



Managing with Assertive Confidence

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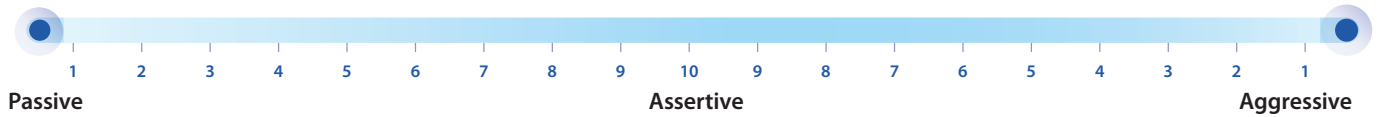
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Understand Assertive Management

The Passive End of the Continuum



Think of passive, assertive, and aggressive as points of a continuum:

When Managers Move to the Passive End of the Continuum

A "victim" I have known:	
Characteristics	Consequences

Goals of Passive Managers

- To be liked.
- To be nice.
- To be friendly and appease others.

Permeating these goals is the desire to avoid conflict at all cost.

The Basic Message of Passive Managers

- What I think doesn't matter.
- What I feel is unimportant.
- Please read this sign I placed around my neck, "Walk all over me."
- I don't respect myself and I don't expect you to either.



The Passive End of the Continuum

Thought Patterns of Passive Managers

- I'm not OK — I'm not sure about you.
- Everyone has rights but me.
- I can survive if everyone likes me and approves of what I do, say and feel.
- Nice people don't disagree.
- Don't make waves. Don't rock the boat. People won't like you.
- Peace at any price.
- What I think is unimportant.
- I won't offer my opinion. People might laugh at me.
- It's not my place to speak up.

How do such thought patterns interfere with the manager's effectiveness with others?

Consequences for being a Passive Manager

Payoffs

Costs

Occasions when passivity might be your most effective response



The Aggressive End of the Continuum

When managers move to the Aggressive end of the Continuum

A “bully” I have known:

Characteristics	Consequences

Goals of Aggressive Managers

To win. To dominate. To intimidate. To overpower. To get what they want when they want it. They often obtain their goal by belittling, degrading and humiliating others.

The Basic Message of Aggressive Managers

You will never have to wonder what I think — I am going to tell you. You will never have to wonder what I feel — I am going to tell you. And I guarantee that you are going to do what I want you to do, even if I have to use fear and intimidation in order to get you to do it. You are even more stupid than I thought, if you disagree.

Thought Patterns of Aggressive Managers

- I’m OK—you’re not!
- I have rights — you don’t!
- People should do what I want without questioning me!
- Personnel doesn’t send me good people any more!
- If more people were like me, we wouldn’t have the problems we have.
- I am never wrong!
- My feelings are more important than yours!
- I don’t need to listen to them. They have nothing to offer me.



Understand Assertive Management

How do such thought patterns interfere with the manager's effectiveness with others?

Consequences for being an Aggressive Manager

Payoffs

Costs

Occasions when aggressiveness might be your most effective response

Ten Reasons Why New Managers Fail

Which ones might be the result of being aggressive or passive?

	aggressive or passive?			aggressive or passive?	
1. Abrasive, intimidating style			6. Can't attract good people		
2. Arrogance, aloofness			7. Can't develop good people		
3. Betrayal of trust			8. Poor planning		
4. Negative political games			9. One-boss performers		
5. Poor operating results			10. Can't stand alone		



The Assertive Position on the Continuum

When Managers Move to the Assertive Position on the Continuum

A "winner I have known	
Characteristics	Consequences

The Goals of Assertive Managers Are:

To get the work done at a level of excellence while enhancing the growth and development of those doing the work. To communicate in a style that is accurate and respectful of the dignity of all persons involved. And to encourage those they work with to do the same.

The Basic Message of Assertive Managers Is:

You will never have to wonder what I think — I will tell you. You will never have to wonder what I feel — I will share that with you. And I guarantee you that I have no interest in being critical of you for what you think or feel. Indeed, I invite you to share these things with me. We are here to get the job done and to contribute to a positive work environment.

Thought Patterns of Assertive Managers Include:

- I'm OK, and you're OK.
- I have rights, and so do others.
- It is all right to learn from mistakes.
- I am a valuable and worthy person, and so are you.
- I have choices in nearly all situations, and I am responsible for the consequences of my choices
- I trust you, and you can trust me.
- I am not a helpless victim.
- I will not allow others to decide for me how I will behave.
- Conflicts provide opportunities to grow and are not something to be avoided.
- I want to find a way we can all win.



Understand Assertive Management

How do such thought patterns interfere with the assertive manager's effectiveness with others?

Consequences for Being an Assertive Manager	
Payoffs	Costs

Five Questions to Determine if You Are in the Assertive Position:

1. Am I willing to take _____ for my own _____ and their _____.
2. Do I _____ myself and others enough to be _____ and _____?
3. Am I willing to state what _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____ without _____ others?
4. Am I actively pursuing _____?
5. Do I _____ at this moment for what I am doing?

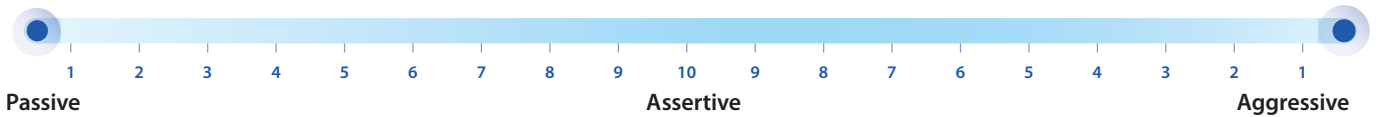


Understand Assertive Management

Check Your Understanding

What is the Assertive Position?

Listed on the left are the characteristics of those who operate at the passive end of the continuum. Listed at the right are the characteristics of those who operate at the aggressive end of the continuum. Fill in the characteristics of those who operate in the assertive position.



Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
I'm not OK.		You're not OK.
I don't have rights		You don't have rights.
Does not respect self		Does not respect others.
Blames others.		Blames others.
Denies or does not express feelings.		Expresses own negative feelings.
Keeps it all in.		Lets it all hang out.
I lose — You win.		I win — You lose.
Closed.		Hostile.
Controlled by others.		Controls others.
Doesn't trust self.		Doesn't trust others.
Allows others to make choices for him/her.		Makes choices for others.
Does not actively pursue own goals.		Reaches goals at expense of others.
Does not make decisions.		Makes decisions for others.



Understand Assertive Management

What do you think?

Following are situations that may take place in your office. Identify the response as passive, assertive, or aggressive by circling a number on the continuum.

1. An employee becomes silent, looks at the floor, and does not verbalize what is on his mind. You say, "Ah, I have a lot to do. I'll see you later. OK?"



2. Based on your performance, you believe you deserve a raise in salary. You say to your manager, "You have taken advantage of me for the last time. Either I get my raise or I'll kiss this joint good-bye."



3. You have been talking on the phone to an employee. You would like to terminate the conversation, and you say, "You're taking up too much of my valuable time. Good-bye!"



4. During a managers meeting a colleague repeatedly interrupts you while you are speaking. You say, "I would like to finish explaining my position without interruption."



5. A high pressure vendor is in your office trying to rush you into buying your supplies from him. You say, "I feel rushed to make a decision. I will consider the information you have given me, and I will let you know by next Monday."



6. Your manager has just insulted you in the presence of your employees. You respond, "I am hurt that you said those things in front of my people. I would like for you to talk to me in private when you are not pleased with me."





Understand Assertive Management

7. One of your employees has interrupted you four times for something that is not urgent. You respond, "You have been interrupting me all day! Can't you see I'm busy? If you interrupt me one more time, you've had it!"



8. Your manager asks about a report that is due tomorrow. You know that you will have to stay up all night to get it done. You say, "It's coming along just fine."



9. You and two other managers are to share the responsibility of explaining a new incentive package to employees. One of the managers is not sharing equally in the task. She asks you to take her next group for her because she has a conflict. You say, "No. Our assignment was to lead five discussion groups. I have done five, and I expect you to do your share."



10. You have set aside 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 to put the finishing touches on a most important project that is due at noon. Your manager asks to see you at this time. You say, "Sure, Boss! I don't need to eat lunch today, anyway. Ha, ha, ha."



11. In your judgment, you have overcommitted yourself with task force and committee work. You are asked to head another committee. You say, "I feel I have overcommitted myself with committee responsibilities. I do not want to head this one."



12. The new manager in the office next to yours plays his radio so loud that it interferes with your getting your job done. You don't want to offend him, so you take your work to the conference room, which isn't being used anyway.





Investigating the Beliefs that Underlie Assertive Management

What you believe or think leads to how you feel and how you behave. In this segment we look at the beliefs that are basic to assertive behavior.

The Four R's of Assertion

1. Respect for yourself and others
2. Rights of yourself and others
3. Responsibility for self and to others
4. Rational thinking



Respect for Yourself and Others

Respect for Others Begins with:

Suggestions for Increasing Self Respect and Esteem

1. Reject perfectionism.
2. Have realistic expectations.
3. Limit TV viewing, and be selective of programs and commercials.
4. Reject a "please others" mentality.
5. Concentrate on strengths, not weaknesses.
6. Engage in positive self-talk.
7. View your employment role positively.
8. Engage in life-long learning.
9. Avoid the "tyranny of the shoulds."
10. Exercise.
11. Reject "better than" thinking



Investigate Basic Beliefs

Respect for Yourself and Others

Assertiveness Happens When:



Rights for Yourself and Others

Assertiveness is Based on the Belief That:

You Have the Right:

- To express your beliefs, opinions, needs and feelings while not violating the personal rights of others.
- To be in charge of your own life.
- To change.
- To be less than perfect.
- To act, think and feel without explaining or justifying.
- To decide if it is your role to solve others' problems.
- To choose your own behavior, thoughts, feelings and attitudes.
- To make your own decisions.
- To evaluate yourself independently of how others evaluate you.
- To refuse to worry about those things you cannot control.



Responsibility for Self and Others

Assertive people

1. Take responsibility for _____ and _____.
2. Replace the _____ and _____ mentality with the concept of _____.
3. Are an _____ rather than a _____.
4. Teach others how to _____.
5. Experience _____ freedom.

Assertiveness Happens When:



Rights and Responsibilities

Rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. Following are some rights of managers. Identify a responsibility which goes with each right.

Right — To go ahead with my own job in my own way once objectives and constraints have been clarified.

Responsibility:

Right — To have a role in selecting the people I am to manage.

Responsibility:

Right — To make mistakes sometimes.

Responsibility:

Right — To expect my staff to maintain a standard of excellent performance.

Responsibility:

Right — To criticize any member of my staff when his/her performance falls below the standard of excellence.

Responsibility:

Other Rights

And Responsibilities



Rational Thinking

The A B C Paradigm

A

B

C

Ten Commonly Learned Irrational Beliefs that Lead To Non-Assertive Behaviors

- 1.** You must — yes, must — have sincere love and approval almost all the time from all the people you find significant.
- 2.** You must prove yourself thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving, or you must at least have real competence or talent at something important.
- 3.** You have to view life as awful, terrible, horrible or catastrophic when things do not go the way you would like for them to go.
- 4.** People who harm you or commit misdeeds rate as generally bad, wicked or villainous individuals, and you should severely blame and punish them for their actions.
- 5.** If something seems dangerous or fearsome, you must become terribly occupied with and upset about it.



Investigate Basic Beliefs

6. People and things should turn out better than they do, and you have to view it as awful and horrible if you do not quickly find good solutions to life's hassles.
7. Emotional misery comes from external pressures, and you have little ability to control your feelings or rid yourself of depression and hostility.
8. You will find it easier to avoid facing many of life's difficulties and self-responsibilities than to undertake more rewarding forms of self-discipline.
9. Your past remains all-important, and because something once strongly influenced your life it has to keep determining your feeling and behavior today.
10. You can achieve happiness by inertia and inaction or by passively and uncommittedly "enjoying yourself."

Are any of these irrational ideas sometimes a part of your thinking? Choose those that are, and write new, more rational beliefs below them.

Source: Albert Ellis, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*, 1962, and *A New Guide To Rational Living*, Ellis & Harper, 1975.



What Is Assertive Communication?

Communication is Assertive when the Speaker:

1. **Respects self and others.**
2. **Recognizes rights of self and others.**
3. **Accepts responsibility for self and to others.**
4. **Thinks rationally.**
5. **Communicates directly without attacking others.**
Communicating assertively is expressing your beliefs, thoughts, feelings, wants or needs in a direct way without attacking others. In the passive position there is not direct expression, and in the aggressive position there is attack on others.
6. **Expects and encourages mutuality.**
The assertive communicator wants, expects, even encourages others to be assertive, too. She/he asks for feedback, because assertive communication is two-way. And she/he leaves room for compromise when there is conflict. She/he strives for win-win outcomes.
7. **Recognizes that the emotional content may be the most important part of the message.**

William
Jennings Bryan,
the silver-tongued
orator said,
"When you want
to influence
someone,
remember: Most
communication
is heart-to heart,
not mind-to
mind."



Component #1: Words

Assertive Communication is not just a way to get what you want.

The goal of assertive communication in management is two-fold:

1.

2.

Components of Assertive Communication

We will consider four:

1. Words

Only _____ percent of emotional meaning is carried by the word.

- "I" messages vs. "you" messages

What are the "I" messages behind these "you" messages?

You make me angry!

You're not doing your share.

You just don't understand.

You expect too much of me.

You must stop interrupting.

You don't keep me informed.

[You] Listen!

Don't [you] speak to me like that!



Statements vs. Questions

Remember: Questions are assertive only when you really want information.

What is the assertive “I” statement behind these questions?

Can't you see I'm busy?

Why do you wait till the last minute?

How can you expect me to do all of this?

Does this make sense to you?

Could you do this by noon?

Why do you always come in late?

Why am I always the last to know?

- Words to avoid
- Keep it short!
- Eschew obfuscation!



Component #2: Voice

2. Voice

_____ percent of emotional meaning is carried by the voice.

- Think how important this is on the phone.
- I don't like your tone of voice!"
- Same words, different tone of voice, different message.
- Three P's you can change about your voice:

P

P

P

Describe these three P's in the passive person.

In the aggressive person.

In the assertive person.



Component #3: Body

3. Body

_____ percent of emotional meaning is carried by the face and body.

What are ways we communicate with body language?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Learn Assertive Communication

Voice and body together account for _____ percent of the emotional content of our messages. This communication without words, with only voice and body, is non-verbal communication.

Keeping in mind how important non-verbal communication is, let's look at four things:

1. We cannot "not" communicate.

2. Leakage cues.

3. Double bind.

4. Gaining attention is the first step of communication and non-verbals do this.



Component #4: Listening

4. Listening

- Back to balances!
- One thing at a time. Listening is a full time job.
- Listen for feelings as well as facts.
- Listen for the main idea. Disregard sidetracks.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Prepare feedback/paraphrase



Tools for Assertive Managers and Supervisors

To enhance effectiveness as a manager, attention will now be focused on a model for assertive management communication and specific on-the-job situations that are often encountered. The situations may create obstacles to healthy and productive relationships and to getting the job done.

A Three-Part Mode for Assertive Communication

1.	Acknowledge the other	What I hear you saying... What I see happening...
2.	Make "I" statements	I feel ... I think ... I know... I want ... I need ... I believe ...
3.	Invite feedback	I'd like to hear how you feel ... Do you have any suggestions? Are there any other options? Tell me what you think.

Techniques for Remaining Assertive when Faced with Aggression

1. Appropriate muscle
2. Sorting
3. Broken record
4. Self disclosure
5. Reflection
6. Pitch, pace and power down



Apply Assertive Skills

What might the assertive manager say in the following situations?

Use the three-part model, write the words and note particularly non-verbal behavior that you would emphasize.

1. Saying “No”

Michael, an employee in your department, wants Friday off for personal reasons. It will cause the rest of the team great inconvenience.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on saying “No,” see Appendix B, pg.37.

2. Setting Limits

An employee, Abby, is late for the third time this week.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on setting limits, see Appendix B, pg.39.



3. Receiving Criticism

Stuart, a supervisor in your department, has accused you of never listening to his ideas.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on receiving criticism, see Appendix B, pg. 41.

4. Giving Criticism

Ann is suppose to have her weekly reports completed and on your desk by 4:00 p.m. each Wednesday. You are not getting them until Friday afternoon.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on giving criticism, see Appendix B, pg. 43.



5. Communicating What Needs to Be Done and the Consequences for Doing and Not Doing It

Grace, one of your sales representatives, is responsible for submitting a proposal to an important client by 3:00 next Friday. If the report is written effectively and submitted by the deadline, your company is likely to land a very lucrative contract.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on communicating needs, see Appendix B, pg. 45.

6. Handling Conflict with Peers, Employees and Bosses

In staff meetings, Douglas, one of your colleagues and also a manager, frequently says in response to the suggestions you make, "That will never work," without giving your idea a chance.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on handling conflict, see Appendix B, pg. 46.



7. Receiving Compliments

Arnold, your manager, thanks you for your idea that cut production costs and made it easier for employees to meet production quotas.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on receiving compliments, see Appendix B, pg. 50.

8. Giving Positive Feedback

You are pleased with the extra effort Victor gave by working additional hours to finish a project on time.

You say:

A situation I encounter:

For more information on giving positive feedback, see Appendix B, pg. 51.



Appendix A — How Assertive Are You?

In each of the situations that follow, you're expected to measure your reaction in two ways.

Degree of Discomfort

In Column A, you should rate the degree of discomfort you would feel in behaving that way, using the 1 to 5 scale.

- 1** - none or not applicable
- 2** - a little
- 3** - a fair amount
- 4** - a lot
- 5** - a great deal

Response Probability

In Column B, you should rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how often you could see yourself behaving in that particular way.

- 1** - always do it
- 2** - usually do it
- 3** - do it half the time
- 4** - rarely do it
- 5** - never do it



Appendix A — How Assertive Are You?

1 = none

2 = a little

3 = a fair amount

4 = much

5 = very much

		Degree of Discomfort	Response Probability
1.	Turn down a request to borrow your car.		
2.	Compliment a friend.		
3.	Ask a favor of someone.		
4.	Resist sales pressure.		
5.	Apologize when you are at fault.		
6.	Turn down a request for a meeting.		
7.	Admit fear and request consideration.		
8.	Tell a person you are intimately involved with when he/she says or does something that bothers you.		
9.	Ask for a raise.		
10.	Admit ignorance in some area.		
11.	Turn down a request to borrow money.		
12.	Ask personal questions.		
13.	Turn off a talkative friend.		
14.	Ask for constructive criticism.		
15.	Initiate a conversation with a stranger.		
16.	Compliment a person you are close to of the opposite sex.		
17.	Request a meeting with a person.		
18.	Your initial request for a meeting is turned down and you ask the person again at a later time.		
19.	Admit confusion about a point under discussion and ask for clarification.		
Subtotals			



Appendix A — How Assertive Are You?

1 = none

2 = a little

3 = a fair amount

4 = much

5 = very much

		Degree of Discomfort	Response Probability
20.	Apply for a job.		
21.	Ask whether you have offended someone.		
22.	Tell someone that you like them.		
23.	Request expected service when such is not forthcoming; e.g., in a restaurant.		
24.	Discuss openly with the person his/her criticism of your behavior.		
25.	Return defective items, e.g., store or restaurant.		
26.	Express an opinion that differs from that of the person you are talking to.		
27.	Resist sexual overtures when you are not interested.		
28.	Tell the person when you feel he/she has done something that is unfair to you.		
29.	Tell someone good news about yourself.		
30.	Resist pressure to drink.		
31.	Resist a significant person's unfair demand.		
32.	Quit a job.		
33.	Discuss openly with the person his/her criticism of your work.		
34.	Request the return of borrowed items.		
35.	Receive compliments.		
36.	Continue to converse with someone who disagrees with you.		
37.	Tell a friend or someone with whom you work when he/she says or does something that bothers you.		
38.	Ask a person who is annoying you in a public situation to stop.		
	Subtotals 1:		
	Subtotals 2:		
	Totals:		



Appendix A — How Assertive Are You?

When you have finished making these two sets of personal measurements, you will have two columns of numbers. Total these two columns so that you have two sums, one indicating your “discomfort degree” and the other indicating your “response probability.”

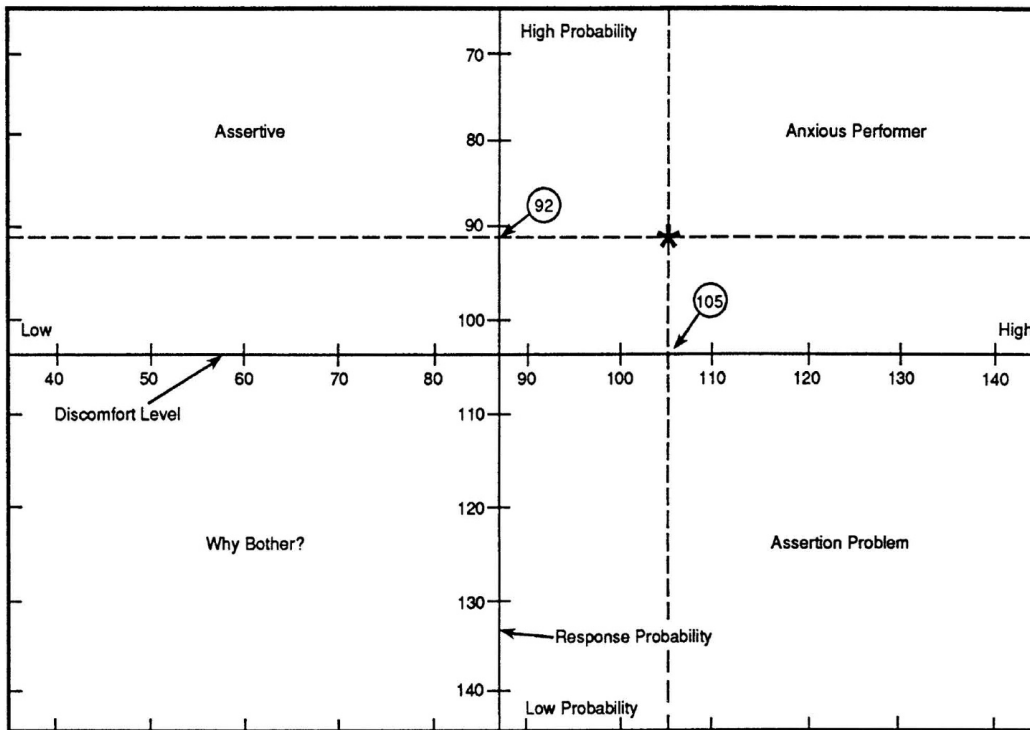
Now, using these totals, plot your personal “assertiveness” position on the ASSERTION SCALE. This scale is designed to show you not only how assertive you are in your day-to-day interactions with others but also how effective your particular assertiveness level is, not just in terms of your motivational impact on others but also in terms of your own internal sense of well-being.

To identify where you stand with respect to these variables, first take the Degree of Discomfort total and identify that number on the horizontal axis of the chart. Draw a vertical straight line through that point.

Then take the Response Probability total and see where it falls on the vertical axis of the chart. Draw a horizontal line through the point.

The place where the two lines you have drawn intersect is your position on this Assertion Scale.

Source: *How to Motivate People: The Team Strategy for Success*, Fran Tarkenton. Harper and Row, Philadelphia, PA, 1986





Interpretation

The Assertion Scale is divided into four equal segments, or quadrants. Here is how we interpret the general behavior patterns that fall into each of the four quadrants:

The “Why Bother?” Quadrant:

If you find yourself in this quadrant, it is likely that both your discomfort level with regard to threatening or disconcerting situations and your assertiveness in dealing with those situations are low. That is, you tend not to assert yourself in compromising social situations, but you experience little anxiety about denying yourself this option, because few of those situations seem to you to warrant a more assertive response. This could indicate that you’re a very passive, retiring personality, or it could indicate that you have such a philosophical approach to social conflict that you’re willing to take a back seat, even when the actual situation doesn’t warrant it. Generally speaking, those who find themselves in the “Why Bother?” quadrant, are ineffective at motivating others, and not especially interested in becoming more effective.

The “Assertion Problem” Quadrant:

If you are in this quadrant, you have, like the “Why Bother?” person, a low probability of reacting assertively to socially threatening situations. But unlike the “Why Bother?” person, this is likely to cause you some grief. Since there is a conflict between the high discomfort level that you feel with regard to disturbing situations and the low response level in those situations, you are likely to feel pressured and resentful in situations where the “Why Bother?” person would simply feel resigned to his/her fate. We say that a person in this quadrant may have an “Assertion Problem” not because he or she simply fails to respond, but because that failure to respond is causing internal anxiety for him/her— an anxiety that is bound to come out in the public arena as well, and to make him/her a less effective motivator or communicator than he/she otherwise might be.



The “Anxious Performer” Quadrant:

In the “Anxious Performer” quadrant, you show a high degree of discomfort over difficult social interactions, and an equivalently high degree of probability that you will react in an assertive manner anyway. That is, you are perfectly willing to behave assertively, but you are not able to do so without incurring internal anxiety; you stand up for your rights at all times, yet this gives you little personal satisfaction, because you feel yourself continually on the defensive, and are not capable of drawing a healthy balance between speaking up and letting things slide. You find this syndrome of anxious performance a lot in highly motivated people who are never fully satisfied with their performance. They often behave in an energetic, but self-destructive, manner — like the newspaper writer whom Harry Truman once called “a four-ulcer man on a two-ulcer job.”

The “Assertive” Quadrant:

In this quadrant, you achieve a reasonable balance between discomfort about social pressures and assertive response to those pressures. Your anxiety level in the face of social threats is lower than that of the Anxious Performer, but the likelihood that you will stand up for your rights when threatened is higher than that of the person who says, “Why Bother?” Therefore, you draw the appropriate balance between the two equally unproductive extremes of fight and flight.



Saying No

You will spend more time and energy on top priority tasks by saying no to those requests that do not fall in your area of responsibility. You will not only be seen as an effective manager, but will also more likely experience joy at work by saying “no” to unreasonable demands for your time. A willingness to say “no” will contribute to your level of self-esteem and will earn the respect of others.

Describe a situation in which it is difficult for you to say “no.”

What are the consequences when you say “yes” and you want to say “no?”

What do you attempt to avoid by saying “yes” when you want to say “no?”



Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Say “Yes” or “No”

- Do I understand the complete request?
- Why do I want to do this?
- Does it feel right?
- From my perspective, is it a reasonable request?

How to Say “No” Effectively

1. Feedback the request you have heard.
2. Confirm that what is being requested is important.
3. Explain your circumstances.
4. Say “no” and mean it.
5. Offer an alternative if possible.
6. Use the “broken record” if necessary.
7. Don’t answer if asked why.
8. Use non-verbal messages that support your verbal “no.”

Following these guidelines, write an assertive “no” response to the situation you described earlier



Setting Limits

The assertive manager knows the importance of setting limits. When limits are poorly defined, or are defined clearly but not enforced, results are broken rules, missed deadlines, a lack of respect for the manager, absenteeism and tardiness. The manager who skillfully establishes limits will get things done on time, increase morale, increase mutual respect and decrease the frequency of absenteeism and tardiness.

How to Set Limits Effectively

Talk about it privately with the person or persons involved.

1. Describe specifically what the problem is.
2. Avoid put-downs.
3. Identify your limits and what you expect.
4. Describe the benefits for them for honoring the limits.
5. Describe the consequences for not honoring the limits.
6. Acknowledge the importance of their input. Ask for information.
7. Listen.
8. Decide.
9. Set the limits.
10. Follow up.



The following are situations in which the manager needs to establish, or reestablish, limits.

Write how you could assertively set limits for the employees described below.

- You have just proofread a letter that is to be sent out over your name. There are several errors, and this isn't the first time.

- Production is lagging behind schedule, and your employees are taking extra time for lunch and breaks.

- One of your valued employees is a computer whiz. His work is consistently accurate and thorough. However, he has been getting slower, and he has missed due dates. His being late with his work forces others to be late with theirs. You are aware of the gripes and complaints about his lateness.

- Describe a setting limits situation you need to deal with at work.

- How can you set limits in this situation in an effective way?



Receiving Criticism

The assertive manager is willing to sort the criticism he/she receives and reject that which doesn't fit and accept that which does. A by-product of the healthy self-respect of assertive managers is that there is no need to become angry or to feel guilty when being criticized. They approach criticism in a positive way and explore the criticism as a means to eliminate a problem. This approach will often lead to an open discussion of the root cause of the criticism and may aid in reaching a mutually agreed upon solution to the problem. Such an approach is a dramatic contrast to the defensive, hostile response of an aggressive manager and the guilty, self-demeaning response of a passive manager.

Ideas to Keep in Mind as You Are Being Criticized

1. Reflect the criticism to make sure you understand it.
2. Decide who owns the problem.
3. Don't exaggerate the criticism.
4. Refuse to interpret the criticism as a personal attack.
5. Criticism does not diminish your value as a human being.
6. Make it OK for someone not to like you.



Appendix B — Assertive Skills Practice

Describe a criticism you have received and may receive again.

List some things you want to keep in mind when faced with this criticism.

Write a response to this criticism.



Giving Criticism

There are few skills more important to the effectiveness of a manager than that of offering constructive criticism. An assertive manager criticizes in a way that is forthright without eliciting defensiveness in the receiver. He/she conveys critical information and at the same time respects the basic worth of the individual criticized.

Principles for Constructive Feedback

1. Have data in hand and know it.
2. Address the issue; don't attack the person.
3. Address only one issue at a time.
4. Describe the behavior or give examples; don't label the person.
5. Do not diminish the receiver's worth as a human being.
6. Accept the role of helper, supporter, coach.
7. Don't overkill!
8. Listen!
9. Speak privately.



Appendix B — Assertive Skills Practice

Which of the previous principles does each of the following statements of criticism violate?

Write in the number of principle violated. There will be more than one violation in each statement.

	Tom you have to be the laziest man I have ever seen! Isn't that true, John? Have you seen anyone more slothful than Tom, here? Tom, you had better straighten up, or I've got your neck!
	I know you hardly ever meet the production schedule. I don't have the records right here, but...
	You are one of the slowest people I've ever had to work with.
	You did it wrong, and I don't want to talk about it.
	You raise your voice with clients. You're behind in the filing. I can't read your writing, and you were late twice this week!
	You college graduates are all alike — no common sense!
	You are not calling on enough customers.
	Well, you've messed up again. Don't come to me for help!



Handling Conflict With Employees, Peers and Bosses

Assertive managers understand that conflict is normal and healthy. How they handle conflict reflects the value of their relationships, they feel that conflict is developmental.

How to Handle Conflict with Employees and Peers

- 1. Person**—who?
- 2. Triggering behavior** — Describe the behavior.
- 3. Usual response** — What is your usual response to the behavior?
- 4. Usual results** — What do they do in response to #3?
- 5. Alternatives** — **Seek alternate responses to replace your usual response.**
- 6. Hesitations** — Why do you hesitate to try your new response?
- 7. Justifications** — Can you justify your hesitancy?
- 8. Strategy** — Develop a strategy for dealing with the conflict.
- 9. Preparation** — Rehearse your strategy.
- 10. Actual plan** — Make arrangements to follow through on your plan.
- 11. Implementation** — Do it!
- 12. Assessment** — Evaluate the effectiveness of your new responses.



How to Handle Conflict with Boss

1. Watch for some traditional errors of perception.

- **Past experience/conditioning**

Don't let your past experiences with this boss distort how you treat him/her now.

- **Expectations**

What you expect him/her to do, you will force him/her to do. If you expect the boss to be difficult, you will interpret anything he/she does as being difficult.

- **Emotions**

Deal with the problem when you are in control of your emotions.

- **Values**

Don't let differing values interfere with a positive approach to your boss.

2. Refuse to get caught up in the power differential.

- You can't require, but you can always request.
- The disarming tactic is often your best ally. "This is difficult for me to talk about."
- Use a non-threatening declaration. "I need your help."
- Find a better way to say, "I disagree." "In my opinion..." "As I see it..."
- Ask questions designed to help you understand his/her position.
- Know when to drop an issue.



Illustration

You are the new manager of a work unit. You like your job and you are a good manager. You've been on the job long enough to establish your professional credibility with your boss and your subordinates.

Lately you have become irritated by a change in your supervisor's behavior. It seems that whenever you pass along instructions to your people, he/she comes right behind you and contradicts your instructions. Naturally, since your boss is in a higher position, your people do as he/she says.

You look like a figurehead. You're disappointed, angry and insulted. You decide to talk to the boss about it. Here's how you go about it.

1. Start with a disclosure message.

You:

"Boss, a problem exists that affects you and me and my staff and how we interact. It may be difficult to talk about, but I'd like to think that our relationship is strong enough for me to be really honest with you. Can we discuss it right now?"

2. Watch out for conditional acceptance.

Boss:

"That depends on what you want to talk about."

3. Don't settle for less than unconditional acceptance.

You:

"I'm really uncomfortable with that. It sounds like I'm in big trouble if you don't like the subject I bring up."



4. Once you get the right level of acceptance, then go on to the ownership message and identify:

- The need for help.
- The problem.
- The people.
- The need for a solution.

You:

"I need your help. I'm concerned that my people are being confused. I give them instructions and often they get a conflicting set of instructions right behind the first. They aren't sure which to follow. It makes me look as if I don't know what I am doing. I feel disappointed and upset about that. I would like for us to work this out more satisfactorily."

5. Watch for a threatened response.

Boss:

"Are you telling me that I'm the cause of your problem?"

6. Stand your "I" ground.

You:

"I'm telling you I'm concerned about my people receiving conflicting sets of instructions."

7. You may have to use the "broken record."

8. Stay with it until a firm decision is made.

9. Monitor subsequent events to assure that the desired behavior change is enacted.

10. Reinitiate the process if you're not satisfied.



Receiving Compliments

Most people have been taught as children to be modest and not be boastful. Consequently, as adults they often deny a compliment or act embarrassed when they receive one. The sender may feel discounted or discredited.

Guidelines for Responding to Compliments

1. **Do** consider responses similar to these.

“Thank you. I appreciate your saying that.”

“Thanks, I like it, too!”

“Thanks for noticing. I did work very hard for it.”

“Thank you. That makes me feel good.”

Smile and nod appreciation

2. **Don’t** discount the compliment.

“Anybody could have done it.”

“It was nothing.”

“I was just doing my job.”

3. **Do** take credit and give credit where credit is due.

“Thanks, it was a real team effort.”

“Thanks. Did you know Sue helped?”

“Thanks, I really appreciated your support.”

Write an assertive response you could give to the following compliments.

“You certainly did a quality job getting the project in on time. I didn’t think it was humanly possible!”

“I want to thank you for the way you handled that angry customer. He was furious, but you handled it well!”



Giving Positive Feedback

Assertive managers give positive feedback often. It is one of the most powerful tools they have to help others do what needs to be done. Managers who focus on positive feedback are more likely to be listened to when they must give negative feedback.

Guidelines for Giving Positive Feedback

1. Be sure you have data.
2. Be specific.
3. Identify the effect of what has or has not been done.
4. Share how you feel about it.
5. Give the feedback in a way that is reinforcing to the recipient!

Identify individuals at work who deserve feedback. Keeping the guidelines in mind, develop your message to them.

Person #1

Person #2

Person #3