ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS: A GUIDE TO POSITIVELY SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

Participant Materials

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ROCKHURST AUDIO CONFERENCE SERIES,

A DIVISION OF ROCKHURST UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTER, INC.
The Importance of Assertive Communication

1. Allows you to set boundaries with aggressive people
2. Provides an avenue for speaking up confidently on your own behalf — this enhances your visibility and credibility.
3. Allows you to express your ideas and convey your value in your organization, which boosts your self-confidence. This behavior allows you to establish and project the image of a poised and polished professional.

Key Learning Points:

1. Appreciate the value of assertive communication and how it helps you influence your reputation and manage your professional image.

2. Know what assertive communication is and make critical distinctions between it and aggressive communication.

3. Understand that assertive communication isn’t a “one size fits all” fix. Get tools for understanding when to vary your approach based on the audience and the situation.

4. Specific guidance on how to use assertive communication to take your career to the next level — learn how to toot your own horn without blowing it, so you and your work can be recognized, valued, and appreciated.
Mastering the How-to’s of Assertive Communication for a Confident, Credible, Professional Image

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Assertive Communication Is:

- Influencing others
- Setting your boundaries
- Respecting your own rights while still maintaining, whenever possible, a positive professional relationship with the other person
- A form of persuasive communication

Three Elements of Persuasion

1. **Credibility**
   - Credibility is other people believing that you know what you’re talking about.
   - Your professional image is entirely based on how other people see you behaving in moments taken completely out of context.

2. **Emotional connection**
   - Emotional connection is essential when communicating with others. To emotionally connect, keep these ideas in mind:
     - Everyone communicates differently and you must take your audience into consideration before you open your mouth.
     - Some people are direct and get right to the point when speaking; think of them as blunt communicators, no beating around the bush here.
     - Others are more indirect and use more words to soften what they’re saying.
     - Some people are more people-oriented and enjoy socializing at work, and some are task-oriented and prefer to focus on the work at hand rather than visit.

3. **Logic**
   - When using assertive communication to project a confident, credible image, remember that your audience, as well as the situation, will determine the approach you use.

Your reputation is based on a tiny glimpse of who you are, taken completely out of context.
The Difference Between Being Assertive and Aggressive and How to Avoid Crossing the Line

Consider your audience. The key is to consider how that person communicates. There are four general styles:

1. **Entertainers** — direct, people-oriented, socially skilled. Their natural exuberance and willingness to share opinions and ideas could be perceived as overbearing (that is, aggressive)!
2. **Commanders** — direct and task-oriented. Their to-the-point, goal-driven style could be interpreted as pushy, rather than assertive.
3. **Feelers** — indirect and people-oriented. Their natural ability to see different perspectives could make them appear as wishy-washy or passive.
4. **Analyzers** — indirect and task-oriented. Their ability to deeply focus and tune out social distractions could be misinterpreted as aloofness.

Speaking Up for Yourself Without Being Aggressive:

Use the Three C’s

1. Clear
2. Concise
3. Conscientious

The goal of assertive communication moves beyond just speaking up for yourself; you must also get your point across in a way that the other person wants to hear. You need to respect not only your own rights, but their feelings and unique perspectives as well.

The key is to practice the Platinum Rule: Speak to others in the way they wish to be spoken to. To be a truly effective assertive communicator, the goal is positive influence.

To face confrontation head-on and communicate professionally, remember that it is about influence, not head-on confrontation!

Remember, Dr. Stephen Covey tells us that one of the seven habits of highly successful people is that they seek first to understand. You should try to understand the emotions behind the words.
How to Defend Yourself Without Letting Your Emotions Get the Better of You

The key is to defend your position without sounding defensive.

1. **The hit and run** — They dump on you then leave. Tell them you’d like to revisit that issue after you’ve finished the project you’re working on. Give yourself time to think first.

2. **The hallway ambush** — They corner you as you’re on your way to do something else and want a response now. Tell them you’ll get back with them as soon as you’ve completed this deadline.

3. **The misplaced blame** — Not even your fault or responsibility. Say, “I can see where you would be frustrated by that. Why don’t you talk with Ted about why he chose to handle the project like he did.”

4. **The appropriately placed (but over the top) blame** — Your slip. Don’t over-apologize, just acknowledge it, and move on.

How to Show Your Anger Constructively

**STOP:** Winging it! Do not address the situation before you mentally rehearse it.

**STOP:** Using anger too much, it dilutes the impact.

**Start:**

- See the event as an act of influence, not confrontation.
- Give the other person the benefit of the doubt. Assume they mean well.
- Clearly explain why it is a big deal, and connect this consequence to something that’s important to them.

To help you express your anger more appropriately, use this three-step technique to be influential in times of conflict. Think “triple A.”

- **A**cknowledge your feelings: “I’m confused.” “I’m concerned.” “I’m frustrated.”
- **A**ddress the facts. No opinions, speculations, or mind reading allowed.
- **A**sk for buy-in. “What do you think?” “Can we reach an agreement?” “How does that sound to you?”
Make Sure All Elements of Assertive Communication Are Congruent

**Remember:** Nonverbal cues win over auditory. If you are saying one thing and doing another, it is the fastest way to lose credibility and appear weak, or worse, dishonest.

The Triple Threat That Suggests Subordinate Status and Passivity

1. Head down
2. Chin tilt
3. Broad smile

**Note:** Gender differences with head nodding and its meaning

- Women, “I hear you.”
- Men, “I agree with you.”

**Adaptors:** Subconscious hand gestures: i.e., rubbing, patting, scratching when nervous, for example, when giving a presentation

**Solution:** Go big! Bigger gestures; OK to speak louder and take strides when talking. It comes across as confidence.
What to Do When People Are Talking and You Can’t Seem to Get a Word in Edgewise

Top tips for being heard at meetings:
1. Be on the agenda so you have a specific time to speak.
2. Be ready to interrupt.
   - Speak lower and louder.
   - Say the name of the person who is holding the floor.
   - Make sure the first thing you say is just an interrupter and not the most important thing. (You will likely need to repeat yourself.)
   - Watch how the people who are getting heard are going about it.
3. Prep before the meeting.
   - Ask an advocate to back you up.
   - Ask for alliances.
   - Ask your mentor for tips.

Earn the Respect You Deserve — Two Foolproof Assertiveness Techniques

1. Purposefully seek out mentors and advocates because they can:
   - Give you the scoop on how best to present your ideas
   - Suggest people you should get to know
   - Introduce your idea at a meeting, then turn it over to you

2. Create a professional portfolio which allows you to track letters of appreciation, list training you’ve attended, and contributions you’ve made to the company. This allows you to subtly, and in a business-savvy way, let your boss consistently know your value.
   - Every month, include a copy of the “memory jog” you give your boss
   - A month before your annual evaluation, give bullet points to your boss that highlight your contributions over the past year.
Recommended Resources

Audio CDs

*The Art of Being Assertive*
*Building Relationships*
*Communicate With Confidence*
*How to Communicate With Power, Diplomacy, and Tact*
*How to Handle Conflict and Confrontation*
*How to Handle Difficult People*
*How to Reach Your Personal Best*
*Mastering the 7 Habits*
*The Power of Persuasion*
*Winning Without Intimidation*

Manuals and Handbooks

*The Assertive Advantage*
*Dealing With Conflict and Anger*
*How to Work With People*
*Learn to Listen*
*Negaholics™ No More!*
*Lifescripts*

To order resources, call Customer Service at 1-800-258-7246, or visit our Web site at www.NationalSeminarsTraining.com.