MANAGEMENT FUNDAMENTALS, SESSION 3

Managing Upwards: How to Effectively Engage your Supervisors to Advance your Professional Goals

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* Excerpts from presentation by Linda Netsch, Stanford Law School
Learning Goals:

• Exploration of the most common “difficult” conversations and why they’re so difficult

• Understanding of the most common behavior patterns when giving/receiving feedback

• Recommendations on how to develop better patterns to effectively manage upwards

Anything else?
Your Difficult Conversations

• Focus on conversations which YOU experience as very difficult – for whatever reason

• Conversations which you either avoid or tend to manage badly – or both

• Explore what makes those conversations difficult for you
1st Things First

• A word about confidentiality….

• Give feedback and/or respond to feedback for the r-i-g-h-t reasons

• Know yourself and your patterns

• “Practice makes perfect”

• Know your ABC’s
The ABC’s of Assertiveness

Action

Belief

Consequence
What is assertiveness to you?
Common Behavior Patterns

• Passive
• Aggressive
• Passive Aggressive
• Assertive
Monitor Your “Zones” Carefully

**Comfort Zone:** Where the person with whom you work is most comfortable

**Zone of Intolerance:** Where you feel most comfortable

**Zone of Tolerance:** Both parties feel a little discomfort but it is a *tolerable* amount of discomfort
Barriers to Assertive Behavior Pattern?

- Cultural differences
- Organizational “rules”
- Gender role stereotypes
- Not being prepared
- Low self-esteem
- Belief that there is no choice in the matter
- Lack of assertiveness on others’ parts
- Old habits die hard!
It’s your choice!

But, how?
| Effective | Less Effective |
Key Skills

You must effectively engage what they are really thinking and feeling.

And, you must manage what you are thinking and feeling.
Three Aspects of Difficult Conversations

What Happened?
Who’s right? Whose fault?
What are their intentions?

Feelings
What do we do with the strong feelings we have?

Identity
How does this situation challenge my self-perception and theirs?
### “What Happened?” - 3 Helpful Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Truth</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>Contributions</td>
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<td>Intent = Impact</td>
<td>Intent ≠ Impact</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
<td>vs.</td>
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<td>An <strong>Observation</strong> is neutral, clear, and specific - is usually either true or false</td>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong> is a statement of opinion and perception</td>
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Observations vs. Assessments

- John fails to get people to deliver on time.

- John’s presentation was due on Wednesday but was not finished until Friday.

- Two members of John’s team were not aware of the Wednesday deadline.
Ladder of Inference

Conclusions
The bottom line, e.g., “You handled that so badly.”

Reasoning & Interpretations
Why? What’s my underlying reasoning?

Selected Data
What data is my conclusion based on?
What do I notice? What do I ignore?
What might they know that I don’t know?

Developed by Chris Argyris of Harvard Business School and Don Schon of MIT
Explore Different Perceptions

Conclusions

Reasoning

Data

Their Ladder

My Ladder

Conclusions

Reasoning

Data
Blame to Contributions
Blame vs. Contributions

Whose Fault?  What Punishment?

My Contribution  Improve Together  Your Contribution

Blame  Contributions
Common, Less Obvious Contributions

- Not listening
- Not saying anything until now
- Being unapproachable
- Being unclear
- Presenting mixed messages…content/tone
- Choosing a mode of communication that didn’t get through (voicemail, e-mail)
- Not providing appreciation or feedback
Contributions

Most Problems Result From More Than One Factor

• Share how you see the problem

• Take responsibility for your own contribution

• Ask how they see the problem and contributions

• Ask how you can each change your contributions to improve
Intentions matter. But other people’s intentions are invisible to us.

So we make up attributions about their intentions based on the impact on us.

We often assume the worst.

We sometimes miss our impact on them.
Disentangling Intent and Impact

What we do know:

- Our own intentions (positive, neutral, negative)
- The impact of their behavior on us

What we don’t know:

- Their intentions
- The impact of our behavior on them
Advice

• Let go of knowing or proving their intentions.

• Be clear about your own intentions - decide whether to share.

• Explain negative impacts on you without attributing bad intentions.

• Listen for and acknowledge the negative impacts they experienced.
Advice On Communicating Decisions

Don’t Leave an Intentions Vacuum

People fill an intentions vacuum with negative attributions

When decisions are made:
- Don’t assume others will understand your intentions
- Offer data and reasoning
- Explain why choices that may appear more attractive were discarded
• “No”

• “I know that you are saying this because you care, but I don’t believe it is best for me”

• “What I am saying is....”

• “I am going to need to think about this and get back to you”

• “When you say this, I feel....”

• “In working with your busy schedule, let me know when/where/how we will next be able to meet”
Putting Theory into Practice

PI/Post-doc Scenario
Quick Tips: Giving Feedback/Confronting a Problem

• Start with clarification *not* assumptions
• Be specific
• Use “I” statements
• Confront the problem right away and in person
• Discuss one problem at a time
• Gently point out inconsistencies
• Acknowledge feelings and responses *nonjudgementally*
• Offer ideas for change or explain possible consequences
• Avoid power struggles or being manipulated into giving positive feedback
Quick Tips: Responding to Feedback and Confrontation

• It’s not always personal!

• Pay attention to the message, not the format

• Ask for specifics

• Talk to someone you trust about the feedback (not for the purpose of gossip)
“Special” Circumstances

- Salary Negotiation
- Overt Aggression, Borderline Violence
- Sexual Harassment

ANYTHING ELSE?
“Special” Circumstances: Taking CARE of You

Cut it off
Assert yourself
Report
Vacuate and/or Elevate
Resources:

- Assertiveness resources handout
- Ombudsman Office or department head
- Other managers/professors
- Counseling and mediation are always options
Next Week: *Negotiation Theory and Practice I*