



Unit 6

Personal Branding

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Speak in terms of the impact and influence that you want to have in life and work
- ✓ Understand your personal style in terms of your personal brand
- ✓ Develop skill in areas like focus, concentration, and communication to support your brand
- ✓ Build credibility and trust by living your brand
- ✓ Take ownership of your image, both online and in person

While we all define success in a way that means something to us personally, we often look to others for inspiration and ideas. Whether success to you means earning recognition; making money; or achieving education, financial, career, emotional, or other goals, this course will give you tools you need to take yourself there as a reflection of your personal brand.

Your Personal Brand

Thinking of people who have ownership over their personal brand can be a bit challenging. First, let's look at some corporate brands that we are probably all familiar with, such as:

- McDonald's
- Coca-Cola
- Nike
- Toyota

What is it about these brands that make them memorable?

Now, consider some people who have a particular look about them. Who are they? What makes them memorable?

Brand Elements

Elements of your personal brand include your entire package, such as:

- Body language
- Image (including how you dress, your hair, and accessories)
- Communication skills
- Credibility
- Managing difficult situations
- Social media presence

In commercial terms, a brand is the customer’s perception of a product. Organizations build that perception by paying attention to areas such as:

- Product development
- Research and innovation
- Marketing
- Sales
- Return on investment
- Bottom line
- Finances in the black or red
- Community involvement

In reality, though, the brand is the consumer’s perception and nothing more. In a similar way, your **personal brand** is people’s perception about you. People who do business with you have pretty high expectations about what a particular brand provides them, and they will review all aspects of you to form their perception.

Having a personal brand doesn’t mean that you have to dress in the same uniform every day (although you might dress in a consistent pattern), or that you are an eccentric individual (although you may be). It doesn’t mean that if you are an introvert you must become gregarious, and it does not require that the extroverts mask their feelings or thoughts about things.

What does developing a personal brand mean to you?

In what ways will developing a personal brand benefit you?

What will you do with it once you have it developed?

Your Brand Approach to Others

Brand Style Assessment

Choose the phrase that most closely reflects the way you see yourself (not the way you want others to see you). Sometimes you may feel that more than one statement fits; if that happens, choose the one that is most like you most of the time.

1. When I meet someone at a cocktail reception, I like to:

- a. Learn lots about them
- b. Tell them about myself
- c. See what's on the food table
- d. Hover on the fringe, observing, and interacting as people approach

2. When I attend a networking event or workshop, I usually:

- a. Listen attentively to all introductions
- b. Don't need to be introduced; we all have name tags
- c. I listen to most of them, but if they are too long-winded my attention drifts elsewhere
- d. I avoid these events because I have too much else to do

3. When I am in a managerial or leadership role:

- a. People on my team come to me for direction
- b. I check every step of the project
- c. I encourage them to be independent
- d. I avoid giving negative performance reviews

4. When I go to a meeting, I usually:

- a. Volunteer to take notes
- b. Sit near the meeting chair, but avoid taking notes
- c. Sit with at least one seat between me and the next person
- d. Sit beside another person

5. When I meet someone I know fairly well:

- a. I ask about how their day is going
- b. I share a story or a joke
- c. I get right to the point
- d. I introduce the conversation by outlining its purpose

6. When I am at a meeting and someone is doing a presentation:

- a. I want it to bring a few laughs
- b. I try to imagine how the presenter feels
- c. I try to analyze the logic of what's being discussed
- d. I get bored or impatient if it does not flow well or engage me

7. When people enter my work space or home, I usually:

- a. Invite them to sit down
- b. Tell them to sit down
- c. Let them decide where or whether they want to sit
- d. Pull out a chair for them

8. When I am speaking with people:

- a. I prefer to stand close to them
- b. I like to keep three feet or more of distance between us
- c. I need to have room to step back if they get too close
- d. I don't mind if they are close to me

9. When I deliver a presentation, it:

- a. Is well organized
- b. Connects to people on an emotional level
- c. Is powerful
- d. Is entertaining

10. My telephone calls:

- a. Are almost non-existent now; I text for efficiency
- b. Avoid small talk and focus on purpose
- c. Are animated and lively
- d. Tend to be quite long

11. Publicly speaking on a cell phone:

- a. Keeps life interesting
- b. Makes most people uncomfortable
- c. Helps me learn what people are thinking about

- d. Should be avoided

12. When my work group celebrates a big win, I tend to:

- a. Attend the party
- b. Organize the party and invite everyone
- c. Focus on the time and money it involves
- d. Avoid the party if possible, but put in an appearance if I have to

13. Which of the following interests you the most?

- a. Ideas
- b. Information
- c. People
- d. Actions

14. You respect when you and others pay attention to:

- a. Intelligence
- b. Authority
- c. Relationships
- d. Performance

15. You pride yourself on being able to:

- a. Solve problems
- b. Look after details
- c. Inspire others to action
- d. Make quick and effective decisions

Results Tabulation

Assessment Tool Results

Check your answer to each question in the Branding Style, and circle the answer below that relates to it. For example, if you selected statement a in question 1, you would circle the symbol beside 1a below. Once you have finished transferring your answers to this page, count the number of each symbol.

Scoring Guide				
1	2	3	4	5
a.o	a.o	a.Δ	a.o	a.o
b.□	b.Δ	b.→	b.□	b.□
c.→	c.□	c.□	c.→	c.Δ
d.Δ	d.→	d.o	d.Δ	d.→
6	7	8	9	10
a.□	a.o	a.□	a.→	a.→
b.o	b.Δ	b.→	b.o	b.Δ
c.→	c.→	c.Δ	c.Δ	c.□

d.Δ	d.□	d.o	d.→	d.o
11	12	13	14	15
a.□	a.o	a.o	a.→	a.o
b.→	b.□	b.→	b.Δ	b.→
c.o	c.→	c.Δ	c.o	c.Δ
d.Δ	d.Δ	d.□	d.□	d.□

Totals

Δ _____ □ _____ o _____ → _____

Scoring

If you scored highest in the:

- Δ category, your primary style is **Pragmatic**
- category, your primary style is **Enthusiastic**
- o category, your primary style is **Accommodating**
- category, your primary style is **Detailed**

Debrief

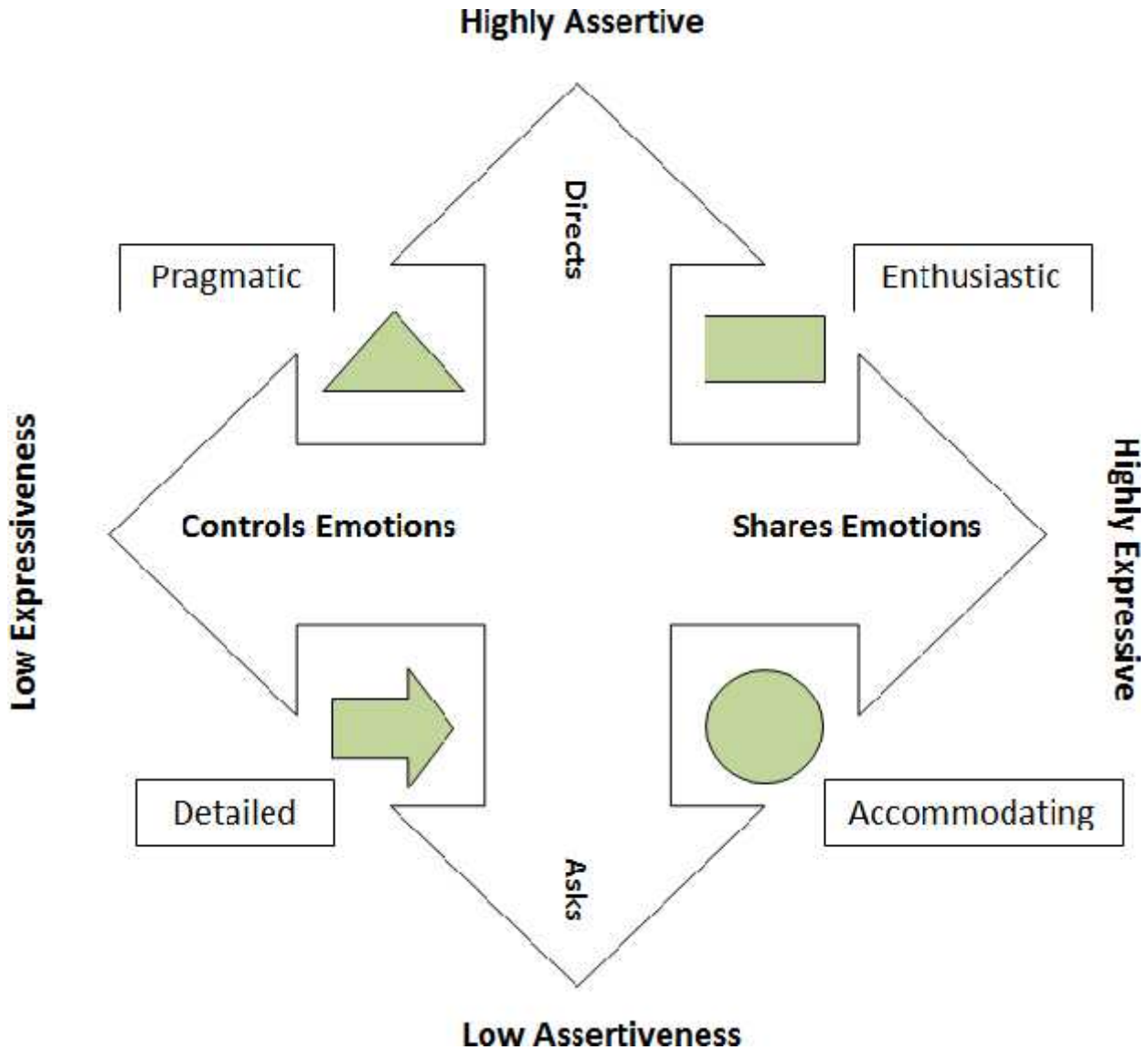
Overview

These results will give you a good idea of your self-perception: the way that you look and act in front of other people, which is the foundation for your personal brand. Keep in mind that while things can be in sharp contrast on paper, as people we are much more of a blend of all these types. Depending on how close our scores are, we can flex our behavior between styles (within our comfort and ability levels) to suit our purposes.

No one type is any better or worse than the other – they just provide us with a platform to talk about who we are and how we behave. If you scored within three points of another category, you may find it quite easy to stretch yourself and behave in the manner of that other category. If you are farther away, you will find stretching to appeal to people with other tendencies a little more challenging, but you can learn to get along with all kinds of people.

Brand Assessment Matrix

Here is a visual representation of the results of your assessment:



Understanding Styles

Sometimes our approach needs to be adjusted in order to present our brand in a way that other people will resonate with. If, for example, you are pragmatic, you may find that people who are an accommodating style have the most trouble relating to you. You are more assertive than they are, and less expressive. They value expression in order to relate to people and have a need to have people understand one another. They are also less assertive than you, and if you have a tendency toward aggression, they will often avoid getting to know you.

The Pragmatic Style (Δ)

The pragmatic style is demonstrated by being highly assertive and lower in expressiveness (the top left quadrant in the diagram). The pragmatic style is characterized by decisiveness; direct, quick speech; loud tones; direct eye contact; a bold visual appearance; and a respect for personal distance. Your personal spaces at work, home, or the gym all denote a powerful presence. Your handshake is firm.

Strengths include getting to the heart of the matter quickly, being direct, and presenting a position strongly. Challenges include listening, demonstrating patience, a tendency to argue, and not taking the advice of others who have more experience or expertise to offer.

The Enthusiastic Style (□)

Enthusiasts express their emotions and are assertive; see the top right quadrant in the diagram. The enthusiastic style expresses opinions easily and can be very persuasive in their approach. They use a lot of inflection, expressive tones, and are animated when they speak. They tend to be active and demonstrate a lot of movement and enthusiasm about everything they do.

Their workspaces are often cluttered and they are comfortable with close physical proximity. Challenges can include listening and paying attention to details, a tendency to generalize frequently, and to exaggerate or be overly dramatic.

The Accommodating Style (o)

The accommodating style is characterized by a tendency to low assertiveness and high expressiveness. This style focuses on relationship integrity. They listen, use supportive language, and thrive when everyone is working well and without conflict. Their speech is often at a slow to moderate rate, using soft tones. They demonstrate patience, build trust, and use supportive language. They do not need to shake hands, although they will if that's what everyone else is doing. This style prefers to hug.

Their workspace will contain family pictures and sentimental items. Their challenges can include handling conflict when it does arise, keeping opinions to themselves, and dealing with data and figures.

The Detailed Style (→)

The detailed style is found in the lower left corner of the diagram and is depicted by low levels of assertiveness and low levels of expressiveness. This style focuses on details, facts, and figures. They use precise language and avoid bringing emotion into the conversation. They use little vocal inflection, speak economically, and control their emotions.

They will avoid touching (shaking hands and particularly hugging) if possible, and maintain a very strong sense of personal space. If there are things hanging in their office, they will be related to charts and graphs. Their desktop will be tidy and well-organized. Challenges can include being too focused on details and losing sight of the bigger picture, and not paying attention to people's feelings.

Looking at the Outside

Dress for Success

The way you look is what people see first. It is the basis for their opinion about you before you even have the chance to speak.

What kind of image are you presenting?

No matter what type of work you do, your image needs to support that, not contradict it. Since the 1980's, and particularly in North America, there has been an acceptance of wearing blue jeans as part of the corporate uniform. Fridays in particular became "casual day" when all employees could wear blue jeans or casual wear. In order to protect the corporate brand, staff often contributed a dollar or two to a charity. Front-line staff would wear a badge saying that they were dressing down for charity.

This push for casual wear has changed the way many workplaces look today. CEOs dress in suits and ties in some companies, and in T-shirts and sandals in others.

No matter what clothing you select to help you create an impact when you enter a room or meet someone new, there are a few rules. We refer to these as **Seven Factors for Success**.

Factor One: Iron

Clothing needs to be clean and free of wrinkles. Get rid of that rumpled college or "just rolled out of bed" look. Learn how to use an iron and use it regularly.

Factor Two: Grab a Needle and Thread

Buttons, zippers, and other fasteners need to be properly attached to your clothing to give you a polished look.

Factor Three: Footwear

People notice what your feet are wearing, too. Your shoes need to be clean and in good condition. Learn how to apply shoe polish and purchase good quality footwear. You can lessen your credibility significantly with a nice outfit and a poor looking pair of shoes.

Factor Four: Hair

Your hair needs to be clean (even if the style of your mop is a messy one). No one wants to be around the smell of dirty hair, and some styles really trap smell.

Factor Five: Teeth

Your teeth need to be clean. You don't have to follow the trend of whitening and braces for adults, but your smile is founded on your teeth, and they need to be well looked after in order to support your image. Getting your teeth cleaned regularly also helps to keep your breath fresh.

Factor Six: Dressing Up

Dress for the position that you want and the respect you are after. If everyone around you wears baggy shorts and skater shoes because you sell skateboards, that's one thing. If you work in a design company, an art gallery, or a

jewelry manufacturer, you will probably dress differently than members of a law firm. If you want to reinforce your brand and have an impact, you still need to dress well wherever you are. Look carefully through your wardrobe and select clothes that will serve you.

Factor Seven: Glasses and Accessories

Long time glasses wearers have a gift for being able to look through a pair of smudged or dirty lenses, but your customers, colleagues, and manager will notice that layer of grime. Keep a microfiber cloth handy to keep your glasses clean. Pay attention to watches, cuff links, and jewelry with the same attention to detail.

Business Etiquette

Having good manners doesn't just mean you make a positive impression; they are also good for business. No matter how formal or informal your personal brand is, people still care about social skills and manners (even if they don't come out and say so). Rules about which fork to use for the salad, or not talking with food in your mouth, are examples of **good manners**. **Etiquette**, however, takes the discussion about manners to a higher level.

Emily Post, famous for her approach to etiquette, manners, and ethics, defined etiquette like this: "Whenever two people come together and their behavior affects one another, you have etiquette. Etiquette is not some rigid code of manners; it's simply how persons' lives touch one another."

When you apply your awareness of etiquette in different situations, you demonstrate that you want to be taken seriously. You become an ambassador for what you do and who you work with.

How You Sound

Do you have a "**phone voice**?" This is the voice you always use when you answer the phone; there can be total chaos around you, but when you pick up the phone and say, "Good morning," the caller hears calm professionalism.

In contrast is the voice we use on the street or at the market. Some of us have grown up using what we might call "**street language**," or language that is commonly spoken with friends outside of the workplace. In business, however, we want to be clearly understood and so we apply a veneer or polish to our language. Sometimes a vocal or image coach will teach you to drop your street language so that it stops creeping into your business conversations and so that we are more easily understood.

When it comes to how you sound, you have to make a decision based on what's important to you and the brand you represent. Does your accent create a barrier in some way? If not, there is no need to change it. But if your accent prevents people from understanding you, or if your street language is having a negative impact on your brand, then it may be worth doing something about.

The 80/20 Rule

The 80/20 Rule, or Pareto's law, says that 20% of what is on your to do list will bring 80% of your results. Make sure you are working on the 20% to make the most of your time. When it comes to the low value, time-consuming tasks, make sure that you delegate them, or take them off your list completely!

Improving Your Concentration

Concentration is a skill that is learned and can be vastly improved. Many of us work in an environment of distractions and interruptions like e-mail notifications, the Internet, stimulants like coffee or soda, and meetings. All of these things interfere with our ability to set aside a solid chunk of time to concentrate and work. The day is so broken up, it seems like there is only five minutes available at one time to actually get work done. Instead of talking about it, we must get focused, set up time for uninterrupted work, and then get that work done.

If you feel like you can only concentrate for very short pieces of time, start there. Assign yourself a task and then work for 45 minutes, giving yourself 15 minutes of each hour to check e-mail, grab a coffee, or touch base with your team. After several days of this discipline, start increasing your time so that are working for 50 minutes, then an hour, and then an hour and fifteen minutes. You'll be amazed at how much you can accomplish when you buckle down and really get into it!

Developing Confidence

Confidence is not just about how you feel; it affects how you look. When you think about your brand, and the promotion of it within your career, you need to be confident. Just thinking about your personal brand and the impact that you can have on your life is a sign of confidence.

Can we project self-confidence even when we don't feel self-confident? Yes, there are several techniques that you can apply in order to gain confidence.

Pretend You're Confident

Imagine yourself to be a confident person. Get that image in your mind and act it out. Stand up straight, dress better, and try to play the part. If you visualize yourself as confident and successful, that will help you to do things confidently and achieve success. When you feel your confidence slipping, visualize and use positive words to build yourself up.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

When Your Positive Self-Talk Doesn't Listen

Sometimes we can be so hard on ourselves that we will actually argue with that voice in our head and therefore can't get the positive message track to enter our consciousness. One helpful way of breaking this pattern is to interfere with it. When you catch yourself listening to negative self-talk, play music that inspires you and sing or hum along. It is much more difficult for those negative messages to persist through music. The music can also be the positive message that you need at that time.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Make Eye Contact

Confident people look people in the eye; people who aren't confident don't, unless it is a cultural restriction. Don't stare or make people uncomfortable; find that comfortable level of engaging in eye contact. (In some cultures it can be considered rude to look people directly in the eye. Make sure that you know your audience.)

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Dance

While this one might get you gasping (for confidence and air!), dancing is a great way to build yourself up. First, we know that the benefits of physical exercise are great, but did you ever think to let yourself go within a class of other likeminded people who are all learning at the same time? Often, you can take a class or two before you have to pay the fee. Then you can decide whether you are more of a salsa, flamenco, or ballroom kind of person.

If you don't have a partner, don't worry because lots of times there are other dancers there on their own. Or, you can take a class in line dancing. Whichever you decide, dance (or even yoga or guitar lessons) will force you to focus on something that you can enjoy.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Know Your Stuff

Your confidence can't be all a front. While you are looking people directly in the eyes, standing straight, and otherwise acting as if the world were your oyster, you also have to know what you are doing. If you are prepared and sure of your facts, you've got a better chance of projecting confidence.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Rehearse

Rehearsing can be as simple as writing out a speech or your intended conversation with someone and practicing it in front of the mirror. For example, you could do a role-play with a trusted friend or colleague as the interviewer

before you interview for a new position. To tackle your underlying fear of failure, include imagery with your rehearsal: imagine yourself succeeding.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Pep Talks Work

Rather than dwell on the things that didn't work or the things that didn't go well, focus on what you did accomplish. Give yourself a mental pep talk at the beginning or the end of every day. Remind yourself that you have done some things well.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Read Inspiring Biographies and Autobiographies

Build a file of stories that inspire you most. Remember that our capacity far exceeds our usual level of performance. Accept the fact you will have ups and downs just like everyone else. Experiencing them through reading will help reinforce that concept.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Be Thankful

No matter how bad your circumstances, there is probably somebody worse off than you. As well, build excellent support around you. There are a lot of tremendous people out there to spend your valuable time with. However, relationships are fragile. You must be prepared to devote some time to them.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Push Yourself to Accomplish Short-Term Goals

There is no greater way to build confidence than to get things done. Push yourself to get at least three things accomplished each week that move you closer to your goals. Develop a habit of getting things done and being productive.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Do Something for Yourself Every Week

You deserve it. Find a way to celebrate what you have accomplished or overcome. Give yourself some kind of tangible reward for your efforts.

Do you agree with this idea?

If so, what could you do to implement it in your life?

Confidence Builder

Four Steps for Success

One of the tools that we can use in building confidence is a process to help us communicate effectively and with assertiveness. This tool involves a four step process based on Think-Act-Feel-I Need.



Framework

The four steps can be framed as follows. Make sure that when you are referring to someone's behavior that you talk about the behavior and not the person.

1. When I witness _____ or When you _____

State what you are seeing without making a judgment. Be a videographer and only state what you can see or hear.

2. The effect (the consequence to me) is _____

This is your reaction.

3. I feel _____

This is your feelings on the matter. There could be range of adjectives here including disrespected, unsupported, upset, angry, etc.

4. I would like _____

Setting Goals

What Do You Want?

If you really don't know what you want, it's hard to represent your brand and have the impact that you want. Many times, people are looking for the easiest route they can find. As an example, they ask for money in the belief that if we have all the money we could possibly want, everything else would be ours for the taking. However, we all know that isn't exactly how it works. Money doesn't buy happiness, although it does make the search a little easier.

One of life's fundamental truths is, "Ask and you shall receive." Kids can ask for what they want, whether it's an ice cream cone or a new toy. As adults, we seem to lose our ability to ask for what we want, and we can really struggle when it comes to asking for or accepting help. Remember, the world responds to those who ask! There are many different asking strategies. We can create abundance in our lives just by mastering the art of asking assertively.

There are three reasons why we don't ask for what we want.

- We believe that it's not right to ask.
- We lack confidence.
- We fear rejection.

Some people don't enjoy the rewards of asking because they don't ask effectively. Here are five ways to ensure that you get results when you ask.

Ask Clearly

Be precise. Think about your request. Take time to prepare; maybe even write out what you want and practice. Words are powerful so choose them carefully.

Ask With Confidence

You are more apt to get what you want if you speak up and sound confident, rather than hesitant and unsure of yourself. The worst that can happen is that you will be denied, but it probably won't put you in a worse situation than before. If this route is closed, look for another.

Ask Creatively

What can you do to make sure you make an impact and to make certain your request doesn't get lost in the crowd? How could you make your request stand out? How can you make your request fun? Schedule some time every month to dream up new and different ways to ask for what you want.

Ask Sincerely

When you really want help, people will respond. Be willing to be vulnerable. Tell it the way it is, lumps and all. Don't worry if your presentation isn't perfect; ask from your heart.

Help Others

We live in a world of reciprocal relationships and energy. When you give, you get. When you are ready to lend someone a hand, do so. The more you can help others, the more likely that someone will be available to help you when you need it. Be giving of your time, and accepting of theirs.

Go For It!

Think of something that you truly want from others or something that you could use help with.

How can you start the ball rolling by asking today?

What techniques might you use?

Identifying Dreams and Setting Goals

Part of the reason people struggle with where they want to go in life is that their goals are vague and ill defined. “More confidence” and “more money” sound really good, but unless we get really clear about what they mean, we may never reach those goals.

Identifying Your Dreams

It is important to give some thought to what we want and how we are going to get there. Right now we’re going to take some time to think about our own hopes and dreams. From that, we will set some concrete goals.

What area(s) of life do you want to set goals in? Some ideas:

- Career (responsibilities or a specific position, or maybe even your own business)
- Income
- Relationships (marriage, children, family, friends, colleagues, customers)
- Things to learn
- Hobbies to take up
- Volunteer activities or charities to support
- Recreational activities
- Home, vehicles, or other possessions to purchase
- Places to travel to
- Spiritual
- Health (examples: lose 20 pounds, exercise more frequently)
- Educational
- Behaviors and habits to develop or change

Now, clearly some of these are achievable in the short term while others will take longer. Some will obviously take more work than others.

SPIRIT

If the goal is quite large, it needs to be broken down into several small, achievable goals that will help you get where you want to go. Good goals should have SPIRIT!

Specific

Be specific about what you want or don't want to achieve. The result should be tangible and measurable. "Talk to people" is pretty ambiguous; "Talk with two of my co-workers each day" is specific.

Prizes

Reward yourself at different points in the goal, particularly if it's long-term. If your goal is to set up a meeting with a new colleague, for example, you might purchase a special treat for yourself afterward.

Individual

The goal must be something that you want to do. If your spouse wants you to lose 20 pounds but you think you look fine, you're not going to want to work towards the goal.

Review

Review your progress periodically. Does the goal still make sense to you? Is it still giving you energy and something you find motivating? Are you stuck? Do you need to adjust certain parts of it?

Inspiring

Frame the goal positively. Make it fun to accomplish. You could make a poster of the end result, frame it, and post it on the wall.

Time-Bound

Give yourself a deadline for achieving the goal. Even better, split the goal into small parts and give yourself a deadline for each item.

Getting Some SPIRIT

Goal Statement One

Check to make sure you have included each of these elements.

Specific	
-----------------	--

Prizes	
Individual	
Review	
Inspiring	

Who will you check in with?

When are your check-in dates? What should be accomplished by each one?

Date	Task

Goal Statement Two

Check to make sure you have included each of these elements.

Specific	
Prizes	
Individual	
Review	
Inspiring	

Who will you check in with?

When are your check-in dates? What should be accomplished by each one?

Date	Task

Goal Statement Three

Check to make sure you have included each of these elements.

Specific	
Prizes	
Individual	
Review	
Inspiring	

Who will you check in with?

When are your check-in dates? What should be accomplished by each one?

Date	Task

Being Flexible and Resilient

When you are setting up big goals (which can include this shift you are making in having personal impact and creating your personal brand), there's a very good chance you will hit some setbacks. People you thought would be supportive may not be. You may let your guard down and have your brand tarnished. Your ability to bounce back after these setbacks is essential in reaching your goals. Being able to apply some flexibility and resilience is a way to measure how successful – and happy – you are.

Some people may appear to be more resilient than others. While this ability may be innate for some, a lot of the behaviors are learned. The evidence of learning means that we can all develop traits of resilience and flexibility. We have organized our top five tips as the 5 D's.

Develop a Positive Self-Concept

Resilient people know that they are worth it and they see themselves in a positive way. A positive self-concept does not mean you have to behave like someone who is self-centered or selfish. It does mean that you perceive yourself in a positive way.

Develop Relationships

Resilient people tend to give to and be a part of strong networks. Friends, family, business partnerships, and colleagues are all a source of support when things are not going well. Accountability partners can help get things back on track.

Develop Appreciation

Focusing on things that are going well helps bring more good things into view. This will help you to regain a positive mindset if you have let go of it. It also helps you to deal with challenges more effectively than if you are focusing on what's going wrong.

Develop Acceptance

No matter how positive, flexible, and resilient you are, there are things that cannot be changed. Resilient people accept these things, instead of spending precious energy fighting things that cannot be altered.

Develop Vision

When you look at your life, your goals, and your business from a distance, problems and setbacks seem less important than when they are close up. Develop your vision and then focus on the ability to call it up whenever you wish.

Networking for Success

Networking is an effective way for you to build your brand. However, building a network can be a difficult thing for a lot of people. If you are inhibited at all, the idea of introducing yourself to people can be daunting. If you are outgoing, people may have the impression you just want to meet them to further your career or grow your business. The real purpose of networking, however, is that you bring something to the group that is helpful to them (not you specifically) without expecting something directly in return.

For example, if you know someone who needs their house painted, and you know a painter, you could introduce the two. You do not gain directly from the referral, except that now it's possible that the person you refer and the painter will both think of you when they have a need or a referral for you.

There are plenty of networking groups available to help you get out into your community and to get known. Building a network takes time and patience. If you are hoping to get business or recognition from a group, expect it to take a year or more. Your results will depend on how involved you are.

Here are some excellent tips to try as you start to build or expand upon your network:

- If you are a strong writer or teacher, you can write for a variety of media (such as local news, websites, and blogs). Just make sure your work is getting read and that it's work you are proud of.
- If you enjoy presentations, then volunteer to sit on a panel or start looking for paid workshops and conference presentations.
- Get away from time wasters, such as water cooler gossip, or people who socialize excessively at work and are not getting things done. You don't want to be associated with these people because they will not be a good reflection of your brand.
- Spend time with mentors and coaches in the workplace that you can learn from, even if it's just while sharing a meal or break together now and again.

Brainstorm some networking strategies that might work in your area.

Communication Strategies

What is Said and What is Heard

Some people seem to be naturally good communicators, while others have to work at it. Communication skills are not related to how bright we are, either; people can be gifted in their subject matter, but struggle with communicating what they know or to connect with people.

What we say isn't always what the other person hears. Our message goes through a complicated system of filters and outside influences before it reaches the recipient. We must always clarify that the person has received the message that we intended to send.



Communication Situations

What would you do if you were trying to talk to someone...

In a noisy workplace?

And there were a lot of visual distractions?

And you felt really tired?

And they had a very strong accent?

And they were speaking too fast for you to understand, or too slowly or softly?

And they kept using jargon or terms you didn't understand?

And they appeared to be very stressed?

And they were using emotionally charged words or statements?

And they were verbally attacking you?

How Do You Rate Your Listening Ability?

One reason listening is so important is that we do so much of it every day. We often say that good communicators spend far more of their time listening than they do talking. Fortunately, listening is a skill that we can develop. In an age when we are inundated with media messages and portable devices, we can choose to listen more than many people seem to be.

Listening Assessment

Answer the questions on the test below. Don't answer the questions too quickly; it is easy to confuse what you know is right from what you actually do.

Question	Yes	No	Points
1. Do you enjoy listening?			
2. Is it easy for you to listen with interest to a large variety of subjects?			
3. Do your friends seek you out to discuss a problem or decision when they need help?			
4. Does your attention usually stray toward other groups or people entering or leaving the room?			
5. Do you interrupt?			
6. Are you more apt to be thinking ahead to what you will say next rather than weighing what you are being told?			
7. Do you stop listening to everything when you strongly disagree with the speaker on one point?			
8. Do you assume or anticipate regarding the other person's views?			
9. Do you feel you can judge most people quite quickly before hearing them out?			
10. Do you generalize (All old people think... all redheads... all college kids...)?			
11. Do you encourage others to elaborate or clarify points you have misunderstood?			
12. Do you listen to what is not said, such as the obvious omission?			
GRAND TOTAL			

Scoring

- Give yourself 2 points if you answered “Yes” for question 1. You enjoy listening as much as you enjoy talking.
- Give yourself 2 points if you answered “No” to questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.
- Give yourself 2 points if you answered “Yes” to questions 2, 3, 11, and 12.

Your score: _____

Interpretation

If your score is **20 or more**, you've already developed some strong communication skills. You have the ability to listen to people, understand what they are saying, and communicate your understanding back to them. Use your listening and communication skills to help others.

If your score is between **10 and 18**, you're within the average range. Use this quiz to help you identify where you're doing well and where you would like to do better.

If your score is **less than 10**, it's time to start learning! Use this quiz to help you set some goals. Start with one or two things that you would like to improve on, such as empathizing, paraphrasing, or asking good questions. Then, we'll work on setting an action plan, and you'll be on the road to being a better listener, and a better communicator.

Active Listening Skills

The problem is that listening and hearing are not the same thing. Most of us were fortunate to be born with hearing, but listening is a skill that must be learned and practiced in order to use it successfully. When you **hear** something, sound enters your eardrum, passes through your ear canal, and registers in your brain. **Listening** is what you do with that sound and how you interpret it.

Here are some tips for successful listening:

- Listen intentionally for people's names.
- Listen with interest.
- Try to get rid of your assumptions.
- Listen for what isn't said.

Listening is hard work. When other people are listening to us, they have the same difficulties we do in trying to focus on a message. Our minds wander, noises or thoughts distract us, and we can be thinking about what to do next.

Active listening means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening

can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

Responding to Feelings

The content (the words spoken) is one thing, but the way that people feel really gives full value to the message. Responding to the speaker's feelings adds an extra dimension of listening. Are they disgusted and angry or in love and excited? Perhaps they are ambivalent! These are all feelings that you can reply to in your part of the conversation.

Reading Cues

Really listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- What are the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Are they stressing certain points?
- Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?

Demonstration Cues

When you are listening to someone, these techniques will show a speaker that you are paying attention, providing you are genuine in using them.

Physical indicators include making eye contact, nodding your head from time to time, and leaning into the conversation.

You can also give **verbal cues** or use phrases such as "Uh-huh," "Go on," "Really!" and, "Then what?"

You can use **questions** for clarification or **summarizing statements**. Examples:

- "Do you mean they were charging \$7.00 for just a cup of coffee?"
- "So after you got a cab, got to the store, and found the right sales clerk, what happened then?"

Tips for Becoming a Better Listener

- **Make a decision to listen.** Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- **Don't interrupt** people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Keep your **eyes** focused on the speaker and your **ears** tuned to their voice. Don't let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Carry a **notebook** or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ask a few **questions** throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be **infectious**. If you want people to communicate well at work, you have to set a high example.

Building Your Credibility

We've probably all worked with people (including leaders) that we did not respect. No matter how long we worked with them, and no matter how great our results were, there was something about them which stopped us from trusting them. This lack of respect leads to dysfunctional teams, where people are afraid of repercussions. When people work well with one another, and respect one another, trust is built.

Factors that impact your credibility include small things (like remembering to think of people and send a thank you note) and big things (like being punctual). Credibility is affected by your ability to engender trust. It is reinforced when people speak about you in a manner that reflects the regard they hold you in.

Below are five ways that you can develop trusting relationships.

If you say you'll do it, then get on and do it.

Some people are good at planning and setting things up, but not so good when it comes to the follow through. At some point, you have to stop talking and start doing. If details are not really your strong suit, then make sure that you have people you can delegate to so that the things you say you will do get done. If you break promises, any trust that people have in you will be swiftly eroded.

If you mess it up, own it.

We all make mistakes, and it's a way to learn how to improve. Instead of pointing the finger at someone else

(especially members of your team), make sure the blame falls where it belongs – on you. Leaders and people who want to have impact learn that accepting responsibility for the good and the bad builds trust and credibility.

Be there for people.

If people feel micro-managed, they feel that you do not trust them to do their own work. Allow them to experiment, take risks, and to learn from failure as well as their own choices. Remember to also see what their strengths are and to celebrate when they do things well. Don't try to take credit when the whole team is contributing to success. As well, make sure that you are available when they need your support through mentoring and coaching.

Be assertive.

Although this is something that varies culturally and even within industries, you've got to be prepared to stand up for the things you believe in. You must also develop tools to manage conflict and to solve problems. If everyone that you work with seems accepting of everything you do and say, chances are that they are afraid of telling you the truth about how they really feel. Encourage sharing of opinions, debate, and discussion as a way for everyone to learn and grow.

Be yourself.

Demonstrating your brand and having a personal impact on the things that you do does not mean that you become someone else in public. Be accepting of who you are (including your strengths and weaknesses) and commit to ongoing development so that you can be the best person you can be.

Brand You

Defining Your Brand

When we refer to your brand, we're thinking about the package that you want to offer to others. This is a small scale version of a corporate brand, and vastly different from a cattle brand. Thinking about your personal brand can seem a bit vague, so let's make it something that is more tangible.

When a company considers their brand, they do so in terms of **standards**. Their logo will be created, and with that will be rules (standards) about how the logo is placed on a page, whether it can be reproduced in black and white or must always be in color, what uniforms staff need to wear, how the business itself will be presented, and so on.

Your brand is not the same as a corporate brand, but it has some similar elements. **Your brand** is a reflection of the story that you want to tell about yourself and how you wish for others to see you. Over time, as you evolve as a human being (and as you age), your story changes. You finish some things, you start others, and things that are important at one stage of your life may lose importance over time. Your goals will also change over time.

If you think of what you want said of you in the public, those things would be a good representation of your brand, wouldn't they? The best exercise for this is to think about what will be said about you when you can no longer speak for yourself, when you have passed away and someone is writing a eulogy in tribute to you or writing an obituary.

Designing My Brand

Details

Name _____

Current Age _____

Direction

To become the person I want to be I will:

I conduct my life centered on the values of:

I respect characteristics that I see in others, such as:

Presentation

Mode of dress when out in public (casual, business casual, snappy dresser, etc.), including specific or signature items that you wear:

My favorite color(s) to wear, decorate my home, my vehicle(s):

My hair usually gets styled like this:

My makeup, eyewear, and accessories (if worn) look like this:

The gadgets I have and use regularly are... (Are you someone who likes brand new, or do you wait until the bugs are worked out of things and purchase them later?)

These are my current hobbies, including ones I want to cultivate:

Things still on my bucket list (the things I want to do before I can't do them):

Accomplishments

These are my greatest accomplishments. (Indicate whether they are already finished, yet to be started, or in progress.)

The Top Five

My last two bosses would use these five words to describe me:

My best friend would use these five words to describe me:

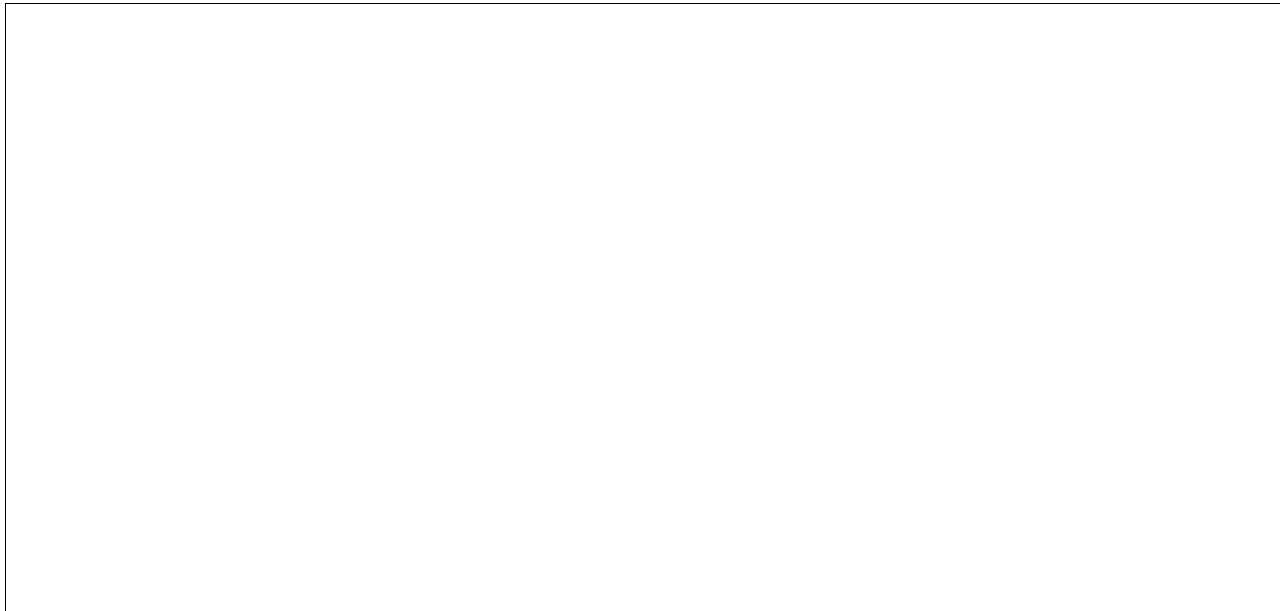
My partner, children, or siblings would use these five words to describe me:

Are the five words consistent in all the descriptions here? If so, congratulations! It seems like you are consistent in the way that you present yourself. If not, what can you do about it?

What are you doing to make those elements part of your life every week?

Ready, Set, Draw!

Create a logo or self-portrait that represents your personal brand. (You are not being marked on artistic merit; just capture the essentials!)



Living Your Brand

Getting Started

If you are going to make a transition to always demonstrating your brand, you could do it in a few different ways. You could:

- Start fresh and simply start behaving as you have identified in your brand description.
- Book an official launch and celebrate the new you publicly.
- Set up a marketing plan to purposely promote your brand. This could be something like a launch, or it might be a branded approach to a job search plan and embarking on the next stage of your career.

Most likely, and quite simply, you could make a gradual transition where you gradually adopt the things that are reasonable to you and fit within your goals, without a big announcement.

What is important is to start, and then to keep going despite setbacks or frustration.

When people notice success, they are inclined to make statements like, “Wow, that person is so lucky to have those things/that life/that job.” And yet the reality is that to get where they are, this person has made mistakes, faced failure, and tried yet again to reach success.

In order to be successful, and get what it is that you want, you are going to have to make some changes. Success will come when you incorporate successful activities that move you toward your goals. We hear frequently that people do not have time to do more. They do not have time to exercise, go out with friends, prepare healthy food, or be with their families. If that’s the case for you, it’s time to evaluate the things that you are doing. You have to make adjustments in order to be able to take the action that is necessary to change your life.

Having Influence

Persuasion Techniques

If you want to be someone who is known for being a clear communicator, watch out for words like these:

- I'll try
- Ought to
- Should have
- Must
- Always
- Never

If you are tempted to insert these words into your conversations, replace them with clearer terms. Instead of "I'll try to get back to you later," say "I'll call you back by 4:00 today" (and then make sure that you do!).

There are different levels of influence that you can exert and different approaches that you can take. Depending on the situation, you may wish to persuade or you may have to move onto negotiation techniques.

Persuasion

Expecting the best and **knowing when to stop** talking are probably two of the most important elements of persuading others. If we can't convince ourselves of something, it will be very difficult for us to persuade others.

Have you ever known another person who talked so much that other people stopped listening? These individuals overwhelm their listeners with conversation until the listener becomes confused, bored, or both.

Mark Twain used to tell the following story that bears out that point:

"I was attending a meeting where a missionary had been invited to speak. I was deeply impressed. The preacher's voice was beautiful. He told us about the sufferings of the natives and he pleaded for help with such moving simplicity that I mentally doubled the 50 cents I was about to put in the plate.

"He described the pitiful misery of these poor people and I raised the amount again. As he continued, I felt that all the cash I carried on me would be insufficient, so I decided to write a large check.

"Then he went on. That preacher went on and on about the dreadful state of these poor natives and I abandoned the idea of a check. And still he went on. And I got back to a dollar, and then 50 cents. And still he went on. And when the plate finally came round...I took 10 cents out of it!"

The lesson: balance enthusiasm with control.

Ten Ways to Persuade

1. Demonstrate your expertise and knowledge without becoming patronizing.
2. Make sure integrity is reflected in your standards, values, and behavior.

3. Know when to be silent.
4. Create an obligation for one or both parties.
5. Proceed a bit at a time, from inconsequential points into major areas.
6. Never corner people. Leave them a way out.
7. Give sincere compliments.
8. Be childlike: open and transparent. Expand your center of interests to include others and explore the talents of others.
9. Remember names.
10. Remember: difficult people don't play by the same rules.

(Adapted from the *Secrets of Power Persuasion* by Roger Dawson)

Negotiation Techniques

The essence of negotiating is that in order to get what we want, sometimes we have to give something up. We can negotiate on price (you give me more value and I will give you more money) or principles.

Argue Based on Principle instead of Positions

You've probably heard that expression that someone is "digging their heels in," meaning that they are so focused on what they want (and their position) that they have lost sight of the topic being argued and the principle.

If you are negotiating, try not to defend a position; otherwise you simply become more attached to it and will defend it even harder. You'll try to save face and lose your commitment to the real problem.

Arguing Chips Away at Relationships

Since a negotiation is a form of conversation, the idea is to have successful negotiations that contribute to more conversations. Be careful that your approach to negotiating does lead to a battle of wills. Each of you can clearly state what you are willing to do or not do, and then work through the problem rather than deteriorating to personal attacks and bravado.

The Softer Side

Sometimes people who resist conflict or who understand the high price that can be exacted for hard bargaining try to soften the edge by being friendlier in their approach. They get focused on the relationship and on reaching an agreement rather than simply pushing their own agenda. This is an example of soft negotiation where we extend trust to the other side, make offers and concessions, and do what we can to avoid confrontation.

Principled Negotiation Works

Instead of having to choose whether to stick to your position, or to use a soft or hard positional approach, we recommend that you apply **principled negotiation**. This approach is neither soft nor hard, and works in almost any negotiation by applying four simple strategies, as described in *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury.

Each point deals with a basic element of negotiation and suggests what you should do about it.

- **People:** Focus on the problem, not the people.
- **Interests:** Be concerned with interests of both parties, not digging in your heels.
- **Options:** Think of different solutions and possibilities instead of starting out from where you want to end up.
- **Standard:** Make sure that results are based on an actual standard, instead of something subjective.

Focus on the Problem, Not the People

We often make the comment that we have to focus on behaviors, not people. Take this concept seriously. Don't get angry: get clear about behaviors that need to change.

Negotiators are People First

When it comes to negotiations, we are dealing with human beings. And when people get passionate about something, it is a good reminder for us to see that they have emotions, convictions, different paradigms, and they can be unpredictable.

When things get heated, which they will at times, remember that your emotions and hot buttons are also involved. Ask yourself if you are paying attention to the people, or are getting distracted by positions.

Expressing Your No

Once you understand what someone is asking of you and decide you want to say no, choose the kind of no that best suits the person and situation. Here are some general rules to follow.

Say no **firmly and calmly**, without saying, "I'm sorry," which weakens your position.

Say no, followed by a **straightforward explanation** of what you are feeling or what you are willing to do.

- "I'm uncomfortable doing that."
- "I'm not willing to do that."
- "I don't want to do that."
- "I don't like to do that."

Say no, and then give a **choice or alternative**.

- "I can't help you now, but I will when I get this done, which could be in an hour."
- "I don't have time today, but I could help out the first thing tomorrow morning."

Say no and then **clarify your reasons**. This does not include long-winded statements filled with excuses, justifications, and rationalizations. It's enough that you do not want to say yes. Your clarification is given to provide the receiver more information so that he or she can better understand your position.

Use your **natural no**. You may have developed your own style of saying no based on your past experience and personality. If so, use it.

Make an **empathetic listening statement** and then say no. You may paraphrase the content and feeling of the request, and then state your no.

Example: “I can see that it is important to you that one of my assistants gets your report done. I’d like to have someone do it, but my staff is already overburdened with high priority tasks to be completed by the end of the day.”

Say yes, and then give your **reasons for not doing it or your alternative solution**. This approach is very interesting. You may want to use it in situations when you are willing to meet the request, but not at the time or in the way the other person wants it.

- “Yes, I would be willing to help you out, but I won’t have time until this afternoon.”
- “Yes, I’d be willing to go along with your second alternative, but not the third one you suggested.”

The Persistent Response

You can also use the persistent response. This method of saying no entails using a one-sentence refusal statement and persistently repeating it as often as necessary, no matter what the person says. This technique is useful when dealing with very aggressive or manipulative people who won’t take no for an answer. The persistent response can be effective in maintaining your refusal while continuing to be in charge of your emotions.

Because this way of saying no is unusual and a bit complex, we will provide some detailed guidelines for applying it.

First, select a concise, one-sentence statement and repeat it no matter what the other person says or does.

Examples:

- “I understand how you feel, but I’m not willing...”
- “I’m not interested...”
- “I don’t want to...”
- “I’m uncomfortable doing that, so I don’t want to...”
- “You might be right, but I’m not interested.”

After each statement by the other person, say your persistent response sentence. It’s important that you don’t get sidetracked by responding to any other issue the other person brings up.

Guidelines for Saying No

Say your statement **firmly, calmly, and as unemotionally** as possible.

Be aware of your **nonverbal behavior**, making sure you don’t come across passively or aggressively. Use plenty of **silence** to your advantage. Your silence will project the message that the other’s statements and manipulation are futile.

Be **persistent**. Simply state your response one more time than the other person makes his or her request, question, or statement. If the other person makes six statements, you make seven. If the other person makes three

statements, you make four. Most often, the other person will feel ill at ease and stop after three or four statements. Other times, your response will move the other person to offer options you are willing to go along with.

Dealing with Challenging People

Getting to the Heart of the Problem

If you think of the assessment you completed in Session Three, you classified yourself on a scale of assertiveness and emotionality. Dealing with challenging people (or difficult people, depending on how you define things), can be scary if you are a conflict avoider, but we are going to run into challenging people throughout our lives, so it's best to have a great set of tools to manage these issues.

For example, you might be a supervisor who had to speak with an employee about some unacceptable behavior. Perhaps they are always late for work, even though they are supposed to be answering the phones at 8:00 a.m. You've spoken with the employee a couple of times, and this led to improved punctuality for a few days before he slipped back to being late again. You have even spoken to your human resources consultant about suspending the employee, but they think that suspension is too harsh a punishment, despite your thorough record-keeping that shows how often and how bad this behavior is.

You've been braver than plenty of workplace leaders because you have discussed the problem with the employee and with HR. But somehow, the behavior continues, and you get a sense that you are not doing enough.

What's Missing?

You aren't getting to the heart of the problem. It's not enough to tell the individual that they are breaking the rules, or that a colleague has to cover their tasks when they are late. If it were enough, the behavior would stop.

Ask yourself what is really bothering *you* to get at what is really bothering *them*. Often the behavior touches a nerve that is much more personal. For example, if you hired the receptionist because he was the son of a friend, and you felt that he was taking advantage of your relationship with him and his parents by not caring about the schedule, that's at a much deeper level than just the rules that are being broken.

If the person is perpetually late because they do not set their alarm (and get up to it) because they really do not care about their job, or they feel underutilized, or they are being bullied by a co-worker and cannot drag themselves into the office, then we are getting at the root of the real problem.

If you are content to only deal with the surface issues, and you are afraid to dig and get at the deeper issues, you will not be a part of improving the situation. You simply scrape the moss off of the surface, only to have it to grow back later.

The ability to peel an infraction back to its core takes patience and precision. Sometimes we don't do this because it can take time to uncover the real problem. We can often find ourselves in too much of a hurry to do this properly. At other times, our emotions get involved and we make a decision that we really don't want to go there because we'll also have to deal with what is bothering us.

If you don't stop to think about the big picture, you'll end up either missing the problem or going after too many problems at one. To stop yourself from being over-involved, you must be able to state the problem in a single

sentence. If you make it longer, you'll lose focus of the real problem.

The Three F's

To get to the heart of the problem, evaluate the 3 F's: **facts**, **frequency**, and **frustrated relationship**.

Facts

What are the facts of the issue? Create a list so that you do not get sidetracked while you plan your conversation. Don't drag in other stories or unrelated issues that have happened previously. If you are talking to someone about tardiness, then stick to that and leave things like poor report writing, gossiping, or not taking care of equipment out of the conversation.

Frequency

Make sure you have a very clear history of the frequency of the issue. In this case, how often is the individual late? How late are they?

Describe the pattern like this: "This is the second time that I've called this to your attention. You agreed it would not happen again. Now I am concerned that I cannot trust you to keep a promise."

Revealing that you notice a pattern brings the history to the forefront. The history is important because repeated frequency erodes your trust.

Frustrated Relationship

If your real concern is about the relationship, but you only focus on the pattern, then you are not likely to get the change that you are aiming for. You have to discuss what is important to you in terms of the relationship. Explain that when they repeatedly ignore your expectations to be on time, they aren't just demonstrating a lack of commitment to the job. They are eroding your trust in them, your trust in their ability to do their job, and the possibility of being trusted with assignments in the future.

Comments like the following can be helpful:

- I feel like I cannot trust you to get the work done.
- I feel like I am constantly nagging you and I don't like to do that.
- I feel like I can't trust you to keep the commitments you make.

Group Exercise

Challenging people are the ones that get themselves sorted into categories, just so we can get some kind of a handle or strategy for dealing with them.

If you pick up almost any book on the subject, you will find descriptions of these people and some suggested ways of dealing with them. Today is no exception. In your workbook, you will see the names of nine types of people. There is space in the workbook for you to develop your own description of these people, along with strategies for working effectively with them.

The Stubborn One

Description

Solutions

The Quiet One

Description

Solutions

The Jester

Description

Solutions

Yakety-Yak

Description

Solutions

Off Base

Description

Solutions

Bigger Issues

Description

Solutions

The Chatterbox

Description

Solutions

The Know-It-All

Description

Solutions

The Whiner

Description

Solutions

Presentations and Meetings

Speak, by all Means!

Public speaking is an opportunity for you to share what you have learned, broaden your network, and consider how the impact that you want to have can be shared.

Whether you are pitching an idea, managing a crisis, or leading a meeting, effective speaking skills are critical to building credibility and carrying your message home. Even the most secure speakers know that they shouldn't wing it. No matter how well you know your product or service, or the story that you will share, it pays to plan. Think about what's most relevant to your audience and put their interests first.

The numbers of people who aren't good speakers far outweigh those who are good, so there's lots of room for those who are just okay at public speaking. However, if you want to move your presentation from dull to dynamic, you can pump up your presentation in seven easy steps:

- 1. Talk to yourself.** Practice in front of a mirror, trying to look relaxed and friendly. Stand with your arms in front of your body, with your elbows at 90 degrees and your palms at 45 degrees, leaning forward. That says, "I'm here, I'm engaged, and I am being open with you."
- 2. Have a point.** Decide on your core message ahead of time. Bring the listener quickly to the point of action by crafting your theme into your introductory passages.
- 3. Look them in the eye.** Making frequent eye contact for a few seconds with listeners in the audience will create an aura of confidence and familiarity, which will help you get your message through. This also helps with making an emotional connection.
- 4. Know the room.** Boost your comfort level by checking out your speaking venue in advance. Practice with the microphone and any visual aids that you plan to use.
- 5. Crack a smile.** Smiling tells the audience you're enthusiastic and confident – just the kind of person they want to hear. Smiling can also relax you, reduce your heart rate, and help you breathe easier.
- 6. Pump up the volume.** People need more energy than they think to make a strong presentation. Use a slightly louder voice than you think you need, and work on your articulation.
- 7. Don't be a comic.** When you tell a joke, you can easily offend other people. Tell a funny story about yourself instead. And write your own material – nothing damages credibility more than telling someone else's story and pretending that it is yours.

Preparing for Meetings

Our weeks are often filled with meetings. They are an excellent forum for sharing information and knowing what's going on, if they are managed well. Otherwise, meetings can seem like a big waste of time. To make the most of your meetings, we have several tips for you.

Before the Meeting

You need to be one of those people who are prepared for meetings when you arrive. This means arriving on time, reading materials that are supposed to be reviewed beforehand, and being prepared to participate as opposed to observing.

Questions to ask yourself when preparing for a meeting include:

- What information do you need to take with you?
- What do you want to get out of the meeting? Is there something in particular you want to get done?
- What contribution do you want to make?
 - Are you just trying to get information?
 - Do you want to follow up something that was raised at an earlier meeting and check progress on it?
 - Do you just want to draw attention to something?
 - Do you want to make sure people are aware of a problem so that it doesn't happen again?

When previewing reports and information, here are some tips:

- When the reports arrive, scan them quickly to establish the scope and content.
- Write down any initial questions you may have and look for answers in the subsequent stages.
- Read conclusions, summaries, and recommendations first, then go back and read the content. (This improves retention of the material.)
- Highlight sections or use sticky notes to make sections you want to refer to.

During the Meeting

Keep your contributions short.

Your point is more likely to be understood and to have an impact if you keep it reasonably short. Resist the urge to go off on a tangent.

Don't take so many notes that you lose track of what is going on.

Most meetings are recorded by a minute-taker, so just write down the things that affect you (such as things that you are responsible for doing before the next meeting) or things that will jog your memory when it comes to reporting back to your employees or supervisor.

Avoid interrupting others to make your contribution. Do not let others interrupt you.

In some meetings it is difficult to get your contribution in. If you do have to interrupt, do so firmly and politely. Once speaking, do not be tempted to make several points for fear of not getting in again.

Think about your non-verbal behavior.

Both the volume and tone of your voice are important here. If you are too quiet you will lose impact and be open to interruptions. Eye contact is also important. Remember to sit somewhere that makes it easy to catch the eye of the chair so that you can get your contribution in. While you are speaking, distribute your eye contact throughout the meeting, but direct it at those for whom your contribution is most relevant. This enables you to judge how your contribution is being received.

Time your contributions.

Raise points at the relevant time for the maximum impact. Do not wait until the last minute before airing an opposing view. If others are on the verge of making a decision, they will be irritated if you suddenly come up with opposition.

If you are brief and avoid interruptions, you stand a good chance of getting a reaction. If no one reacts, however, don't be shy about asking the group or an individual for a reaction.

If you are asked to give an opinion on something that has come up unexpectedly, don't feel pressured into giving an off-the-cuff answer if you are not confident that you know your own strengths. It is perfectly acceptable to ask to be given time to think about it.

Leading Meetings

If you are leading meetings, here are five ingredients for managing them effectively:

- Be a leader or member of the meeting committed to resolving issues, not just talking about them.
- Hold meetings that focus on important issues and guide the group in resolving them.
- Make sure that meeting leaders and members have the skills needed to work together effectively.
- Establish a means for recording ideas and keeping track of what goes on.
- Arrange a meeting location free of interruption from other activities.

Further Reading:

- ✓ Berkley, Susan. *Speak to Influence (Second Edition)*. Campbell Hall Press, 2004.
- ✓ Bilanich, Bud, and Lydia Ramsey. *Success Tweets For Creating Positive Personal Impact*. Front Row Press, 2011.
- ✓ Boothman, Nicholas. *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less*. Workman Publishing Company, 2000.
- ✓ Canfield, Jack, and Janet Switzer. *The Success Principles*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 2006.
- ✓ Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Collins, 2006.
- ✓ Fisher, Roger, Bruce Patton, and William Ury. *Getting to Yes*. Penguin, 2011.
- ✓ Post, Emily, and Peter Post. *Emily Post's The Etiquette Advantage in Business*. William Morrow, 2005.
- ✓ Wheeler, Alina. *Designing Brand Identity (Third Edition)*. Wiley and Sons, 2009.