



Proactive Strategies for Everyday Negotiation Skills

- **A No Can Do**

There will be times in which you are not able to provide the result or service that the other person wants. A *Proactive No* will help you to communicate a confident response. A *Proactive No* helps you to create boundaries and to maintain a healthy level of assertiveness. It includes the following steps:

1. Avoid jumping to a 'no' before fully hearing the other person's needs
2. Clearly explain your reasons for saying *no*. For example, it can be helpful to start your part of the dialogue with: *I would like to explain the reason for my not being able to help with your project*. Some examples may include:
 - Conflicting deadlines or obligations
 - Legal reasons
 - Policy or procedure reasons
 - Physical limitations
 - Personal value reasons
 - Contractual constraints
 - Not having more specific information
3. Let the other person know what you CAN DO. Use your creative thinking skills here! For example: *While I am not able to help you on this project, I can offer some alternatives that have helped me in the past when I've been in a similar situation. Would you be open to hearing more?*

- **Language changes**

There exists power in the use of language. Try changing some of the more 'loaded' words or phrases to alter the dynamic of your dialogues. Simply changing the word *problem* to *issue* or *concern* can help the dialogue move forward. Also, *I can't* is easily transformed to *I am unable to because...* Try using *and* instead of *but*. Think about the many words and phrases you use and which words create the most negative reaction from others. Then consider other ways of rephrasing the words to reduce a potentially negative reaction.

- **Gain agreement**

Closed-ended questions (begin with *do, can, will, are, is*) generally result in a one-two word response, are more directive, and can put you in control of a dialogue. Open-ended questions (begin with *who, what, how, when, where and tell me*) generate more detailed feedback, get others to share, and open up dialogue. To gain agreement, try using a closed-ended question such as, ***Do I have your agreement on this course of action?*** This next closed-ended question will clarify what it is the other person is willing to do: ***Are you willing to...***

- **Begin with a comment that shows understanding of what the other person needs**

It sounds like you have an urgent need to get started on your project right away, and you need us to put through the changes immediately. At this point, we are still discussing your changes and haven't yet accepted them. I'll check into it and get back with you one way or the other by 3:00 pm today. Would you be willing to work with me on our timeline as we figure out how best to help you while maintaining our project deadlines?

- **Avoid putting yourself down – any time any where!**

- **Err on the side of over-communicating with diplomacy**

The people with whom you work are not mind readers – even if you sometimes want them to be. Let them know what's going on so you can help create a proactive rather than reactive work environment. For example: make your calendar of priorities visible or put a sign on/near your desk that shows your current schedule; go directly to the source and have a courageous conversation instead of talking behind another person's back; and state your wants and needs in a way others can hear you. Your ability to effectively communicate is essential to your success. Find your courage. Take the time to formulate a message that can be heard by others and move forward. You hold the power to make it happen! One thought of caution: the phrase *over-communicating* does not mean that by talking nonstop you are communicating effectively. People who are too verbose often and in many cases unknowingly get tuned out. Over-communicating in this sense means sharing your thoughts when you know it is in the best interest of your work group's success including helping you deal with your work load/stress level.

Administrative Associates Conference

Everyday Negotiation Skills

Kenda Swartz



- **Use I Statements**

I statements are a way of holding oneself accountable for a message one is sending. *YOU statements* are very different. These can express a judgment of the other person. Essentially, the content of a *You statement* contains the speaker's assumptions or interpretation – opinion – of what s/he observed. This is also called a *You blaming* or *assumption statement*. When using *I statements*, it is essential to **focus on facts**. Facts are observations you can **SEE * HEAR * TASTE * TOUCH * SMELL** or are your personal **feelings/experience**. Be *specific*.

An *I statement* is simply a statement that is given *from the experience of the speaker*. It is the most direct form of message sending a person can provide. It states the experience, fact, feeling, wants, needs, thoughts, etc. of the speaker. With an *I statement*, the speaker is taking his or her own *inventory* instead of taking the *inventory* of the receiver.

I statements have many benefits including being more complete and reducing defensiveness. They allow the receiver to know more clearly what the speaker is trying to communicate by eliminating mixed messages. It is the truest form of assertive communication eliminating aggressive or passive language from a dialogue.

Note how each of the statements on the left imply that the subject is doing something wrong, are unclear or are aggressive; whereas the statements on the right are direct, assertive and facts as described by the experience of the speaker.

You Blaming or Assumption Statement

I Statement Reframe

<i>You need to keep your voice down.</i>	<i>I have a hard time concentrating when anyone is standing outside my door talking. I need your help with this. Would you be willing to take your conversations to a conference or break room?</i>
<i>You need to tell me when you're going on break so that you don't mess up my schedule anymore.</i>	<i>I need to know in advance when you're taking a break so that I can schedule my own time more effectively. Would you be willing to let me know at the beginning of each day?</i>
<i>Why are you doing it that way? (do you see the implied message?)</i>	<i>I'm not clear as to how you came to that conclusion, so I wonder if you would be willing to show me.</i>
<i>You just don't get how busy I am.</i>	<i>I'm feeling stressed these days given how Janice is no longer here to support our workload. Right now I have two other high priority items on my desk. As soon I complete those, I can help you and more fully focus on your needs. Would you be willing to let me work only one more day on those two items before helping with your project?</i>

Remember: Tone of voice is very important! If you have a sarcastic or aggressive tone, it can be just as damaging as using a *YOU blaming/assumption statement*. If you sincerely want to accomplish a complete and direct *I statement*, it will come across authentically in your tone.

The following messages go in degrees from **most harmful** to **least harmful** (or most effective).

- **You're lying. = You + My assumption of you**
(the whole world and I agree that you are lying = harmful)
- **I think you're lying. = You + Owing my assumption of you**
(this is my single, solitary belief = harmful but to a lesser degree)
- **What you're telling me today is different than what you told me previously. = I + My experience**
(this is my experience or reality = more effective but still a bit vague)
- **Yesterday I heard you tell me that the data had all been entered, and today I hear you telling me the data hasn't been entered. I'm confused about these two different messages. = I + Facts**
(this is my experience with as many facts as I can include = least harmful/most effective)