

Assertive Communication for Managers



Why Assertiveness Matters for Leaders:

- Enables clearer communication
- Strengthens team trust and respect
- Improves conflict & dispute resolution
- Encourages team accountability

What else?

Quick Reflection:

- What comes to mind when you think of being assertive as a team leader?
- What challenges do you face when trying to be assertive with your team?
- When else do you find it challenging to be assertive? And when is it easier?

Section 1: What is Assertive Communication?

Assertive communication is the ability to express your thoughts, feelings, and needs clearly and confidently while respecting others. It strikes a balance between being passive and aggressive.

Understanding Your Communication Style

Pick the answer that best reflects how you typically respond in work situations:

1. When someone disagrees with me, I:
 - a) Avoid expressing my opinion to prevent conflict.
 - b) Calmly share my viewpoint while listening to theirs.
 - c) Interrupt or dominate the conversation to get my point across.
2. When I need help with a task, I:
 - a) Struggle to ask for assistance even when I need it.
 - b) Clearly ask for help and explain why it's needed.
 - c) Demand that someone helps me immediately.
3. If a colleague takes credit for my idea, I:
 - a) Say nothing and feel frustrated.
 - b) Politely address the situation and clarify my contribution.
 - c) Confront them aggressively and accuse them of stealing my work.

Scoring:

- Mostly a's: You tend to communicate passively.
- Mostly b's: You lean toward assertive communication.
- Mostly c's: Your style may be more aggressive.

Quick Reflection:

What do you notice about your communication style? Are there situations where you are more or less assertive?

Key Principles of Assertive Communication

Use these tips to practice assertiveness:

- **Use "I" Statements:** Express your thoughts and feelings without blaming others. Example: "I feel concerned when deadlines are missed because it impacts the entire project."
- **Be Direct and Respectful:** Communicate your needs clearly without being confrontational. Example: "I need support with this task to ensure we meet our goals."
- **Practice Active Listening:** Show that you value others' perspectives by listening attentively and acknowledging their input.
- **Set Boundaries:** Say no when necessary, but offer alternative solutions when possible. Example: "I can't take on this project right now, but I can assist once my current tasks are complete."

Rewrite the responses as assertive responses:

1. **Scenario:** A colleague regularly interrupts you during meetings.
 - Passive Response: *Say nothing and let it continue.*
 - Aggressive Response: *Snap, "Stop interrupting me!"*
 - Assertive Response:
2. **Scenario:** Your manager assigns you more work than you can handle.
 - Passive Response: *Accept the task and feel overwhelmed.*
 - Aggressive Response: *Complain angrily, "This is unfair!"*
 - Assertive Response:
3. **Scenario:** A team member is consistently late to meetings.
 - Passive Response: *Ignore it and hope they change.*
 - Aggressive Response: *Say, "You're always late. You're wasting everyone's time."*
 - Assertive Response:

Your Assertiveness Plan

Complete the table to set goals for practicing assertive communication:

Situation	Assertive Action I Will Take
Example: Team meeting	Use "I" statements to express my concerns directly.

Reflection:

1. How did it feel to be more assertive?
2. How did people respond when you communicated assertively?

Bonus Tips for Success:

- Stay calm and maintain steady eye contact.
- Use a confident tone of voice.
- Practice with a trusted colleague or friend.

Remember: Assertiveness is a skill that improves with practice. Start small, and build your confidence over time!

Section 2: Handling Pushback

When faced with pushback, it's essential to remain calm and use assertive communication techniques. Here are key steps to navigate pushback effectively:

- **Acknowledge:** Recognize the other person's feelings and perspective.
Example: "I understand that this change may feel overwhelming."
- **Clarify:** Ask clarifying questions to understand the underlying concerns.
Example: "Can you share what specifically concerns you about this change?"
- **Respond:** Address the concerns by providing factual information or alternative solutions.
Example: "We have a detailed plan to ensure a smooth transition, and I can share it with you."
- **Collaborate:** Work together to find a solution that respects both parties' needs.
Example: "Let's find a way to do this that feels comfortable for you."

Apply the **Acknowledge: Clarify: Respond: Collaborate** approach to this situation:

A team member resists implementing a new process.

Acknowledge: How might you acknowledge their perspective?

Clarify: What questions could help get to the root of their resistance?

Respond: Identify some facts or solutions that could help them accept it.

Collaborate: Suggest some solutions/ways forward that benefits both of you.

Section 3: The Feelings to Facts Approach

The Feelings to Facts technique helps transition from emotional responses to factual information:

- **Identify Feelings:** Start by recognizing the other person's feelings.
Example: "I can see that you're feeling uncertain about this decision."
- **Transition to Facts:** Shift the conversation towards objective facts.
Example: "However, we have successfully implemented similar changes in the past."
- **Provide Evidence:** Support your statements with data or examples.
Example: "Our last implementation led to a 30% increase in productivity."

For each situation below, write:

- The emotional objection someone might raise.
- A "Feelings to Facts" response using the steps outlined in the worksheet.

Scenarios:

1. A colleague says, "I feel overwhelmed with all the changes happening."
 - Emotional Objection:
 - "Feelings to Facts" Response:
2. A team member comments, "I don't feel confident meeting these new expectations."
 - Emotional Objection:
 - "Feelings to Facts" Response:

Section 4: Feel/Felt/Found Approach

The Feel/Felt/Found approach builds rapport while guiding the other person through their objections:

- **Feel:** Acknowledge the other person's feelings.
Example: "I understand how you feel; many have had similar concerns."
- **Felt:** Share your experience or that of others to create commonality.
Example: "I've felt that way when I faced new systems too."
- **Found:** Transition to what was discovered or learned after overcoming the objection.
Example: "What I found is that once I adapted, the benefits were clear."

Choose a statement below & craft a Feel/Felt/Found response:

1. Objection: "This new software looks too complicated for me."
2. Objection: "I've always handled tasks this way; why change now?"
3. Objection: "I'm not sure this strategy will deliver the results we need."

Conclusion & Next Steps

Take some time reflect on these approaches & how you might use them to build more assertive communications for your team.

1. Which of the techniques resonate best with you?
2. What do you think will be the most challenging for you about being more assertive with your team?
3. How will you encourage yourself to practice more assertive communication?
4. What more do you want to learn about assertive communication?

After applying these techniques at work, take a moment to write down:

- The situation and the pushback/objection faced:
- Which techniques you used (e.g., Feel/Felt/Found or Feelings to Facts):
- The outcome of the conversation:

Reflect on:

- What worked well?
- What could you improve for next time?