

Communication Intelligence

Part 2. Being Assertive

Trainer's Manual

Manual written by Tracy Riddiford
Video written by Tracy Riddiford

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FOREWARD

This program is designed as a half-day group training session on intelligent communication and being assertive in the workplace.

Just as the organizations that use this program are wide and varied, so are the desired outcomes of the participants attending. As a result, we have tried to make *Communication Intelligence- Being Assertive* as generic and flexible as possible.

This manual will provide you with background notes along with practical activities and suggested running times. Feel free to add to or adapt the structure of this training session to suit your needs.

You do not need to complete all exercises provided unless they suit the specific requirements of your organization. Of course, the time schedule we have provided is only a guide. The time spent on each activity is entirely dependant on the objectives of the trainer/facilitator and the progression rate of participants.

PREPARATION

In order to maximize the benefits of this training session, we recommend that the trainers/facilitators familiarize themselves with the topic at hand. You should be comfortable with the material in both this manual and the video.

You have been supplied with master copies of overhead transparencies and participant handouts. Make sure that sufficient copies of each have been prepared prior to the training session.

In the training room you will need the following: -

- ☒ Overhead projector or computer projection system
- ☒ Monitor and VCR player
- ☒ A whiteboard with markers and eraser
- ☒ Note paper and pens or pencils for participants

SYNOPSIS

Communication Intelligence – Being Assertive

Lauren, Jeremy, Warren, Greg and Peta are all working furiously towards a special opening night exhibition at the Museum. There is a great deal at stake. They need to make a positive impression on potential sponsors in order to cement their plans for expansion.

However, when it's discovered that their big night clashes with the neighboring Art Gallery's "food for Thought" exhibition, all their plans are thrown into disarray. It creates a major scheduling problem, which puts everyone under pressure. Their already tenuous communication skills are seriously put to the test. The result is a complete communication breakdown with an emotional outburst from Lauren, which leaves them all devastated.

However, with the knowledge, determination and encouragement from team member, Peta they struggle through some valuable lessons about communications. Eventually they resolve their behavioral problems by learning how to communicate assertively.

Opening night is a tremendous success. They receive their funding and they take with them some valuable lessons, which will help them all grow personally and professionally.

Featuring

Robert McPherson as Greg
Rakendra Moore as Peta
Merri Contina as Lauren
Vinnie Monaco as Warren
Robert Diaz as Jeremy

COURSE STRUCTURE AND RUNNING TIME

This course has been designed to run as a half-day training session. If you do all of the course work within the allocated running time, your training session should run for approximately 3 hours and 55 minutes.

COURSE WORK**RUNNING TIME**

| | |
|--|------------|
| Welcome & Introduction | 10 minutes |
| Objectives & Agenda | 10 minutes |
| Introduction | 50 minutes |
| The Video and Discussion | 40 minutes |
| Activity 1 – Barriers to Assertiveness | 15 minutes |
| Break | 20 minutes |
| Activity 2 – True or False | 15 minutes |
| Activity 3 – Why be Assertive | 15 minutes |
| Summary | 30 minutes |
| Activity 4 – Who am I? | 15 minutes |
| Debrief | 15 minutes |

PART 1

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

10 minutes

- ✍ Welcome all participants to the *Communication Intelligence – Being Assertive* training session.
- ✍ Introduce yourself and tell the group something about your training background.
- ✍ Explain how the training session is to be structured, how long it will run for, when the video will be shown, when breaks will be taken, what refreshments are available and where the phone and rest rooms are located.

OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA

10 minutes

Discuss the objectives and agenda of this training course with the group.

OHT # 1

After completing the training session on *Communication Intelligence – Being Assertive*, participants will understand the following: -

- ✍ The definition of assertiveness
- ✍ The characteristics of passive, passive aggressive, aggressive and assertive
- ✍ Be able to define their own behavior
- ✍ How to communicate assertively
- ✍ Why we should be assertive
- ✍ Barriers to assertiveness

INTRODUCTION

50 minutes

- ✍ Using your own research and the brief notes provided below, give participants an overview of why being assertive is so important.
- ✍ Invite questions and discussion from the group as you go.

OHT #2

Did you hear the one about the employee who wanted to attend an assertiveness training course but couldn't muster up the courage to tell anybody?

It's no laughing matter when talented people derail off the track of success just because they haven't mastered the art of communicating assertively.

Using inappropriate behavior either socially or at work will often exacerbate problems. In contrast, those who have mastered the skills of assertive communication will deal more confidently and successfully with a wide variety of people and situations.

People can often be assertive in some circumstances, yet ineffectual in others. However, assertiveness shouldn't be something we dust off every now and then to put in to practice. It should be a way of life.

Assertive behavior influences everything we do, particularly our interactions with others and how we deal with any problems and injustices we perceive. You might say that it's an outward display of our inward security, confidence and self esteem. A more text book definition however, would be :

OHT #3

Assertiveness - the ability to express yourself openly and honestly without denying the rights of others.

From a practical point of view, assertiveness is a skill that enables us to prevent and resolve problems that may be interfering with the achievement of your goals.

The use of assertiveness skills is varied and unlimited. How many times have you not contributed a great idea to a discussion just by not being able to speak up? Or missed a chance to meet someone by being too afraid to introduce yourself? Or maybe even engaged in a fight or heated argument because you did not know how to deal with conflict properly?

When we fail to act assertively, we usually pay a price. This can have quite damaging professional, personal and social implications.

OHT #4

Assertive personality types will:-

Stand up for themselves
Use open body language
Maintain eye contact
Aren't afraid to ask "why" or say "no"

Listening Skills

Assertiveness in fact encompasses many topics under the communication umbrella. Because communication is not simply a one-way process where someone sends a message and other people absorb it like a sponge, we must also develop good listening skills.

The following is a list of do's and don'ts for effective listening:-

- ✗ Don't stereotype the speaker because of age, sex, economic class, mannerisms, race, religion or sexual preference.
- ✗ Don't express boredom, embarrassment or be threatened by what the speaker is saying.
- ✗ Don't constantly drift off into a remote association with what the speaker is saying.
- ✗ Look for feelings as well as facts.
- ✗ Don't read too much meaning into what is being said, ignoring plain facts and clear words.
- ✗ Don't constantly rehearse witty and profound responses before the speaker is finished speaking.
- ✗ Don't react automatically, unthinkingly and predictably over sensitive issues.
- ✗ Don't jump in with a quick fix when you think you understand what the speaker is saying. Always allow them to finish.

Know What You Want

Assertive communication also means knowing what you want, how you want it done, when you want it and how to ask for it.

However, even knowing what you want doesn't always guarantee you'll get it. Therefore, you have to know how to negotiate and look for win/win solutions.

You should always be open to ideas and suggestions from other people – and don't judge their ideas until you have heard them out.

Knowing How to Say No

If a request is untimely or unfair, everybody has the right to say no. However, before categorically stating a refusal you should probably consider the following six step evaluation:

1. Ask yourself "Do I want this or am I trying to please someone else? What will I receive for my participation? If I agree to do this will it continue to be rewarding or will it become oppressive?"
2. Think it over and give yourself time to evaluate the request.
3. Look for clues that the request may be unreasonable. Are you hesitating? Do you feel cornered or trapped? Do you feel nervous?
4. If necessary, ask for further evaluation.
5. Allow for discussions of ideas and differences of opinions.
6. Focus on the problem at hand and not the person.

Do's and Don'ts for Saying No

- ✗ Say no firmly and calmly
- ✗ Never say "sorry" – it weakens your position.
- ✗ Follow no by a straightforward explanation of how you feel.
- ✗ Say no and then look for an alternative solution.
- ✗ Make an empathetic statement first before saying no e.g. "I understand what you're saying, however..."
- ✗ As a last resort to persistent requests you should use the broken record technique. Remember to always try alternative methods first, because an initial "parrot style" response to customers or associates will simply reveal that you do not either, understand or care about their request.

Of course, saying yes is also acceptable – but remember you can't expect people to be mind readers. Therefore, you should set the parameters within which you are prepared to say yes e.g. "I would be happy to do that, however, it cannot be completed until next week".

Briefly define the remaining behavior types; passive, passive aggressive and aggressive.

To generalize, passive people are usually shy, lack confidence and get embarrassed easily. Their body language tends to be introverted in that they don't make good eye contact, are prone to fidgeting and their voice tone, volume and inflections aren't particularly authoritative. Passive people will often feel quite uncomfortable speaking up in a debate or expressing themselves in general.

OHT #6 Passive/Aggressive Personalities

Passive aggressive characters tend not to say anything to your face but they'll talk about you or the situation behind your back and try to sabotage your efforts. When dealing with passive aggressive characters nobody wins and problems are very rarely solved satisfactorily. In fact, these characters can often be quite dangerous as they tend to fuel the rumor mill and have an adverse affect on company moral.

OHT #7 Aggressive Personalities

Aggressive characters are quite happy to speak their mind – but their manner and methods in doing so are often quite intimidating. They are usually prone to flying off the handle and can be quite critical of other peoples ideas and opinions. It is not unusual for them to constantly interrupt and finish other people's sentences.

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PART 2

THE VIDEO

Play the video *Communication Intelligence- Being Assertive*

20 minutes

Lead a short discussion around the video

20 minutes

Facilitator suggestion:-

- ✍ After viewing the video how would you now classify your behavior?
- ✍ Can you identify yourself or any of your work colleagues in the program?
- ✍ Do you think Warren is basically a good person – perhaps just a little bit dogmatic and overbearing?
- ✍ Why can characters like Jeremy be so dangerous?

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Activity 1

15 minutes

Barriers to Assertiveness

- ✍ Divide participants into groups of six to eight and ask them to write down some barriers to assertive behavior.
- ✍ Go through the responses on the whiteboard and discuss.

Facilitator suggestion:-

- ✍ Many people do not believe they have the right to be assertive
- ✍ Cultural pressures and differences
- ✍ Balance of power
- ✍ Some people feel anxious or fearful about being assertive
- ✍ Lack of social skills
- ✍ Bigotry
- ✍ Some organizations do not foster assertiveness

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Activity 2

15 minutes

True or False

TRUE OR FALSE

- ✍ Ask participants to complete the True or False handout.

Handout # 1

- ✍ Go through the handout and discuss the answers. Address any queries the group may have.

Facilitator's copy: -

TRUE OR FALSE TEST?

Decide weather or not the following statements are true or false.

| Statement | True/False |
|---|------------|
| You should feel guilty about saying no to a request, particularly if it is unreasonable. | False |
| Assertive communication contributes to increased productivity. | True |
| Assertive people have control over everything that goes on in the workplace. | False |
| You should always discuss a problem with the person concerned before taking it to a higher level. | True |

| | |
|--|-------|
| Assertive people need to choose their words carefully if they are to make a good impression. | False |
| Assertiveness skills help eliminate frustration and resentment in the workplace. | True |
| Assertiveness is getting your own way at any cost. | False |
| The difference between assertive and aggressive behavior is how much we take into account the rights and well being of other people. | True |
| Passive aggressive communicators can have a detrimental effect on company moral. | True |
| Assertive people shouldn't disagree emphatically with others. | False |

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Activity 3

20 minutes

Why be Assertive

- ✍ Divide participants into groups of six to eight and ask them to come up with reasons why they think we should be assertive.
- ✍ Go through the responses on the whiteboard and discuss.

Facilitator suggestions:-

- ✍ Assertiveness aids in problem solving.
- ✍ Every problem can have a win/win solution.
- ✍ Assertive behavior reduces physical and mental stress because people are less like victims.
- ✍ Communication becomes clearer and more concise which reduces misunderstandings and clarifies expectations.
- ✍ Less time is spent gossiping and complaining and more time getting things done.
- ✍ In an assertive work environment, people speak up and say what's on their mind because there is no fear that their ideas and opinions will be shunned or ridiculed.

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Summary

30 minutes

Go through some of the training points highlighted in the video using the OHT's.

OHT # 3

Definition of Assertiveness – Assertiveness is the ability to express ourselves openly and honestly without denying the rights of others.

OHT # 4

Assertive – Stand up for themselves, use open body language, maintain eye contact, not afraid to ask “why” or say “no”.

OHT # 5

Passive – Rarely get involved, lack confidence, get embarrassed easily.

OHT # 6

Passive Aggressive – avoid conflict, rarely speak up, complain about you or the situation behind your back.

OHT # 7

Aggressive – prone to ‘fly off the handle’, opinionated, finish other people's sentences for them.

OHT # 8

Reasons to be Assertive – It reduces physical and mental stress, sees problems solved more quickly, encourages productivity, win/win solutions.

OHT # 9

How to be Assertive – Be proactive, know what you want, use “I” statements and feeling verbs, speak up for yourself. Say no firmly and calmly, match you delivery to your message, look for solutions.

Activity 4

15 minutes

Who am I?

Facilitator's Copy:-

WHO AM I?

Describe the following behaviors as passive, passive aggressive, aggressive or assertive.

Behavior

Behavior Type

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| A colleague is not contributing to a project assigned to your team. You tell everybody how it makes you feel – except the main offender. | Passive Aggressive |
| You've been given some instructions but you're still confused as to what's being asked of you , so you say, "Just to make sure I understand that - could you please repeat it one more time?" | Assertive |
| An unreasonable request has been made of you so you say "no" followed by a brief explanation of how you feel. | Assertive |
| You are openly critical of other people's ideas, opinions and behaviors. | Aggressive |
| You avoid certain people and situations because you get embarrassed easily. | Passive |
| You usually have confidence in you own judgment. | Assertive |
| You are prone to "fly off the handle". | Aggressive |
| Someone has taken your place in a queue so you speak out in protest. | Assertive |
| You can't say "no" to a sales person even though the merchandise is not what you really want. | Passive |

| | |
|--|------------------|
| <p>In a room full of strangers you are happy to introduce yourself and begin a conversation.</p> | <p>Assertive</p> |
|--|------------------|

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PART 3

DEBRIEF

35 minutes

- ✍ Play the Video again.
- ✍ Go through some of the training points highlighted in the video and this training session using the overhead transparencies.
- ✍ Ask for and answer any questions that participants may have.
- ✍ Give participants a copy of the Summary Handout.
- ✍ Let participants know if and when any follow up training is to be held.

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**PARTICIPANT HANDOUT
MASTERS**

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HO #1

TRUE OR FALSE TEST?

Decide weather or not the following statements are true or false.

| Statement | True/False |
|--|------------|
| You should feel guilty about saying no to a request, particularly if it is unreasonable. | |
| Assertive communication contributes to increased productivity. | |
| Assertive people have control over everything that goes on in the workplace. | |
| You should always discuss a problem with the person concerned before taking it to a higher level. | |
| Assertive people need to choose their words carefully if they are to make a good impression. | |
| Assertiveness skills help eliminate frustration and resentment in the workplace. | |
| Assertiveness is getting your own way at any cost. | |
| The difference between assertive and aggressive behavior is how much we take into account the rights and well being of other people. | |
| Passive aggressive communicators can have a detrimental effect on company moral. | |
| Assertive people shouldn't disagree emphatically with others. | |

HO#2

WHO AM I?

Describe the following behaviors as passive, passive aggressive, aggressive or assertive.

| Behavior | Behavior Type |
|--|---------------|
| A colleague is not contributing to a project assigned to your team. You tell everybody how it makes you feel – except the main offender. | |
| You've been given some instructions but you're still confused as to what's being asked of you, so you say, "Just to make sure I understand that - could you please repeat it one more time?" | |
| An unreasonable request has been made of you so you say "no" followed by a brief explanation of how you feel. | |
| You are openly critical of other people's ideas, opinions and behaviors. | |
| You avoid certain people and situations because you get embarrassed easily. | |
| You usually have confidence in you own judgment. | |
| You are prone to "fly off the handle". | |
| Someone has taken your place in a queue so you speak out in protest. | |
| You can't say "no" to a sales person even though the merchandise is not what you really want. | |
| In a room full of strangers you are happy to introduce yourself and begin a conversation. | |

HO #3

Summary

We hope you have enjoyed learning how assertive techniques will help your team communicate better. Let's summarize what you've learned.

Assertive communication is your ability to express yourself openly and honestly without denying the rights of others. You must know what you want and speak up for yourself using "I" statements and feeling verbs like "I feel, I felt, I found". You must practice good listening techniques by asking clarifying questions and paraphrasing what you understand. You have the right to say "no" which you should say firmly and calmly matching your delivery to the message and you should follow no by a simple explanation of how you feel. But don't feel compelled to always justify yourself and don't say sorry, it weakens your position. You must practice good negotiation skills and look for solutions. Assertive communication won't always get you what you want but it's your best chance of arriving at a win/win solution, plus you'll be more comfortable dealing with conflict, saying no, handling feedback, stating limits and coping with stressful situations. Remember, assertive communicators are truthful about their own feelings and responsible towards others.

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**OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCY
MASTERS**

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- ✍ the definition of assertiveness
- ✍ the characteristics of passive, passive aggressive, aggressive and assertive
- ✍ be able to define their own behavior
- ✍ how to communicate assertively
- ✍ why we should be assertive
- ✍ barriers to assertiveness

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did you hear the one about the employee
who wanted to attend an assertiveness
training course but couldn't muster up the
courage to tell anybody?

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assertiveness

the ability to express yourself openly and honestly without denying the rights of others

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OHT #4

assertive people

stand up for themselves

use open body language

maintain eye contact

aren't afraid to ask "why" or say "no"

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passive people

rarely get involved

lack confidence

get embarrassed easily

never complain

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passive/aggressive people

avoid conflict

rarely speak up

complain about you or the
situation behind your back

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aggressive people

prone to 'fly off the handle'

opinionated

finish other people's sentences

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reasons to be assertive

reduces physical and mental stress

problems solved more quickly

encourages productivity

achieve win/win solutions

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how to be assertive

begin with a positive assumption

be proactive

know what you want

use "I" statements and feeling verbs

speak up for yourself

don't feel compelled to always
justify yourself

say "No" firmly and calmly

match your delivery to your
message

look for solutions