

How to ask for what you want at work

Jane Stephenson; Anne Galloway



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1st edition

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ISBN 978-87-403-0735-1

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Preface

Do you know someone who appears extremely confident and who always seems to get what they ask for?

You have probably noticed people at work, school, and in your daily life that always appear to be self-confident and on top of world. Everything seems to go right for these people and they always seem to present themselves as calm, collected and successful in everything they do.

So how do they do it?

Self-confident people are usually great communicators and they understand the impact of believing in themselves and relying on their abilities; this confidence ultimately creates opportunities for success. Unlike many of us who struggle to articulate our message about what it is we want to achieve and how others can help us, confident people are able to clearly and succinctly specify exactly what it is they want and this is central to their success.

The following chapters take you on a journey of self-discovery. You will learn how to articulate your message so that you: can say “no” to taking on extra work; so that you can delegate; ask for a pay rise or promotion; get your new team to follow your lead; be heard and get your needs met within an organisation.

You will be given the opportunity to analyse your own personal communication style as well as the tools to help you adjust your style to effectively enable you to ask for what it is you want. By taking a new approach to the way you communicate, you will develop the skills to communicate assertively so that you can increase the chances of getting what you want.

With the use of examples, you will be shown how to properly prepare to ask for what you want which will not only help to boost your confidence levels significantly but also increase your chance of getting the outcome you want.

Finally, no matter what it is you want to ask for at work, you will need to know how to negotiate effectively and this book will provide you with the tools for creating the ultimate win/win solution.

And, while you can't force dreams to happen, you *can* take the steps outlined in this book toward making them a reality.

1 From dream scenario to reality

We would all like to think that we are great communicators, after all how hard can it be? We started talking at around two years of age and have been developing our communication skills ever since, with parents and siblings, playmates and school friends, through first loves to break ups. We have manipulated, cajoled, pouted and experimented to prove to ourselves that the test of how good we are at communicating is whether people act on our words.

The usual tactics we use in personal relationships are sometimes not effective or appropriate in a work situation, however. We spend up to a third of our lives at work whether work is a corporate role or a not for profit organisation, as a government official or in a commercial concern. Maybe work is as an independent business owner employing staff, or running a one man show. Wherever we work and for whomever we work we will spend our whole time there communicating what we want at work.

And what do we want from work? We all want to be valued at work. We expect to get positive feedback at our annual appraisal, we hope to get promoted because we feel we have deserved it, we want to receive wages commensurate with our worth. We want respect, we want our staff to carry out our requests, and we want to be heard.

So now is the time to be honest. When you think about what you want from work are you always able to achieve it? Are you always the perfect communicator? Let's take an example of how communication can go wrong.

Some years ago when Jane felt really under pressure in the run up to a big family Christmas she talked to her partner about how she felt, swamped by work, trying to get everything done before the family hordes invaded for the holidays. Jane felt they had really connected, and her partner definitely understood that she needed him to help her. The next day he gave her an early Christmas present – an electronic organizer! Jane had thought she had been asking him to take over some of the many tasks on her to-do list and her partner had understood that Jane wanted to be able to plan her time more easily. We leave you to imagine Jane's reaction to her present!

At work however such a miscommunication may be more difficult to resolve. You may feel unable to address the issue with someone because they are more senior to you, or you don't want to hurt their feelings. You may feel you find it difficult to connect with someone, which makes it harder to bring a particular subject up. You are not sure of someone's reaction to a plan or suggestion you want to make, so you put off tackling the issue entirely.

It would be great if you could sweep away those doubts and uncertainties and allow yourself to just say what you want to say. The key to this is knowing yourself and how you feel most comfortable communicating. Once you have done that then it's time to build your confidence in your own abilities to connect, communicate and negotiate.

Shakespeare wrote "Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered" and you will have more chance of success if you make a conscious effort to improve your communication skills and plan your encounters rather than relying on a chance meeting by the water cooler and a big smile to get what you want. Find out what your personal communication style is to begin building your self-confidence towards getting exactly what you want at work.

2 Why the reality happens

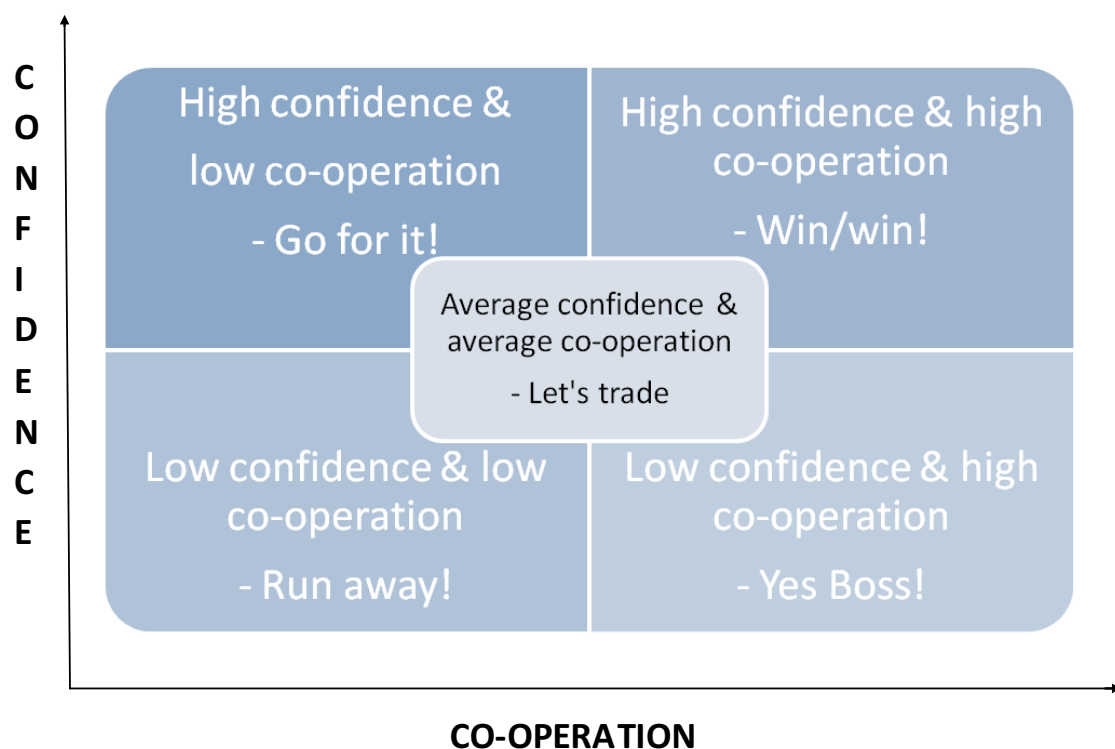
2.1 Personal Communication styles

We generally have a prevailing communication style. In normal day to day situations this communication style works for you, you feel comfortable with your interactions, and people are used to you and the way you communicate with them. No one style is right or wrong and each style provides a benefit to both you and the person you are communicating with.

We begin to have problems when communication does not go smoothly and we are left with the feeling that we could have handled our part of a discussion differently. We feel uncomfortable, and even emotional.

I know we are talking about feelings, but here is a bit of science for you:

The graphic below shows the five communication styles, which develop along two axis. For the numeric amongst us, the Y axis shows the level of cooperation you are willing to give in a situation, and the X axis shows the level of self-confidence you have in a given situation. Recognising these 5 communication styles will help you the next time you get into an uncomfortable situation.



We can summarise the five communication styles as follows:

Go for it!

When you are convinced you are right, do you “Go For it”? Your confidence overpowers the other parties in a discussion or conflict, and you drive home your opinion as to the “right” or “best” approach.

As a strategy this competitive attitude is very effective when a decision or action needs to be taken urgently. It is how a doctor takes control of an emergency situation, or commands are issued in the army. It works because all parties recognize the power relationships within the group and know that action is imperative. However, it is a temporary answer to resolving a discussion or conflict.

If you find you are often involved in discussion, or that discussion often leads to conflict, it could be time to look at how you approach discussions. Are you really listening to what the other person is trying to say?

Run away!

Is there anyone who has not taken the option to avoid a conflict situation in the workplace? I know I have done this. I also know people who do this all the time: “Run Away” from a problem that needs to be addressed.

But when is it good to run away, and when should you stand your ground? Avoidance can create conflict or make a heated situation worse. But on the other hand avoidance can be of benefit to you if you are not part of the problem or part of the solution.

Ask yourself what are you running away from? If the answer is that you are uncomfortable with your feelings around the conflict, take a moment to find out why. Are you fearful of the reaction if you dare to say something? Are you fearful of showing your own emotions in this conflict situation? Is your confidence low and you don't think you will be heard if you do speak out? If these questions apply to you, then its time find out how to raise your confidence levels.

On the other hand, if you feel the conflict is nothing to do with you, then good as it is not always your responsibility to “fix” every conflict that arises in your home or workplace.

Yes boss!

The overconfident communicator can only be successful if there is someone who cooperates fully with them. Being cooperative is a very valuable skill, work tasks run smoothly and relationships are harmonious. When there is a threat of conflict, cooperation maintains good relationships, even if tempers become frayed.

However always saying “Yes Boss” won’t keep everyone happy all the time. Giving in to the demands of others leads to an unequal relationship. That confident go-getter will walk all over you and the only one who suffers is you. If you do not have the confidence to express your opinion, ask for what you want and negotiate practical solutions to problems affecting you, your feelings of frustration and resentment will generate your own internal conflict.

Let’s trade!

You have got more confidence than someone who is a yes man, and you are more cooperative than the go getter, so trading is well within your comfort zone. You are reasonable, listen to the other person, and make concessions in order to reach agreement.

As a strategy it works best when there is little time, and there are immediate benefits for both sides. But although it seems that trading is a solution to a conflict, do you sometimes have a sneaky resentment when you think about what you had to give up in order to reach an agreement?

Where does this feeling come from? Basically from the belief that the result is finite, you are negotiating for a “slice of cake” and you feel your opposite number wins a bigger slice than you do. It means you need to defend your position.

Win / win!

With “Let’s trade” we talked about lingering resentment when you concede too much within a negotiating situation. This dissatisfaction will be removed in a win/win situation. If two people remove the idea that there is a limit to the benefits of negotiation, and work on solving the issues rather than beating the other person, then they will make great progress. Start by creating a feeling of trust and cooperation and work towards finding satisfactory solutions for both parties while keeping goals and values intact.

Now you know how to recognise these five communication styles it’s time to see where you sit on the graph and what you can do to help yourself before you get into a situation which leaves you dissatisfied with your part in the discussion.

3 Which style are you?

As we saw in the last chapter we each have our own way of dealing with conflict. The techniques we use are based on many variables such as our basic underlying temperament, our personality, our environment and where we are in our professional career. However, by and large there are five major styles of conflict management techniques available to us. We may “go for it”, “run away”, be a “yes boss”, “suggest “let’s trade” or attempt a “let’s both win” approach.

None of these strategies is better than any of the others. How effective they are depends on the context in which they are used. In this chapter we want to discover your own prevailing communication style, so that you know what strengths you can bring to a discussion, and which techniques may improve your communication style in the future.

On the next page is a communication style quiz with 15 statements. Each statement provides a strategy for dealing with a conflict. To find your prevailing communication style simply rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 4 indicating how likely you are to use this strategy.



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3.1 Communication style quiz

		1 = rarely	2 = sometimes	3 = often	4 = always
1	I explore issues with others so as to find solutions that meet everyone's needs.				
2	I try to negotiate and adopt a give-and-take approach to problem situations.				
3	I try to meet the expectations of others.				
4	I would argue my case and insist on the merits of my point of view.				
5	When there is a disagreement, I gather as much information as I can and keep the lines of communication open.				
6	When I find myself in an argument, I usually say very little and try to leave as soon as possible.				
7	I try to see conflicts from both sides. What do I need? What does the other person Need? What are the issues involved?				
8	I prefer to compromise when solving problems and just move on.				
9	I find conflicts challenging and exhilarating; I enjoy the battle of wits that usually follows.				
10	Being at odds with other people makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious.				
11	I try to accommodate the wishes of my friends and family.				
12	I can figure out what needs to be done and I am usually right.				
13	To break deadlocks, I would meet people halfway.				
14	I may not get what I want but it's a small price to pay for keeping the peace.				
15	I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself.				

Source: Reg Adkins, *Elemental Truths*

3.2 How to score the Communication Styles Quiz:

Now you have completed the quiz, it's time to reveal the results and find your personal communication style.

Each statement corresponds to one of the five styles. To find your most preferred style, total the points in each category. The one with the highest score indicates your most commonly used strategy. The one with the lowest score indicates your least preferred strategy.

Style Corresponding Statements:	Question no's.	Total:
Let's both win:	1, 5, 7	
Go For It:	4, 9, 12	
Run away:	6, 10, 15	
Yes Boss:	3, 11, 14	
Let's trade:	2, 8, 13	

While carrying out this exercise you may find your scores reflect a blend of styles, this is common in people who take a leadership role and regularly communicate effectively with different people at many different levels.

The prevailing communication style you use is the one that works for you in your day to day interactions, but if you begin to feel uncomfortable with your part in those interactions, and dissatisfied with the results of your communication attempts, it's time to do something about it, and the next chapter looks at how you can start to change.

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4 How to put that right

Acting the part!

You now know your prevailing communication style, but no matter what it is, if you find yourself complaining about the fact that a colleague isn't doing their fair share of the work or meeting deadlines, or that your boss is not putting you forward for a promotion, nothing will happen until you start to take action and let them know what it is you want by communicating clearly, directly, effectively and confidently.

Think about it, if you don't ask, you don't get and if you do ask and the answer isn't the one you were hoping for then at least you now know where you stand. It's time to stop worrying and divert the energy into taking action on what you have control over.

The first step to being able to do that is to take the time to write down precisely what it is you want and why. The next step is to silence that negative voice inside your head which is great at reducing your confidence levels by telling you exactly why you don't deserve to get what you want.

If you had all the confidence you believed you needed in order to be able to ask for what you want at work, how would you behave? How would other people know that you had all this confidence? Would it be in the manner in which you walked, talked and acted? Would your facial expressions give it away?

Of course, the answer is yes to the last two questions; it would be obvious from the way you walked, talked, and from your actions that you were a confident person. So, could you not just copy these actions and instantly start to feel more confident about approaching your boss? Of course you could!

Begin by thinking back to a time when you achieved something that you were very proud of and I'm sure that your posture will become more upright, a smile will probably appear on your face and you will look more relaxed. Your body language plays a big part on reflecting your confidence levels and because your mind, body and voice are so closely linked, just by changing one, you cannot help but change the others as well. For example, just by smiling, you can boost your mood and the tone of your voice will also become more cheerful.

Just thinking about a time when you were successful brings back the feel good factor; and what if you were to make a list of 20 positive things about yourself and/or what you have achieved? Think how this would boost your self-confidence. Doing this will enable you to at least act the part of feeling confident for long enough for you to ask for what it is you want.

Try following this quick guide to instant confidence the next time you have a meeting with your boss:

- When you walk in to their office, don't rush in, walk tall with your weight evenly distributed, shoulders back and down a little and relax your arms so they are not tense.
- Sit up straight and ensure that your body, legs, and head are facing your boss.
- Place both your feet firmly on the floor so you feel "grounded".
- Imagine a thread on the top of your head that is pulling you up as straight and tall as possible.
- Let your shoulders drop a little so they are down and back which makes them feel wider.
- Your hands and arms should be uncrossed and open.
- Smile.
- And when you have asked for what you want, stop talking and don't try to fill the silence that follows.

It sounds simple, doesn't it, and it is good to remember these tips as you go into a meeting that is important to you, but changing the way you communicate so that people who know you begin to see you as a more self assured and assertive person requires more. It is time to build on these tips to help you model your behaviour more consistently.

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5 Raising confidence levels

Your Confidence Role Model

So just how do you change your mind set and become more self assured and assertive? One way is to set up a role model. Do you have any heroes in your life? You know, the people that you admire the most. The people whom you say “I wish I could be like them” They could be actors, sports stars, even your parents or friends.

A lot of people try to copy and emulate what they do. Remember seeing the little boy copying his Dad when he is helping him with the DIY? Or the teenager who dresses like their favourite pop star?

You see, successful people leave us clues which we can emulate.

This is called modelling and by taking time to create and visualise your own role model, someone who has all the confidence you would like to have, you can copy their actions and behaviours to help you feel more confident in any situation.

A lot of your confidence worries and problems are down to the fact that you have been conditioned in the past to think and feel a certain way. This “Conditioning” is built up over all of the experiences in your life, your values, beliefs, successes, failures – you name it!

What we first need to do is to start to train your mind to accept the new confident you. We can do this by using a technique called visualisation.

Think about what it is you want to ask for and consider how your role model would deal with it. Find a quiet place and close your eyes then go through in your mind how your role model is dealing with the situation, it's as though they are right in front of you, think about the skills and behaviours they possess to be successful in the role you want to be promoted to for example:

- What do you think their attitudes, beliefs and values are?
- What are they saying?
- How are they saying it?
- How are they moving?
- What are their facial expressions?
- How are other people interacting with him/her?

Next, you need to see yourself in the position of your role model. See yourself as walking, talking, acting and moving your body in EXACTLY the same way as your role model just did.

- How does it feel to be this person?
- How are others reacting to you?
- How are you perceived by other people?

Have you ever seen any top athletes before a big race? They look completely focussed. They either have their eyes closed or look like they are in a trance. When they do this, they are in fact going through their mind and visualising how they are going to run the race.

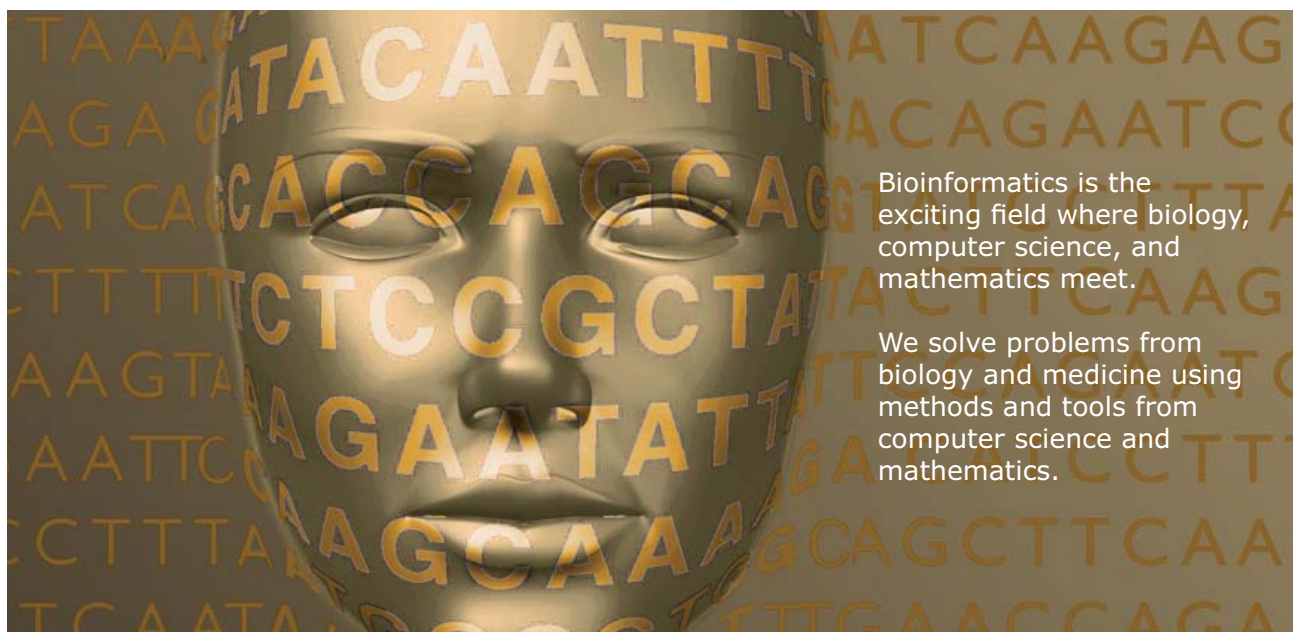
This is EXACTLY what you can do by visualising yourself asking for that promotion and getting a positive outcome, for example.

By first visualising and then copying your role model, you will be exhibiting all the skills and behaviours of a confident, successful person who adds value where the company needs it and therefore deserves to be promoted.

With the image of your role model in your head you will find it easier to ask for what you want at work and be able to put past unsatisfactory situations behind you.



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6 Knowing your triggers and how to act differently

It's time to forget history and approach each communication afresh, as if you had never spoken to this person before! Would you find this difficult?

Many people do. Your confidence is beaten down by the results of previous confrontations: you begin to second guess the results of this communication based on what has happened before in similar situations. Always remember you cannot control how someone reacts to your communication, but you can build your confidence before you communicate. Let's look at a case study and see how someone built her confidence in a real situation.

Case Study

Pauline had been working as a clinical project manager for the same company for several years. Her role was to initiate, monitor and report on clinical trials, manage a research team and implement procedures for best practice within clinical projects. Her work had resulted in her company winning contracts to trial various treatments for different medical conditions.

A change of management within the company meant that Pauline reported to a new director whose specialty was business development. He did not have a clinical background.

As their business relationship developed Pauline felt that he did not value her attention to detail which made her the ideal person to implement guidelines on best practice. When preparing proposals for new projects they sometimes clashed over the length of time she recommended to run a trial, or the size of the team needed to carry out the project.

Pauline's preferred communication style was to cooperate with her boss, but over time she began to feel very much like running away whenever she knew she was going into a meeting where she felt from experience her clinical judgment would be questioned.

Let's look at how she managed to change that feeling of low confidence as she went into her next meeting

There are three excellent ways to boost confidence at those crucial moments before you to deliver your message, or start a difficult communication. We need to develop positive feelings by looking at:

1. Your focus
2. Your body language
3. Your speech

let's see how Pauline did this:

1. What Pauline focused on

She became aware of the focus of her thoughts. To change her focus from negative to positive she asked herself the following questions:-

What would she have to focus on to feel vibrant and full of energy? What would she have to focus on to FEEL confident?

If she felt vibrant and energised right now, what was she thinking about?

Pauline remembered how she always felt full of energy walking along the beach near her house, as she thought about it she could almost breathe in the sea air, and feel the wind blowing in her hair. She felt the soft sand tugging at her feet, but knew she would soon be able to reach the firm sand and imagined herself striding out at the water's edge. She felt confident to tackle anything.

Change what you are thinking about and you WILL change your attitude and build your confidence.

2. Pauline's body language

Using the visualisation of the walk on the beach Pauline consciously adjusted her body language; her physiology.

As she walked towards her next meeting, she held her head high, and raised the tempo of her walk so it was purposeful but relaxed, no rushing into the meeting today! As she walked she took slow deep breaths, (breathing in this way helps to slow the heartbeat, which in turn helps you to feel more in control and more calm).

She decided in advance which of the two chairs available she would pick to sit in – and as she entered the room, moved directly to that seat, and sat calmly with both feet together and her hands on the arm of the chair – putting her papers on the table rather than clutching them across her body.

Taking these decisions and making these movements made her feel much more in control, and very much more calm than she normally felt.

You know, emotion is created by motion! The fewer movements you make the less energy you will have! And also the type of movements that you make will have an impact on whether you feel energised and ready to tackle a difficult situation, or whether you want to avoid it!


3. Pauline's speech

Pauline had already raised her confidence levels considerably before she needed to say her first words, but she chose then to greet her boss calmly and pleasantly with a slight smile.

She kept the tone of her voice steady, and pitched her voice low, she knew that if she got nervous it would rise in pitch, and even hearing the tone helped her confidence.

The meeting went well, she was able to present her points using positive language, and felt the change in her boss's responses as she was able to communicate assertively without sounding aggressive or defensive.

Pauline's approach can help you too, and if you check that you are adjusting your focus, body language and speech, you will also find your confidence building before you go into a situation which could intimidate you. Let's address how you can now communicate assertively; confident you can communicate effectively with the people you need to.



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7 Assertive communication

The title of this chapter refers to the language to use in assertive communication, however before we talk about language, we need to address something very important – 95% of language is *Non-verbal*! In the same way that you boosted your own confidence levels by changing your body language, learning to read body language is extremely important in building rapport with the person you need to communicate with and in reinforcing the messages you want to communicate to them.

Building rapport is a vital element to concluding a successful communication. There are many ways to do this, but a good start is to use a non-verbal technique you can practice in social situations first before adding it to your armoury of effective communication at work. The technique is called mirroring.

Mirroring

Case Study

Jim showed very dominant behaviour in the office, but varied his behaviour depending upon whether he was talking to a male or female colleague.

With female colleagues he was flirtatious, perhaps even a little chauvinistic, but it tended to get him what he needed, as he was superior to them, and asking someone to do something with a smile and a wink got him further than giving a direct order.

With men he was different however; he tended to dominate an area, physically taking a lot of space, maybe blocking the exit to the room by standing in the doorway, or leaning back expansively in his chair, arms behind head. It was very hard to introduce new plans or different ideas when he was in this mood.

One day one male colleague, Pete, decided to try a new tactic. As they sat and chatted before introducing the topic Pete wanted to discuss Jim started to lean back in his chair, and he crossed one ankle over the other knee.

Pete, slightly mirrored that position, and followed Jim's hand movement as he picked up a pen. And later again as Jim rubbed his chin. Then Pete shifted his position, putting both feet on the floor, and leaning slightly forward. Unconsciously Jim copied HIM, and Pete knew he was ready to listen to his discussion now!

This non-verbal mirroring really helps build rapport, in the same way as chitchat about football, or your journey to the meeting can help; but as we said before, non-verbal cues can develop your verbal message in several ways.

Nonverbal communication cues can play five roles:

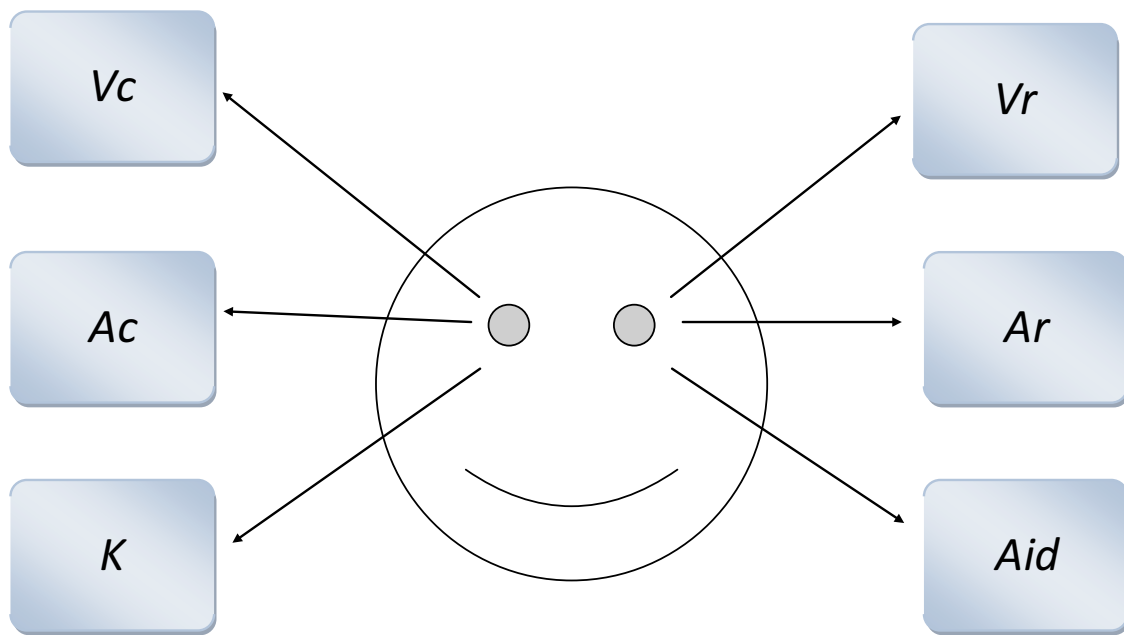
- **Repetition:** they can repeat the message the person is making verbally
- **Contradiction:** they can contradict a message the individual is trying to convey
- **Substitution:** they can substitute for a verbal message. For example, a person's eyes can often convey a far more vivid message than words and often do
- **Complementing:** they may add to or complement a verbal message. A boss who pats a person on the back in addition to giving praise can increase the impact of the message
- **Accenting:** they may accent or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline a message.

Sometimes it's relatively simple to read someone's body language and pick up cues about how they are really thinking; If you find it difficult to understand someone's non-verbal signals, or if you are communicating with someone who gives very little away, don't you think it would be great to be able to read what they are thinking from looking into their eyes? You can if you adapt one of the fundamentals of NLP or Neuro linguistic programming. Picking up information from a person's eye movements is known as "eye accessing cues".

Eye accessing cues:

It is perhaps a little more complex to begin with than watching someone's hand movements, but it gives a good connection if you can do it. NLP recognises a fundamental connection between the way we move our bodies and our thoughts. The way we move our eyes tends to show our thinking strategies, and when we tap into this we can really increase the effectiveness of our communications.

By matching the words a person uses to his eye movements you can work out which cues correspond to which rep systems. Once you know that you can tell exactly what patterns the person uses to think, see diagram overleaf.



The above diagram shows the NLP rep systems. As you look at someone eye movements to the left indicate that the person is recalling something from memory; whereas eye movements to the right show they are creating or constructing a new concept.

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The full breakdown is as follows:

Name	symbol	Use
Visual constructed	Vc	Used to create visual images
Visual remembered	Vr	Used to access visual memories
Auditory constructed	Ac	Used to imagine new sounds
Auditory remembered	Ar	Used to access memories of sound
Auditory Internal	Aid	Use to generate language, or “that little voice in your head” Sometimes called ID internal dialogue
Kinaesthetic	K	Used to access feelings. This is actually a collection of rep systems and senses including emotions and body awareness
Olfactory	O	Used to access Sense of smell
Gustatory	G	Used to access sense of taste

As you pay more attention to signals other people send out, you’ll become more aware of how much their nonverbal communication reflects their models of the world. Matching a person’s external behaviour to their internal workings is called *calibration*.

The easiest way to start is to work with another person, and ask them some questions that presuppose that they think in certain ways. For example, to see what a person looks like when she’s thinking in pictures, ask her a question that requires her to make a mental image.

Here are some example questions for each rep system:

- **Vc** – How would you look if you dyed your hair?
- **Vr** – What colour is your car?
- **Ac** – Can you imagine what we’d sound like talking underwater?
- **Ar** – How does Beethoven’s ninth symphony start?
- **K** – How does your foot feel?
- **Aid** – What happens when you tell yourself you can do this?
- **O** – Do you know what ammonia smells like?
- **G** – What does chocolate taste like?

Try this out with a couple of willing “victims” and you begin to get a feel for reading how they are thinking. Once you feel more confident in using this technique you can bring it into situations where connecting with someone on a non-verbal level will help you connect with them better as you are conversing with them; and help you bring your point across with more assertively.

Assertive communication

Do you walk away from some situations feeling dissatisfied with your part in the transaction? Do you feel you have been manipulated, or lost out in some way? There are 5 steps we can use to help us communicate more assertively.

1. Use facts not judgments
2. When explaining the consequences, use fact here too
3. Talk in the 1st person “I would like it if you would”
4. When you (do this) I feel (this)
5. When you (do this) and what follows (the result) I feel (this)

When we look at this list, it becomes clear that it is very important to focus on ourselves, on our feelings, and on the facts. Doing this does two things:

1. It stops us from becoming judgmental, or exaggerating, or dramatising a situation.
2. It stops us thinking about the other person's reaction to our words.

- We stop thinking “what will he do if I do this...???”

So you see that whether non-verbal or verbal, developing an assertive communication style, very much depends on the language we use and you can use all this information when you start planning your next meeting!

8 Planning is everything

Now you know the most effective way to communicate, the next step is to create an action plan before your meeting. Being properly prepared not only boosts your confidence levels significantly but also increases your chance of getting the outcome you want. In addition, the timing of when you ask can also be very important. If your boss is rushing to a meeting, for example, then that is clearly not the time for you to put your case to him for a promotion.

You might be interested to know that even the most confident of people can lack confidence in certain situations which is why we are going to provide you with a few techniques and examples that will help you to ask for what you want. While we have linked these techniques to specific examples, any and all of them can be used to help you to ask for whatever it is you want.

8.1 Technique 1 – Positive thoughts/positive actions

New graduates who are being fast tracked by their company for example, may not contribute to discussions in meetings because they feel that everyone else is 'older and wiser' and so they keep quiet for fear of looking foolish or asking a 'stupid' question.

So how can you break this negative cycle of low confidence and replace it with more positive action?



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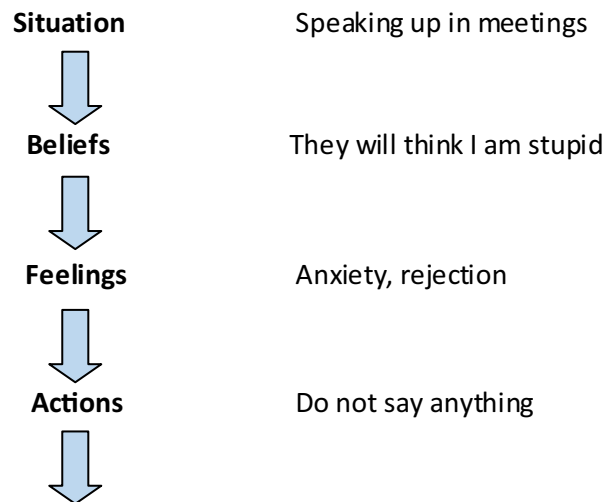
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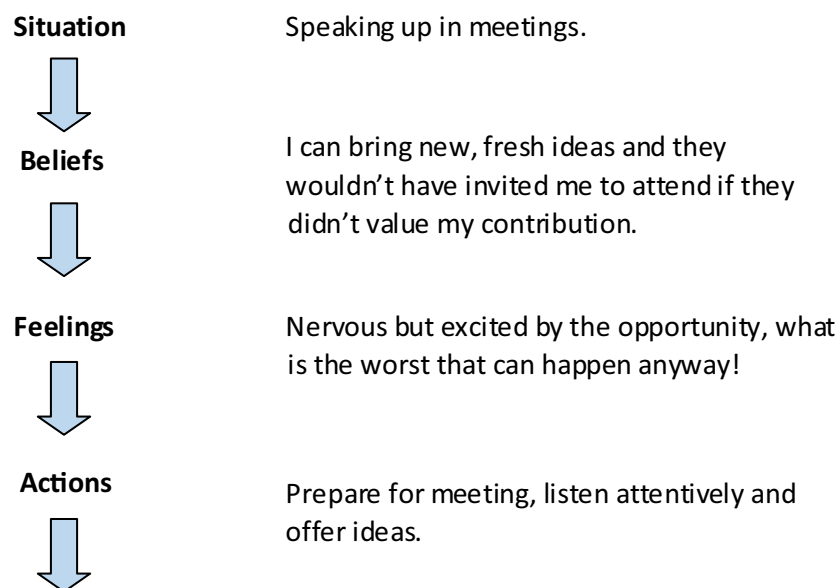
One way to do this is to try to identify the negative thoughts that you have in certain situations and see how they prevent you from taking positive action. This will enable you to breakdown the negative thinking and replace it with positive thoughts which will enable you to better manage these situations.

In order to show how this can work, we will use the example of Tom who was on a graduate training program and hated having to attend meetings with senior management. Tom's negative cycle looked like this:



What Tom had to do to get over this fear was to remove the negative voice in his head that was telling him that his boss probably wouldn't think him good enough and replace these with more realistic, positive thoughts.

After doing this, Tom's positive cycle looked like this:



8.2 Technique 2 – The right attitude

When asking for a promotion, it is helpful to have the appropriate attitude. One way to do this is to put yourself in the shoes of your boss and consider the attitudes they are looking for from a successful person in the particular role you are aspiring to. Are they looking for someone who is positive, energised and/or business focussed for example? And if so, how would you know that a person has these attributes?

Once you have a clear idea of the particular attributes that your boss is looking for, check how many of these attributes you actually possess yourself. Be honest, do you think that others see these attributes in you? Take time to match your work achievements to these attributes.

Here, positive thinking works because it is backed by hard evidence. Your work achievements, skills and experience are the facts we mentioned under Assertive Communication in the previous chapter; these facts prove you are worthy of being considered for the position.

Just knowing that you exhibit many of the attributes that your boss is looking for, as well as being prepared to show that you want to develop some of your weaker attributes, will increase your confidence to ask for the promotion.

8.3 Technique 3 – Looking the part

Have you ever wondered why you haven't been considered for promotion when you know you work hard and are doing a great job but you just don't seem to be recognised? This is where you need to consider whether or not you actually look the part of the position to which you are aspiring.

Sometimes it is those who look the part rather than those who are really capable of doing the job that get the promotion! This is unfair but unfortunately many people are influenced by what they see and make assumptions based on appearance.

This is why you need to imagine a room full of people doing the particular job you are interested in; who do you see as being the most successful? What do they look like? What are they wearing? How do they sound when they speak? What body language are they using?

Use your answers to these questions to create your own recipe for success. Create a role model, as described in Chapter 5, for this position and begin to mirror your role model. But you will have to do this consistently, not just one or two days a week! The way you dress and present yourself can have a huge impact on your confidence levels.

8.4 Technique 4 – Non-confrontational conversation

Many new managers struggle to talk to their staff about poor performance when really it is an important part of their job. If this is you and you want to be able to address the situation in a non confrontational way, follow these 4 steps:

1. Talk to your employee in terms of their behaviour and what they are doing as this avoids the feeling of a personal attack. Begin by saying something like, “I’ve noticed that...” and here it is important to use facts not judgements.
2. Tell them what the effects of their behaviour are on other people. Here it is also important to use facts to explain the consequences of their behaviour and you can use the statement, “When you (do this)...” as we discussed under Assertive Communication.
3. State what it is you want them to change.
4. Tell them the positive consequences of an improvement in this behaviour and of course mention the negative effects if they choose not to change their behaviour.

By preparing for the discussion in this manner, you will feel more confident and increase the likelihood of negotiating a positive outcome.

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9 Negotiation

No matter what it is you want to ask for at work, ultimately it will mean some form of negotiation and the key here is to always think win/win! In other words, you have to be able to demonstrate that the outcome you are after is of mutual benefit to the other party. By opting for a win/win solution, you develop and maintain your integrity, maturity, self confidence and respect.

There are 5 steps to achieving a win/win solution:

1. Be open to seeing the other person's point of view. You can do this by really looking to understand the needs and concerns of the other party. By learning as much about the person with whom you are negotiating and the outcome that they are after, you will be better able to anticipate reactions, objections and responses.
2. Identify the key issues and concerns involved. Encourage the other side to talk by asking open ended questions, listen to their presentation, understand their position and identify the real issues. Choose your words carefully, for example use "and" instead of "but" wherever possible and avoid anything that sounds negative. Ask what the other person thinks is fair or reasonable in order to break a stalemate and use sentences with the word "because" in order to encourage the listener to be logical.
3. Determine what results would produce an acceptable outcome for both sides and this means really taking your time to prepare. Look for ways that you can reach agreement. Try and find areas that make it easier for the other person to say "yes". If you can agree to small things first then you can create a positive atmosphere. Find some mutual ground for agreement upfront even if it's just that you both agree that you have a problem which needs to be resolved. Once you have made an offer stop talking and wait for a response. Later, as you develop alternative solutions, consider the other party's interests. If you do have to give something away, make sure that you get something in return.
4. Negotiate an agreement that is consistent with your long term goals and never accept anything that could have a negative impact on your values and beliefs. In other words, know what you want and don't be afraid to ask for it.
5. When you believe that you have reached an agreement, summarize your understanding of what has been agreed and have it confirmed in writing. Be sure to always end on a positive note.

While you won't always get what you ask for, if you don't ask, the answer is already no!

Conclusion

If you want to ace an interview you need to be prepared, if you want to get a promotion or pay rise, you need to be prepared, if you want to ask colleagues to share a heavy workload, you need to prepare your case. No matter what it is you want to ask for at work, you need to spend time preparing if you want to increase your chance of getting a successful outcome.

Know what it is that you want and why. Write the dreams down. Look for the best alternative idea. It may be that accomplishing your idea exactly isn't possible, so look for realistic ways to make it possible. Invest your energy in the things you can change and be aware that some things may be out of your control; wasting your time and energy on things that are beyond your control will just lead to frustration.

Review your communication style and consider the best approach for asking for what it is you want then run it through like a movie in your head with your role model taking the lead role. Learn from your role model before seeing yourself take the lead role. Playing the scenario through in your head gives you time to practice and anticipate reactions and therefore increase both your confidence to face the situation and chance of a positive outcome.

Here's an 8 point reminder!

1. Think through your desired outcome Ask yourself – “How would a person with confidence do this?”
2. Visualise yourself doing the tasks. Close your eyes and see yourself doing it successfully.
3. Prepare thoroughly. What are you going to say? How are you going to say it?
4. Before you do it, go through it in your mind several times and be positive.
5. Put it into perspective. No matter what it is, is it worse than something like 911 or a tsunami? The answer is NO.
6. DO IT!
7. Whatever the outcome, take what you learnt for next time.
8. REWARD yourself for DOING rather than TALKING about doing it!

Don't give up. While you can't force dreams to happen, you can take the steps outlined in this book toward making them a reality.