Can you be a valued employee and a straight shooter, too? Many of the best ones are. Here are some observations on how to become the MVSS (Most Valuable Straight Shooter) on your team.

You may not have the lung capacity of a real Sherpa but you have your own mountains to climb. Sherpas are celebrated for their endurance and dedication.

The journey doesn’t have to be lonely. Find other Sherpas and celebrate them. Continue developing your skills and theirs.

## **The Art of Straight Shooting: SHERPA**

**SHERPA - Characteristics of a Straight Shooter**

* **S**trive for excellence
* **H**elp others, with humor
* **E**uphemisms are out
* **R**eward others
* **P**rovide perspective
* **A**ddress the issues

**Strive for Excellence**

What drives you? As it has been said, the perfect is the enemy of the good (I paraphrase Voltaire who popularized the saying since I totally reek at all things French).

Don’t spend your time in pursuit of the perfect.

Instead, strive for excellence and focus your efforts on contributing to the good: The good of your organization, the good of your colleagues, the greater good of humankind.

**Top Tip**: See the books mentioned below for approaches that can be most effective. It's not about you. It's about providing value and help.

**Help Others, with Humor**

Passion, passion, passion. You are not in this for you. Your positive attitude and willingness to work with others are what matters. Your ability to empathize and be present when others bring up concerns is all important.

Recognize other straight shooters and coach them. Some straight shooters cannot sugarcoat their observations and this can cause tensions when their passion is unleashed. Guide them to retain their passion but not alienate others. This can make all the difference.

Using humor while providing input can be very helpful with straight shooters. Using humor while straight shooting can be most effective.

**Top Tip**: Don't confuse humor with sarcasm. Sarcasm will dig a deep hole for a straight shooter and turn your audience against you.

It makes for a funny story now, but I once compared the actions of my managers to the Three Stooges episode where the Stooges drill holes in their boat to let the water out. Yes, my management was in the room. No, my message was not well received and it changed nothing.

**Euphemisms Are Out**

Strive to be clear and concise in your use of language. As a straight shooter, the temptation is to blurt out an answer, since the solution is obvious to you. Consider your audience and be patient. Flies to honey, my friend.

To develop your abilities, consider joining Toastmasters. This is a group of incredibly supportive people. Their approach gives you experience speaking with and before others. Click [here](http://www.toastmasters.org/Find-a-Club) to investigate meetings in your area. A wise person I know recommends that you attend at least two different groups, twice, and join a group that you like.

**Top Tip**: Profanity must be used carefully (do as I say, not as I do). Know your audience.

I once attended an upward feedback session. Things were not going well as the HR person appeared to be defending our management when we were just trying to weigh in. I don’t recall using profanity. I do recall being passionately enflamed. I stepped over the line and it was suggested that if I could not control myself, perhaps I had better leave.

I left. Know when to cut your losses and be prepared to apologize. As you master your skills, those incidents will fade to legendary tales of your impertinence. No harm, no foul.

Here is a great article on precise communications with no sugarcoating, a dash of spice – profanity - and plenty of good advice, especially for those of you in the IT arena but with much broader applicability.

[**Loose Lips Sink Ships: Precision**](http://goo.gl/dzYpjY)[**in Language**](http://goo.gl/dzYpjY)by Ernest Mueller

(Loose Lips Sink Ships: Precision in Language | the agile admin, https://theagileadmin.com/2017/01/03/loose-lips-sink-ships-precision-in-language/ (accessed January 13, 2017).)

**Reward Others**

If a straight shooter helps you understand an issue, acknowledge their contribution. If they do it in an expert way, displaying their passion yet not in an alienating fashion, point that out.

Acknowledgement is the highest form of reward to the straight shooter. They are not in it for the money, they want to make a difference. If possible, acknowledge them in front of others. This action on your part is both free and priceless.

**Top Tips**: Rewards don't have to be expensive. Acts of kindness are the coin of the realm. Be present, but you don't have to give presents.

**Provide Perspective**

If you are a straight shooter, you need to provide perspective as a way of engaging your audience. The short, jump-to-the-conclusion approach is far less effective. Alternatively, you don’t want to bore your audience with long, rambling introductions of your idea.

You do want to give your idea context and persuade your audience as to how your observations will help. Approaching your mission from the perspective of helpfulness is what it’s all about.

For guidance on perspective, here are two excellent books. I have had the good fortune of meeting people who base their approach on both and you will know right away when you are in the presence of these people. The energy is palpable, the honesty refreshing.

For the non-fiction minded:

[The Fred Factor: How](http://goo.gl/U4UHcs) [Passion in your Work and Life Can Turn the Ordinary into the Extraordinary](http://goo.gl/U4UHcs) by Mark Sanborn and John C. Maxwell

For the fiction minded:

[The Go-Giver, Expanded](http://goo.gl/lUsiJL) [Edition: A Little Story About a Powerful Business Idea](http://goo.gl/lUsiJL) by Bob Berg and John David Mann.

**Top Tips**: Focus on the positive. Be there to help. Give without expecting anything in return.

**Address the Issues**

You have a talent for recognizing issues and feel compelled to speak up. This is a chief value you bring to all you do. Others will recognize your passion and many will enjoy it.

Your positive outlook makes positive things happen. Take some time to practice how you deliver your message but don’t wait so long that your passion diminishes.

**Top Tips**: Seek out positive people and develop relationships. Even though you are a straight shooter and full of good ideas, not everybody will jump on board. Rejection is part of the picture and we need to support each other.

**Special Offer**

If you made it this far, you may have liked this article. If that is the case, I have a special offer for those who did. If you are one of the first 10 people to respond and provide the information below, I will send you a copy of one of the books referenced above.

* **Send me an email at** [**stephen.r.fairbrother@gmail.com**](http://mailto:stephen.r.fairbrother@gmail.com/) **and indicate the following:**
* **Which book you want**
* **Which format (Book or Kindle edition)**
* **Address to send it to**

**Dedication to the Dedicated**

Time to reward some straight shooters I have met. Much gratitude to you all for the things you have taught me: Alex, Anthony, Bill, Catherine, Chris, David, Donna, Ernest, Fred, Les, Lynne, Sally, and Tim.