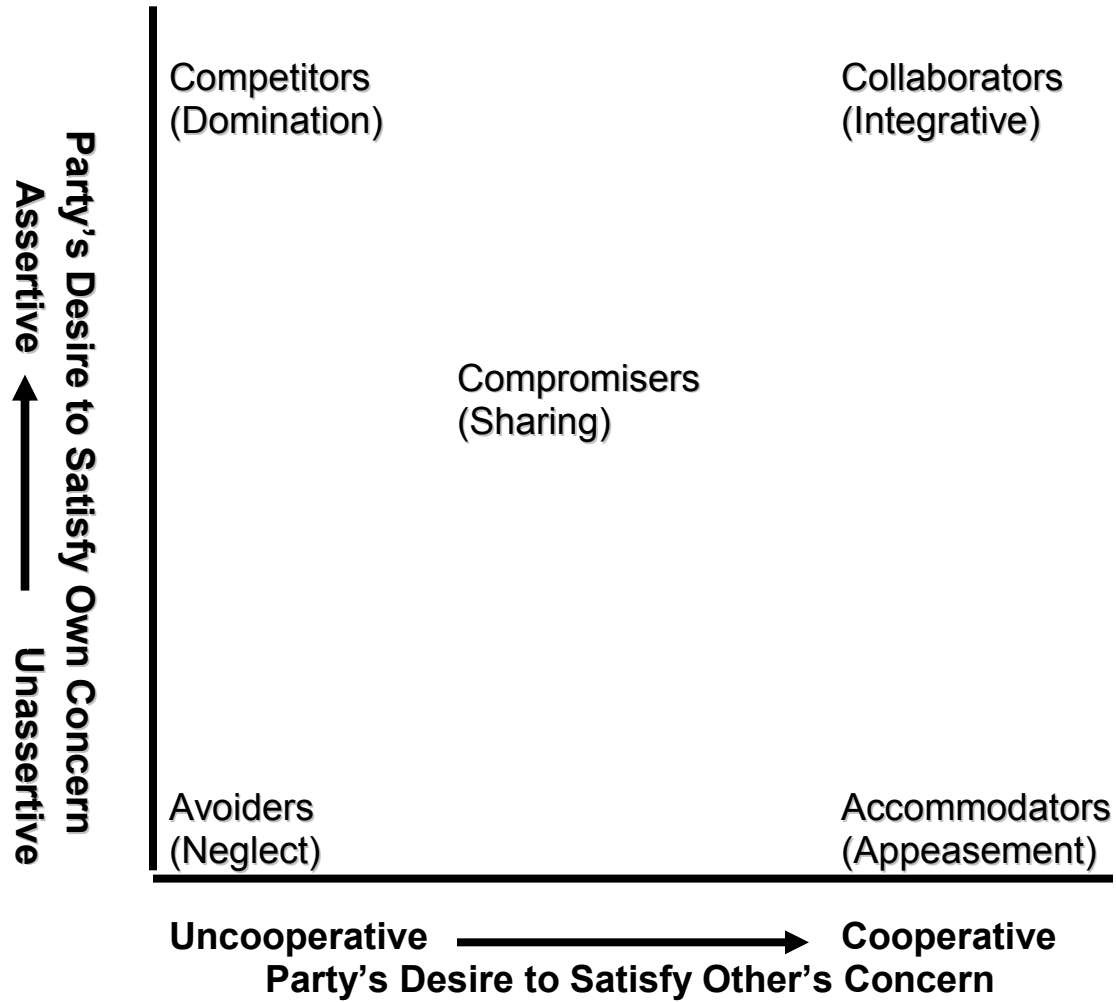
- Assertiveness, or the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns.
- Cooperativeness, or the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

The following chart illustrates five conflict management styles—accommodator, avoider, competitor, compromiser, and collaborator—in relation to assertiveness and cooperativeness.

⁶ These conflict styles and the diagram on conflict styles are from Jon Hartwick and Henri Barki, "Conflict Management Styles of Users and Analysts, and Their Impact on Conflict Resolution," Proceedings of the Thirty-second Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Computer Society, 1999), 2–3. Available online, <http://csdl.computer.org/comp/proceedings/hicss/1999/0001/07/00017036.PDF>, accessed April 18, 2005.

HANDOUT: CONFLICT STYLES

ACCOMMODATORS, AVOIDERS, COMPETITORS, COMPROMISERS AND COLLABORATORS



Competitors are assertive and uncooperative. They try to satisfy their own concerns without regard to others and generally use a forceful, win-lose strategy to get the other side to adopt their position. This style can harm a relationship between parties and reduce options for a solution to a few outcomes.

When to use this style:

- When the issue is considered absolutely critical and “losing” would compromise the long-term position of the person or group.
- When you have to make a quick decision or decisive action.

Avoiders are unassertive and uncooperative. They sidestep conflict, postpone decisions, and put off resolution. This style gives the impression that you do not care and will not change.

When to use this style:

- When a disagreement has become so heated that people need time to cool down.
- When either party feels physically threatened.
- When people need additional information before they can resolve the conflict.
- When other parties who are less involved emotionally could step in to resolve the conflict.
- When there is no chance of winning the issue at the moment but the time isn't right for compromise.

Compromisers are partially assertive and partially cooperative. They look for a middle-ground solution that will satisfy all of the parties to some extent, encouraging concessions from both sides that will lead to a win-win resolution. This style can prevent creative options from arising because it can take the “easy way out” of the conflict. It also reinforces the existing balance of power.

When to use this style:

- When a solution is needed for a complex issue.
- When two parties with equal power are committed to resolving the dispute.
- As a backup negotiation technique when collaboration fails.
- To achieve temporary or expedient settlements in time-pressured situations.

Accommodators are unassertive and cooperative. They yield to the other side and neglect their own concerns. If this style is overused, the commitment to the relationship is never tested. It also reinforces the accommodator's lack of power.

When to use this style:

- When you know that you are wrong.
- When the issue in dispute is more important to the other person.
- When you want to maintain group harmony.
- When you feel you are losing the conflict and want to maintain credibility.

Collaborators are assertive and cooperative. They work with the other side to find a solution that meets the needs and concerns of all parties. They seek a win-win solution and view conflict as a solvable problem. This style is time and energy consuming.

When to use this style:

- To generate new ideas.
- When issues are too important to be compromised, avoided, or accommodated.
- When the objective is to understand and blend different perspectives.
- When the goal is to reach a decision through consensus.

WORKSHEET: MY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

Write your answers in the space provided after each question:

Which conflict style do you think you usually use? Why do you use that style? What experience in dealing with conflict has led you to use that style (family relationships, as well as conflicts with friends and with colleagues in professional settings)?

- My usual conflict style is:

- Why I use this style:

PERSONAL CONFLICT EXAMPLE: Think about a recent conflict in your personal life. ***This information is personal and confidential. You don't have to share this information with anyone during the training unless you choose to.***

1. Which conflict style did you use? Why? Which conflict styles did the other person in the conflict use? Why do you think s/he used that style? What happened when you/s/he used those styles?

2. Which other conflict style(s) might you try to help better manage this conflict? What do you think might happen?

ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT EXAMPLE: Think about a recent conflict within your organization that affected you. ***This information is personal and confidential. You don't have to share this information with anyone during the training unless you choose to.***

1. Which conflict style did you use? Why did you use that style? Which styles did other people involved in the conflict use? Why do you think they used those styles? What happened when you/they used those styles?

2. Which other conflict style(s) might you try to help manage this conflict?
What do you think might happen?

INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT: Think about a conflict between different stakeholder groups in the project in which you are working that is affecting you and/or your project.

1. Which conflict style did you/your organization use? Why? Which conflict styles did other people/groups in the conflict use? Why do you think they used those styles? What happened when you/they used those styles?

2. Which other conflict style(s) might you try to help manage this conflict?
What do you think might happen?

HANDOUT

RECOGNIZE POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND EXPLORE THE CAUSES OF DISAGREEMENT⁷

An essential part of communication that encourages cooperation and reduces conflict is to recognize points of agreement and explore the causes of disagreement. Simply put, we need to ask:

- What do we agree on? Why do we agree on this?
- What do we disagree on? What is the source or cause of this disagreement?

Sources of disagreement generally include:

1. **Facts:** What exactly happened? What are the “data” that back this up? What sources of information are we using about what happened?
 - I think / believe _____ because of _____ (source of information).
 - The other person in this disagreement thinks / believes _____ because of _____ (source of information).
2. **Interests (goals):** What do we want or think we need? What do we want to achieve? (A visioning exercise may help resolve this disagreement).
 - I want _____.
 - The other person in this disagreement wants _____.
3. **Values:** Why do we want this? What do we believe in? Why do we think things should be done in a certain way?
 - I want _____ because I believe in and value _____.
 - The other person in this disagreement wants _____ because s/he believes in and values _____.
4. **Methods:** How should we accomplish what we need to do?
 - I think we need to do _____.

⁷ This handout is adapted from Rick Ross, “Skillful Discussion: Protocols for Reaching a Decision—Mindfully,” in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*, Peter M. Senge et al. (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1994), 385–391.

- The other person in this thinks we need to do _____.

5. **Relationships:** Why don't we "like" or trust each other? What can we do to change that?

- I would describe the person in this disagreement as unlikable or untrustworthy because _____.
- The other person in this disagreement would describe me as unlikable or untrustworthy because _____.

These five categories provide a useful tool for understanding the root causes of a disagreement. By recognizing what is causing the disagreement and you and your partners in conflict can develop a plan for resolution.

Tips for recognizing agreements and disagreements:

- Listen to the person as if for the first time. Work at being open to new ideas.
- Consider the other person's mental model or "frame." Look at the issue from his/her perspective.
- Ask yourself and the other person, "What do we need to do to move forward?"

Words that intensify a conflict:	Replace those words with:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Always • Unless • Can't • Won't • Don't • Should • Shouldn't • You made me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe • Perhaps • Sometimes • What if • It seems like • I feel • I think • I wonder

WORKSHEET: RECOGNIZING AGREEMENT AND EXPLORING THE CAUSES OF DISAGREEMENTS

Use the previous handout and this worksheet to identify the points of agreement and explore the sources of disagreement in the personal, organizational, and inter-organizational conflicts you analyzed in the previous exercises.

Personal Conflict

What do we agree on? Why do we agree on this?	What do we disagree on? Why do we disagree on this?

Organizational Conflict

Points of Agreement	Sources of Disagreement

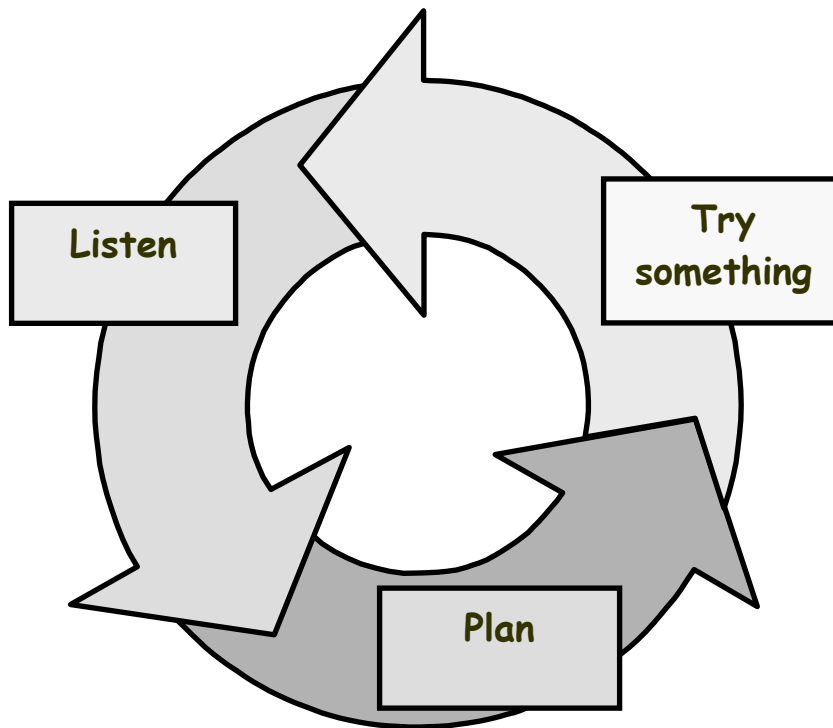
Inter-organizational Conflict

Points of Agreement	Sources of Disagreement

Other observations and comments:

HANDOUT: COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE EFFECTIVELY

Whether you are communicating in a conversation, an interview with the media, a presentation to a group of people, or a mass media campaign, the following process and planning worksheet can help you to communicate your message more effectively.



Objective

- What do you want to achieve from this communication?
- What do you want your audience to **know or think** after your communication?
- How do you want your audience to **feel** after your communication?
- Most importantly, what do you want your audience to **do** after your communication?

This is what you want...

.....but to communicate effectively, you need to put YOUR AUDIENCE FIRST,

.....see the issue through their eyes, and understand and respond to what they want and need.

In order to communicate effectively in any setting or at any scale, you need to **first ask questions and listen** in order to understand your audiences' perspective and needs. This can be as simple as personally asking questions and listening to individuals and groups with whom you want to communicate and as complex as conducting social science audience research to communicate with large numbers of people.

Bottom line: talk with representatives of your audience and get their perspective on the following questions before you plan your communication.

Audience

- Who exactly is your audience? Learn everything you can about them.
- Listen to understand what they currently know, believe, feel, and do in relation to your communication objective?

Message

- What incentives or benefits does this audience want from taking the action you are communicating? Emphasize these benefits in your communication.
- What potential disincentives or barriers might this audience encounter if they take the action you are communicating? How could these barriers be reduced or resolved? You may need to address these barriers in your communication.

Tools

- What communication tools will communicate this message most effectively to this specific audience? Tools can be as varied as a letter, a pamphlet, a radio or television spot, and a press release and as innovative and creative as you want to be – balloons, a dance, or a song.

Delivery Systems / Channels

- *When and where is the most convenience, accessible, and appropriate for your target audience to receive your communication?* If you want to have an effective

dialogue or conversation with someone, ask him/her what the best time and place would be. If you want to hold a community meeting, give a presentation, or hold a media event, ask representatives of the audience what time and place would be best for them. If you want to communicate through the mass media, find out what radio and television stations your audience listens to and at what times of the day?

- People remember more when they receive the same messages through many different channels. *Which combination of channels can you use to deliver your message to this specific audience?* (In a presentation this might include using video, posters, flipcharts, and handouts. In a campaign, this could include using interpersonal, print, and mass media. In a network, this might include direct e-mail, inter and intra stakeholder group meetings and inserting your messages in partner web sites).

Impact

- How will you know what you have achieved with your communication?
- What are your criteria for measuring “success”?
- What information will you collect and how will you collect it to measure these criteria?

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Wait!

Before you begin to plan your communication, have you listened to your audience? Do you **really** understand what they currently know, believe, feel, and do in relation to your communication objective? If not, go back and listen some more! Then begin to plan!

1. What is your **communication objective**? What do you want to achieve from the communication? What do you want the audience to **do** after your communication?
2. Who is your **audience**? What does this person currently know, believe, feel, and do in relation to your communication objective?
3. What is your **message**?
 - Emphasize incentives and benefits.
 - Reduce disincentives and barriers.
4. What **communication tools** will communicate this message most effectively to this specific audience?
5. What combination of **delivery systems and channels** can communicate this message most effectively to this specific audience?
6. How will you know what **impact** your communication has had?

HANDOUT

MAKE REQUESTS (INSTEAD OF COMPLAIN AND CRITICIZE!)⁸



It often feels easier to say, "You're wrong" than it is to say "I need your help." Making requests leaves us much more vulnerable in relation to our listeners than making criticisms or complaints. If we make a request, the other person could turn us down or make fun of us, and the *risk* of disappointment and loss of face is hard to bear. If we complain, on the other hand, we stand on the emotional high ground and our listener is usually on the defensive.

However, in order to manage and resolve conflict and improve our chances of getting cooperation from another person or group, we need to ask for what we want and risk being turned down.

Why criticisms don't get the positive result we want: Whenever we place people on the defensive, their capacity to listen goes down. Their attention and energy will often go into some combination of defending their position, saving face, and counter-attacking. Only when people feel safe are they likely to listen and consider how they might meet our needs.

The truth of the complaint is not the issue. Because mutual imitation or emotional "echoing" is so much a part of ordinary conversation, a criticism from one person in the conversation, no matter how justified, tends to evoke a criticism from the other, bogging the pair down in a spiral of accusations.

⁸ This handout (including graphics) and the worksheets on changing complaints and criticism into requests are reprinted in abbreviated form (and with text adapted for the needs of this workshop) from Dennis Rivers, "Challenge Four: Translating Complaints and Criticisms into Requests," *The Seven Challenges: A Workbook & Reader About Communicating More Cooperatively* (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford Publishers, 2004), 4:1–12. Copyright 2004 by Dennis Rivers. Reproduced with author's permission. This workbook is available online in English, <http://www.newconversations.net/workbook.htm>, and Spanish, http://www.newconversations.net/siete_retos/tabla_de_contenido.html, accessed April 18, 2005.

To avoid this trap, approach the other person not as a problem-maker and adversary in a debate but **as a problem-solving partner**. By translating your complaint into a request, you "transform" the role you are asking the other person to play and create a safe space for more cooperation and less conflict.

Tips for making requests:

- **Be specific about the actions you want to take and/or the action you want the other person to take in the present and the future.** For example, use verbs and adverbs, such as "meet our deadlines regularly." Avoid proposing changes in a person's supposed character traits (nouns and adjectives, such as "slow worker" or "bad team player"). "How can we solve this problem quickly?" will generally produce much better results than "Why are you so slow?"
- **Explain why you are making the request.** Research in social psychology has revealed that many people respond more positively to explained requests than to unexplained requests, even when the supposed explanation is obvious or doesn't actually explain much of anything. Notice the difference between the following two ways of expressing requests:

Good	Better because it explains why:
"Will you please open the window?"	"Will you please open the window so that we can get more fresh air in here?"
"Would you please stop interrupting?"	"Would you please stop interrupting so that people have the opportunity to completely explain their point of view?"

In the second request, the speaker is treating the listener as a social equal, worthy of being persuaded and informed as to why a request is being made. The listener is invited to comply with a request to accomplish the stated goal rather than simply to submit to the will of the speaker. **Explaining your request makes it more likely that your listener will cooperate.**

Summary: In order to get more cooperation from others:

- Use specific, action-oriented, positive language.
- Explain why you are making the request with phrases such as "so that...", "it would help me to... if you would..." or "in order to..."

Organizational Conflict

WHAT IS YOUR COMPLAINT WITH THIS PERSON OR PEOPLE?

CHANGE THIS COMPLAINT INTO A REQUEST:

1. *What specific actions do you want to take and/or the action you want the other people to take in the present and the future?*

2. *Why do you want to take or have the other people take this action?*

HANDOUT

EXPRESS APPRECIATION, GRATITUDE, AND ENCOURAGEMENT⁹

Because life continually requires us to attend to problems and breakdowns, it gets very easy to see in life only what is broken and needs fixing. However, cooperative relationships (and a happy life) require us to notice and respond to what is good, positive, and working well. It is appreciation that makes a relationship strong enough to accommodate differences and disagreements.

- Couples who stay together tend to have five times more positive interactions than negative ones. Couples who stay together often have real disagreements, but a strong pattern of appreciative and affirming interaction appears to give them the positive momentum they need to work through their problems.
- Children who are the most intelligent, self-confident and flexible experienced five times more positive than negative interchanges with their parents.
- Recognition and appreciation are the most powerful motivators of improved performance. Building a successful business means most of all bringing out the best in people.
- Appreciation nurtures relationships and encourages qualities and behaviors. It is never too late to begin listening and appreciating, and paying attention to the qualities and behaviors you want to encourage in others.

Gratitude is a way of seeing the world. Gratefulness has two sides. Expressing gratitude is partly a conscious action, like opening a door or telling a story. It is also a result of deep attitudes: the way we look at our lives and the way we turn the events of our lives into meaningful stories. Thank you equals yes to life. One way to cultivate a grateful heart is to look for as many ways to say thank you as possible.

⁹ The handouts and worksheets on expressing appreciation are reprinted in abbreviated form (and with text adapted for the needs of this workshop) from Dennis Rivers, "Challenge Six: Expressing More Appreciation," *The Seven Challenges: A Workbook & Reader About Communicating More Cooperatively* (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford Publishers, 2004), 6:1–10. Copyright 2004 by Dennis Rivers. Reproduced with author's permission. This workbook is available online in English, <http://www.newconversations.net/workbook.htm>, and Spanish, http://www.newconversations.net/siete_retos/tabla_de_contenido.html, accessed April 18, 2005.

WORKSHEET: EXPLORING THE PERSONAL SIDE OF GRATEFULNESS

Write down the five things in your life that you are the most grateful for—this can include the happiest events in your life, specific people, or other things. How and to whom can you express gratitude for these five things? At the end, notice your mood and write that down, too.

I am most grateful for...	I will express my gratitude by...

How did doing this exercise make me feel?

HANDOUT

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION IN THREE PARTS

Use the first three of the five messages to strengthen the way that you express appreciation.

- ***When I saw...***that your group had joined the coalition...
- ***...I felt ...***so happy...
- ***...because...***I think we can do some really good work together.

Three-part appreciations are more powerful because the speaker shares the details of his or her experience of another person's action. These are quite different statements than saying "You are wonderful!" "You are such a great guy," "You are so beautiful," and so on. Although such statements sound like the highest praise, there can be a big gap between what they intend to convey and how they are actually received by others:

- Even though these are positive judgments, they still put the recipient in the position of being judged and the praise-giver in the position of judge. Many people have experienced an unhappy lifetime of being judged by others, sometimes harshly, sometimes erratically, with the effect of making all judgments an unpleasant experience.
- In the "You-are-so-beautiful"-type statements the person doing the appreciating has disappeared. These are actually very impersonal statements. There is no "I feel" to anchor the feelings as belonging specifically to the giver of appreciation.
- "You-are-wonderful"-type statements are vague and may lack descriptive richness and meaning. The person being appreciated has to figure out exactly what about him/her is being appreciated.

WORKSHEET: EXPRESSING APPRECIATION IN THREE PARTS

Think again of the personal, organizational, and inter-organizational conflicts that you analyzed in the last exercise. How could you express appreciation in three parts in each of these settings?

When I saw/heard...	...I felt...	...because I... (need, want, interpret, associate, etc.)...
Personal Conflict		
Organizational Conflict		
Inter-organizational Conflict		